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The Aesthetics of Sadism and Masochism in Italian Renaissance Painting

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Abstract

This thesis analyses selected paintings and aspects of life of the Italian Renaissance in terms of the aesthetic properties of sadistic and masochistic symptomatologies and creative production, as these have been explored by philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Marcel Hénaff, and Gilles Deleuze. One question which arises from this analysis, and is considered in this thesis, is of the relation between sexual perversion and history, and in particular between experiences of violence, (dis)pleasure and desire, and historically specific forms of discourse and power, such as legislation on rape; myths and practices concerning marriage alliance; the depiction of such myths and practices in art; religion; and family structures. A second question which this thesis explores is the manners in which sadistic and masochistic artistic production function politically, to bolster pre-existing gender ideologies or to subvert them. Finally, this thesis considers the relation between sadism and masochism and visuality, both by bringing literary models of perversion to an interpretation of paintings, and by exploring the amenability of different genres of visual art to sadism and masochism respectively.

Résumé

La présente thèse analyse certaines peintures et certains aspects de la Renaissance italienne en terme des propriétés esthétiques des symptomatologies sadique et masochiste, telles qu'explorées par des philosophes comme Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Marcel Hénaff, et Gilles Deleuze. Une question qui émerge de cette analyse, et qui est étudié dans le présent ouvrage, est celle de la relation entre la perversion sexuelle et l'histoire, et plus particulièrement entre les expériences violentes, le (dé)plaisir, le désir, et les formes spécifiques de discours et de pouvoir d'une période donnée, telles que la législation sur le viol; les mythes et les pratiques autour du mariage; la représentation de ces mythes et de ces pratiques en art; la religion; et la structure familiale. Une autre question que la thèse explore est les façons dont les productions artistiques sadiques et masochistes fonctionnent politiquement, soutenant les idéologies sexuelles préexistantes ou les subvertissant. Finalement, la présente thèse considère la relation entre le sadisme, le masochisme et la visualité, en utilisant des modèles littéraires de la perversion pour interpréter des peintures, et aussi en explorant l'affinité de différents genres d'art visuel avec le sadisme et le masochisme.

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Introduction: Sadism, Masochism, and the Body in History

In a rare excursion outside of Italy and beyond the fifteenth century, Guido Ruggiero, an historian of sexual crime in Renaissance Venice, evokes Sade in his discussion of rape in this city. He writes:

> The Marquis de Sade argued that the rape of unmarried women should be a minor crime in society's eyes because the rapist "has done no more than place a little sooner the object he has abused in the very state in which she would soon have been put by marriage and love." In this, he was not so radically insane as has been assumed; in the Venice of the Early Renaissance, he would have found his fantasy to be a common operating assumption. In fact, the Forty occasionally followed de Sade's dictum to a logical and medieval conclusion by offering the rapist the choice of paying a penalty or marrying his victim.[1]

Beginning by taking up Ruggiero's observation and pursuing the question as to whether Sade was, in his conceptualisation of the body and violence, mad because born some centuries too late, the current project will engage in the analysis of the historicity of the body and its possibilities for suffering, both in relation to sadism and to masochism, and by means of an analysis of aesthetics as well as history. Michel Foucault occasionally situates a figure historically in terms of when he would have been considered sane or mad. For instance, Cervantes and King Lear are deemed by Foucault to have been mad only because they lived in the first days of the Baroque.[2] Their behaviour, he claims, would have seemed quite rational in the Renaissance, and thus their tragedy was in being born too late. Given Ruggiero's comments on Sade, might we employ this sort of argument in order to suggest that the marquis was insane in the eyes of his contemporaries only because his ideas reflected back on an earlier way of conceiving of the body and violence? To reconceptualise this question, could we push Ruggiero's observation to say that sadism was, not mad, but within the realm of normalcy in the context of the Italian Renaissance? Or, in exact opposition to this suggestion, and as many have argued, does Sade foresee and epitomise all that is most frightening in modernity? If the latter claim is correct, Ruggiero's insight on the relation between Sade and views of sexual violence in Renaissance Italy must still be explained.

The question of the historicity of sadism is, in fact, one that has been debated frequently and with little consensus within the context of post-World War II French philosophy, for instance by Foucault, Georges Bataille, Marcel Hénaff, Roland Barthes,

and Gilles Deleuze. To provide a brief overview of the debate, Foucault argues in *Madness and Civilization* that sadism was something entirely new, a subversive product of practices of confinement which only arose in Sade's lifetime.[3] In *The Order of Things*, Foucault alters his position slightly, situating Sade at "the end of classical discourse and thought."[4] In volume one of *The History of Sexuality*, however, he sees sadism as archaic and retrograde rather than innovative in its conceptualisation of power, while so far as he still considers it modern, he ceases to glorify it as politically subversive, but relates it rather to Nazism, fascism, and eugenics. Bataille emphatically denies the relation suggested by Foucault and others between sadism and the modern phenomena of Nazism, and Hénaff initially seems to adopt Bataille's view, wanting to assert the modernity of the perversion along the inocuous lines of Foucault's early and romanticising work (by asserting the independence of the text).[5] However, in the conclusion to his work on Sade, he writes that we no longer censor the marquis because we are "*in him*":

> We entered into the precision and actuality of the Sadean body, and from that point on, the modalities of sexual pleasure and suffering – from their ordinary to their paroxysmal forms, from the marketplace of sex to the crushing of bodies in concentration camps – have been assuming the shape of Sade's universe... Everywhere, in banal or dramatic ways, our hyper-Englightenment illuminates super-Sillings.[6]

Yet, in a manner which surely complexifies the situation, Hénaff's work is largely occupied with aspects of sadism which are derived from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, such as feudalism, monastic orders, the fortified chateau and the walled-in city. The question of sadism's historicity is important, and was raised at this historical moment - as is already apparent - because the atrocities of the second world war suggested to many that new possibilities of violence had appeared upon the horizon of human actions, and were in some way caused by the conceptualisation of the body under modernity, of which Sade was, arguably, a harbinger. Investigating the historical-situatedness of sadism (and of masochism) is to explore the relation of the body, and of its experiences of pleasure and pain, to history. Further, it raises the question as to whether our own era has invented new possibilities, desires and means for the imposition of suffering on the body.

Masochism has received less critical attention than sadism, with the outstanding exception of Deleuze's *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch*. As Deleuze laments, while most people, including psychologists, writing on sadism have read Sade - which reading enriches their work - scarcely anyone reads the literary texts of the namesake of masochism, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, and their work suffers from this neglect. While Sade was abhorred and censored in his lifetime, Sacher-Masoch was a celebrated author of the nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century, however, the situation had been reversed, with Sacher-Masoch virtually forgotten, his works deemed to be lacking in any aesthetic merit which might have made them worth reading, while Sade became an object of fascination and – to use Barthes' term – hagiography, at least in France.[7] In the first half of the twentieth century, Sade's texts underwent repeated aesthetic analysis, and were deemed inspirational by members of modern artistic movements such as surrealism. Though this celebration of sadistic texts became more uneasy in the second half of the century, with perspectives on violence grown queasy, the fascination for Sade remained, whereas the questions of masochism as an aesthetic and as a potential political position, and of its relation to history, remain largely unexplored.

While the first half of the present project will participate in the tenacious vogue for sadism, the last two chapters will follow in Deleuze's footsteps by engaging in the exploration of masochism's relation to art, politics, and history. While Deleuze considered the aesthetic and historical properties of masochism only in relation to the literary texts of the perversion's namesake, I will explore the extent to which works of *visual* art, and art from a period pre-dating that of Sacher-Masoch, can be explained in terms of the aesthetic and psychic symptoms which Deleuze isolates – which project by its very nature tests the historical nature of the sexual/textual practices. Although I find the aesthetics of sadism and masochism to be in many ways applicable to artworks of the Renaissance, and although I discuss historical explanations for this applicability, I do not entirely disagree with philosophers such as Foucault and Hénaff who see a connection between these forms of violence and modernity. Rather, my position is that these forms of pleasure, displeasure and desire – as aesthetic expression and responses as well as sexual practices - were diffuse in the pre- and early modern eras, while they became crystallised and systematised in modernity through, for instance, new forms of discourse

and economics. It is this crystallisation and systematisation which enabled the particular extreme forms of violence which characterise the modern period: this view is perhaps closest to Foucault's third and last conceptualisation of sadism in *The History of Sexuality*, to be discussed in Chapter One. This thesis limits its explorations to the continuities between modern sadistic and masochistic expression and artistic expression and spectatorship of the past, but this is not to deny the equally important project of investigating what is new in Sade and Sacher-Masoch, and the implications of this novelty to the present.

The first chapter will return to Ruggiero's study of rape in Renaissance Italy as an example of early modern sadism which sustains certain conclusions reached in a reading of Foucault, and sees a continuity between Sade and the legal views on sexual violence in Renaissance Italy. On the other hand, the "fit" will not be found perfect. The second chapter will consider the aesthetic and economic qualities of sadism with relation to four painted panels from Quattrocento Florence by Botticelli. Once more, many aspects of the sadistic aesthetic will be found to characterise these works. However the factory-like aspect of sadism as it was developed on the eve of the modern era, and which is perhaps the most alarming aspect of the marquis' texts with respect to the violences of modernity, will not be found to be fully present. The third chapter will discuss the aesthetic and gendered properties of masochism as they are opposed to sadism, as well as the different political implications and potentials of the two perversions. Chapter Four will consider the relation of masochism to the historic moment of the Italian Renaissance and the manners in which masochism intersects with visual culture, and specifically with painting, by means of an interpretation of several mythological canvases by Titian from Cinquecento Venice. The different relations to visuality and to visual art of sadism and masochism will be discussed in this final chapter.

To conclude this introduction with two methodological notes: Deleuze is interested in the formal properties of masochism and sadism, and not very much in the sexual practices or psyches of the perversions' namesakes. However he does invoke biographical information from the lives of Sacher-Masoch and Sade to bolster claims drawn from their literary works. Their lives are interesting for Deleuze in so far as they enhance an understanding of their texts, rather than their texts being means of

understanding their lives. My project, on the other hand, has even less interest than does Deleuze's in the lives of the makers of the artworks deemed "sadistic" and "masochistic," either as a means or an end to my readings of their paintings. In other words I mean to say nothing about Botticelli or Titian, though I recognise that a reader could choose to make associations between my interpretations of the works and the lives and psyches of the painters. While the sadism of Sade's texts and the masochism of Sacher-Masoch's tales virtually saturate their meanings, given that they gave rise to the naming of the perversions and that the authors to some extent identified themselves according to their sexualities, I consider the works I analyse to be very much in excess of the interpretations I offer. Further, I feel my readings are more interesting in reference to the experience of viewers once the paintings were made, than to their etiology in the studio. It will be argued in the first chapter that before the modern era, as Foucault defines it, sexualities such as sadism and masochism were not identities of persons, or of artists, but were rather part of a repertoire of possible acts available to anyone within contextualised situations. Translating from sexuality into aesthetics, as this project sets out to do: even more so than today, viewing a work in the Renaissance according to the visual dis/pleasures which I deem "sadistic" or "masochistic" would have been but one of multiple co-existent or successive possible responses. Certain persons, depending on class and gender, might be more likely to engage in certain acts of sexuality and viewing dis/pleasure than were others, but these acts did not constitute their identities as they would for figures such as Sade and Sacher-Masoch.

Finally, on one hand, conceptualising paintings by Botticelli and Titian according to frameworks, aesthetics, or "ways of seeing" which were artistically epitomised and theoretically articulated in modernity is to impose sameness onto the past, to efface the otherness of history. On the other hand, I disagree with the strongness of the emphasis on historical rupture in Foucault's early works, which was modified in his later writings, in that I think there must be some such hybridity between eras, that make such projects as this valid. Thus I feel that the interpretations I offer enrich a viewing of the works, but recognise that the objects always surpass and escape the readings I ascribe to them.

[1] Guido Ruggiero, *Violence in EarlyRenaissance Venice* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1980): 167.
[2] Foucault discusses these literary figures in *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1965), and *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1970). For instance see Section One of Chapter Three in *The Order of Things*.
[3] *Madness and Civilization*: 210.
[4] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things:* 224.
[5] The term "perversion" will be used to refer to sadism and masochism throughout this text for the sake of variety. It should not be read as a normative or negative term.
[6] Hénaff: 290. Silling is a site of the *120 Days of Sodom* and has been described as a "death factory."
[7] For a discussion of responses to sadism in twentieth century France, see Caroly J. Dean, *The Self and Its Pleasures* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Chapter One: Sadism and Rape in Renaissance Italy

I. Rape in Renaissance Italy

Guido Ruggiero's evocation of Sade's views of rape as not atypical of legislation in Renaissance Venice, cited in the introduction, is interesting as an example of one of the marquis' apparently outrageous opinions in fact manifesting a continuity between sadism and medieval or Renaissance norms. Sade is well known for his penchant for medieval and Renaissance themes – the fortified chateau, the monastery, feudalism, tales of seige and confinement – but it is something quite different to consider whether his thought might characterize a specifically Renaissance epistemology of sexuality and violence. Taking the case of rape in the Renaissance Italian city and considering it in light of Foucault's discussion of sadism in *The History of Sexuality I*, it will be argued that much of what seems shocking and mad in sadism is a redistribution of models of sexuality and violence that were condoned in Renaissance Italy, though this redistribution is perhaps specifically modern.

A MINOR CRIME

Two forms of rape seem to have been both common and relatively admissable in Renaissance Italy: the rape of working class women by nobles, in gangs or as individuals, and the rape of working class women by men of their own social class. In the latter case, as Ruggiero shows in his two major studies of violence and crime in Renaissance Venice, it was quite normal for a working class couple's sexual encounters to follow the pattern of rape, followed by fornication and/or marriage.[1] Many affairs began with violence, but continued immediately as consensual, even love relations, sometimes leading to long-term commitments, marriage and children (occassionally, but not always, with the encouragement of the courts). In what Ruggiero calls a "strange but recurring facet of life that appears regularly in the criminal records," women, and even ten or twelve-year-old girls, of Renaissance Italy were able to enter into "normal" sexual, romantic and domestic relations with men who had shortly before sexually violated them at knifepoint or with blows.[2]

There are, of course, economic and ideological explanations for the practice of marrying women to their rapists. Obliged to marry for financial security, a raped woman or girl found her marriage prospects severely damaged. The rapist, who had taken the right of the husband in depriving the woman or girl of her virginity, became a logical choice in the eyes of the courts, the victim's family, and the woman or girl herself, partly because few other men would now marry the victim. Nonetheless, the facility and regularity with which girls and women seem to have entered into consensual relations with their rapists, even in cases in which they were under no duress from family or the courts, as when the rape was kept private, is difficult to comprehend. In one case, for instance, a boatman raped a ten-year-old girl with whom he then continued a nonviolent affair. The case was only considered alarming and brought to court when he abandoned her.[3] In a similar case discussed by Ruggiero, a virgin was raped at knifepoint but then allowed the relationship to continue willingly "in bed and on a chest."[4] Another man, already married, raped his twelve-year-old sister-in-law, and continued the affair even after she became a nun, and after his wife died, eventually having five children with his cloistered one-time rape victim.[5] Family members and judges who pressed a girl or woman to marry her rapist, or penalized the rapist for not marrying his victim, do not seem to have considered the possibility of an adverse psychological impact of such a marriage on the bride, nor do we find traces in the court records of unwillingness on her part.[6] On the contrary, Ruggiero suggests that in certain cases it was the girl or woman who suggested to the courts the solution of marriage. This seems to imply that sexual violence, particularly at the initiation of relations, was so common that it failed to be gravely socially or psychologically alarming even to those involved. As such, beyond a consideration of financial motivations, Ruggiero explains the phenomena of marrying women to their rapists as the result of the normalization of sexual violence against women in Renaissance Italy.[7] Due to the prevalence of such violence, women and girls, particularly those of a lower social status, were prevented from developing a sense of inviolability which could then be considered lost or broken.[8] The frequency of sexual violence against women is made evident by Ruggiero's researches. For instance, we find that "[g]roup assault on women was not rare. At all social levels, it seems, men regularly banded together to victimize women,"[9] and that "[t]he rape of nuns was a popular

diversion, especially for the nobility."[10] Gang rape is known to have been a frequent activity for noble youths in Florence, as well as in Venice[11] and Richard Trexler notes that Florentine *giovani* had a reputation for "hounding" prostitutes, for which harassment they were legally immune.[12] The rarity of rape prosecutions and the minor penalties which they incurred - so long as the rape occurred down the social scale - shows just how normal and harmless such acts were perceived to be. So slight were the potential penal risks that it is comprehensible to Ruggiero that even noble men, who could afford prostitutes and mistresses, would find little to deter them from engaging in rapes and gang rapes.[13]

Indeed, the responses of the courts are almost illogically lenient. While a robber who broke into a home and stole an object would be mutilated through corporeal punishment and/or executed, a man who broke into a home and raped a woman and also stole some goods at the same time might expect to receive a brief prison sentence and a small fine. If no robbery occurred, and the rape moved down the social scale, he might receive no punishment at all, or a mere handslap. Interestingly, a robbery itself was underpunished so long as it was undertaken in the context of a rape, making the rape itself an excuse for further crimes rather than an additional incursion. Sexual violence, as "passionate acts," were viewed with such judicial indulgence that trespasses such as forced entry and robbery, so long as they occurred alongside the rapes, were seen as "excesses of youth" rather than serious crimes. As Ruggiero writes,

> First, rape was so unimportant, seen almost as a boyish prank or indiscretion, that its associated crimes were similarly discounted. As a consequence, the penalties were not designed to control robbery or assault; they were aimed at rape, although the concomitant acts added to the seriousness of that offence. In other words, the Forty believed that it was dealing not with robbers or serious assailants, but with rapists who were "forced" by the situation – carried away by the passion of the moment – to be more criminal than the rape implied.[14]

"Youthful excesses" or "boyish pranks," rapes were, indeed, an activity of young, unmarried men. While working class men, as seen, might acquire a wife by this method, rape was pure sport for bachelors of the patriciate. This situation was exasperated by the common late marriages of patrician men in the Italian Renaissance: males of this class tended to be married in their early thirties to brides half their age.[15] The prevalence of rapes of working class women by such men seems to have been viewed as the natural,

and not terribly harmful, result of prolonged bachelorhood at this social level. A large number of patrician men, therefore, would have engaged in gang or individual rapes before finally settling down to marriage and a non-violent sex life in their thirties, whereas among the working classes, as seen, many men would have engaged in rape as a preliminary step in securing a wife and likewise adjusting to a more "normal," by our standards, sexual relationship.

One case of courtship and rape serves an example of this malleability of male sexuality in the Renaissance, which could easily swing to and fro between gentle wooing and sexual violence. The court record of this case reads as follows:

> About three or four months ago the nobleman Michele Morosini began wooing [Benevenuta, the adopted daughter of the noble Paolo Contarini] ardently. He sent her a servant of his, whose name she did not know, to tell her that he was dying of love for her. [He asked] that she open the door of her home to him and not allow him to die of love. She replied that she did not wish to do it. Later one night the said ser Michele asked her to open her door to him, promising her that he would do her no harm. Thus she let him in. He entered and tried to grab and kiss her, but she fled, locking herself in her room, and went to bed. Later, after several days, Michele sent a relative of Benevenuta to her [saying] that if she did not speak to him he would die. Feeling sorry for him, not wanting him to die, she therefore let him in, not believing he wished to do her any harm. When he came he promised the said Benevenuta that he would give her furs and pearls and many other things. As a result she was willing to consent to Michele who then had sexual relations with her and took her virginity.[16]

On the third occasion of the couple's consensual relation, however, they were discovered and forced to flee on a boat. Once aboard, as the court record reports, Benevenuta seems to have had a change of heart and "Michele raped her against her will… The two previous times he had had sexual relations with her, however, were with her consent."[17] In this record of a fifteenth century rape trial, we find an attempt at courtly wooing followed by an attempted rape. The rape failing, Michele returned to wooing, this time with success. The consensual relationship, however, soon returned to a violent one, this time with Michele accomplishing the rape. Something similar will be seen in the following chapter functioning in the *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*, as it is told in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and in four illustrative panels by Botticelli. As in the case of Michele and Benevenuta, the characters of the fable are of the nobility and are

involved in a tale of shifting techniques of seduction, ranging from courtly wooing and displays of wealth to violent attacks.

What emmerges from this discussion is a world in which men could move fluidly between violent and non-violent sexualities depending on circumstance and their stage in life. Judges did not see rape as a proof of a man's bad character: in sentences they rarely refer to a rapist's lack of honour, fear or respect for Venice or God, as they did for other crimes, but merely to the somewhat unfortunate passion or "diabolic spirit" which had moved him.[18] Because the violence was circumstantial and temporary, unlikely to be serialized, it did not call for the harsh penalties of crimes such as theft, which were seen to reflect on the perpetrator's intrinsic character, his lack of honour and civic or religious fear. This is an exact reverse of how we view crime today, in which theft is more likely to be viewed as circumstantial, the result of economic stress, and rape a manifestation of psychic disturbance and an inherently unhealthy sexuality. Today rapists are argued to be seriously or irrecoverably ill, compelled to repeat their crime, and hence drastic punishments such as chemical castration, long prison terms, and extensive psychiatric care are seen as warranted for the protection of society. Sexual violence was therefore a more common behaviour expected of men in the Renaissance than it was to become in the modern period, and yet was not associated with their individual sexualities or characters in an important way. Rape was a circumstantial act available to all men, rather than being the manifestation of a certain kind of sexuality possessed by a subset of men. If we simplify our understanding of sadism for the moment to a juxtaposition of sex and violence inflicted on an unwilling victim, we find that this sort of act was almost certainly perpetrated by a greater number of persons in the Renaissance than in modernity, but that there were not persons defined or limited in their sexuality by such acts.

BLOOD AND SEX

There are three types of rape cases which were exceptions to the rule that rape in Renaissance Italy was a minor crime, each of which involves trespasses of blood. First, cases in which a woman of patriciate or noble blood was the victim of the rape received far greater attention and called down stricter sentences than the more common violations of working class women. The case was especially grave, calling for penalties such as the

perpetual banishment or execution of the perpetrator, if the rapist was of lower social status than his victim. Interestingly, in such cases the language of the condemnations of the criminal seems more concerned with the sanguinary element of his trespass than with the sexual.[19] The second type of rape which called down greater rhetorical disapprobation and severer penalties than "normal" rapes, is that category which involved incest. While rapes which moved up the social scale involved persons of too divergent blood, incestuous rapes entailed relations between persons whose blood was, on the contrary, too proximate. As an example of the severe penalties which such a rape could entail, one incestuous father was sentenced to bodily mutilation and ten years in prison, followed by exile from Venice and execution should he ever return.[20] Finally, in the third case, rapes which involved the spilling of blood were, at least on the level of rhetoric, also treated quite differently by the Renaissance courts from rapes which involved non-bloody force or coersion. In rape and attempted rape cases that were complicated by bloodshed, we find that not only are the penalties somewhat more severe but, interestingly, the records of the event are much more detailed than the normally cursory and formulaic accounts of straightforward rapes. The details of the wounds, their location and debth, and the profusion of bloodflow, are carefully recorded.[21] Indeed, so much attention is paid to the shedding of blood in such cases that whether or not the rape attempt was successful is often left unstated.[22] Whether forced sexual intercourse actually occurred becomes a superfluous detail beside the fascinated discussion of bloodflow.

Penalties in this third category of rape cases were higher than those in which no blood was spilled, but were not penalized so drastically as rapes involving the transgression of sanguinary laws. In each of these three cases, however, we see that rapes involving blood were seen as demanding at least somewhat severer sentences than crimes of mere sexuality, and calling for much finer attention to detail in the recording of the events and the expression of disapprobation. Even more significantly, the city often wished to be rid entirely of the criminal who violated sanguinary mandates, whether through exile or death. This suggests that the criminal who crossed boundaries of blood was viewed as a continuing threat, or of incorrigibly bad character, in a way that the mere sexual criminal was not. Thus we see that blood and the capability to trespass against

laws of blood, were considered to be intrinsic and significant to a person's being, while sex, even forced sex, was viewed as a relatively inconsequential act.

THE SOCIAL UTILITY OF RAPE

The legerity of penalties for rape has thus been partially accounted for by the social insignificance of the majority of the victims within a judicial system which was more concerned with blood than with sex. Sexual acts, including acts of sexual violence, were seen, to cite Ruggiero, as "excesses of youth" or "boyish pranks," so long as they did not transgress sanguinary laws or involve bloodshed. Further, even those rapes which involved bloodshed, though they were quite a bit more interesting in the eyes of the court, were not terribly consequential so long as the blood which flowed came from the popular classes. Arguably, however, there is another explanation of the insignificance of rape as a crime in Italian Renaissance cities, one which is not raised by Ruggiero's discussions. This is the complex social function which rape served in the Italian Renaissance urban environment, which function would have been viewed as beneficiary by the members of the male elite who judged criminal cases. Rape in the Italian Renaissance city will be shown to have been socially utile in at least three ways.

First, a large number of women who were raped and consequentially found themselves unmarriagable, turned to prostitution as an alternate means of financial support.[23] Prostitution was viewed in the Italian Renaissance city as a necessary evil, because it kept the large number of bachelors from turning to greater vices, such as adulterous affairs and sodomy.[24] Sodomy in particular was frequently cited as the great evil which the encouragement of prostitution would combat, whereas Trexler notes that prostitution is never once argued to be advantageous for its potential to diminish the frequency of rape in the city.[25] On the contrary, rape was a permissible act precisely because it was an outlet for male sexuality which functioned to keep young men from adulterating marriages and committing crimes against nature, and also created a pool of women who continued in this service through prostitution. A striking example of the willingness to tolerate rape if it prevented homosexual acts is evident in Bernardino of Siena's advise in 1427 to his contemporaries. Bernardino states that it is preferable for households to send their daughters on errands in the city rather than their sons, since the

latter might be abducted by men for the purposes of sodomy.[26] Of course, the daughters were at least as vulnerable to rape as the sons, but this was heterosexual rape and hence a small sacrifice compared to the homosexual relations with sons that it served to avoid. The light penalties for rape, when it was prosecuted and punished at all, compared to the punishments for adultery and sodomy, underscore the patriciate's preference for this evil over others, and, I would argue, their willingness to tolerate rape so long as it reduced the number of more "serious" infractions.

Additionally, rape served the socially beneficial purpose of establishing marriages in a manner which was seen as having important foundational precedents. The city of Rome was understood in the Renaissance to have been established and populated through the rape of the Sabine women by Roman men. Not long after, the city became a republic, overthrowing its dictators, as a direct consequence of the rape of Lucretia. Both of these socially advantageous rapes were commonly depicted during the Renaissance, particularly for art works such as cassone panels which commemorated marriages, as were other rape scenerios which could be interpreted as serving a similar civic function.[27] For instance, the rape of the Amazons, in which previously independent and troublesome women came under the rule of male partners, was depicted on cassoni. Similarly, two famous works by Botticelli commissioned for Medici marriages depict the rape of Chloris by Zephyr, and her consequential social elevation to Floris.[28] As Floris, a symbol of Florence itself, the ravished nymph serves an exemplary and socially-useful role expected of other rape victims/wives: generation. These domestic art works demonstrate that it was common in the Renaissance to conceive of rape as serving a socially useful and harmonizing function: the creation of marriages and, consequentially, reproduction, the population of the city, and the establishment or perpetuation of civic order. Renaissance judges may have rarely penalized rapes, and when they did but lightly, because they understood rapists to be facilitating such socially desirable ends.

Finally, rape served a third purpose, not unlike that mythologized in depictions of the rape of the Amazons. That is, rape could function to discourage the existence of women who lived autonomously of men. Rape victims in the Italian Renaissance city were commonly women who lacked the guardianship of family or husbands.[29] Often living alone, such women were easily accessed for violation. Further, a woman who

lived independently of family, and particularly of male guardians, would have no husband or father whom the court would see as injured by her violation, or who could bring forth and support her case. This augmented her social insignificance, making her case virtually impossible to bring to court. By making the rape of such victims impossible to protest, women who lived independently of male guardians were made vulnerable prey, and their position in life utterly unenviable to other women. The permissability of raping autonomous women in Renaissance Italy thus arguably served a similar function with regards to female independence as the witch hunts which occurred throughout Europe in the following centuries, which, notoriously, targeted and discouraged the existence of exactly the same type of women.

CONCLUSIONS

Rape during the Italian Renaissance has been seen to have been viewed as a minor crime, with the courts showing little concern for violent and coersive acts of a straightforward sexual nature. Only when such acts involved the spillage or transgression of blood, or when they were seen to be against nature (sodomy) or God (sex with Jews or nuns), or to be disturbing the social order (adultery), was greater notice taken. In contradistinction from these acts, straightforward cases of rape were permitted, it has been argued, because they either did not interfere with, or even perpetuated, beneficial social ends, and because they diminished the numbers of more serious sexual infractions. Such an account of rape as it was understood in the Italian Renaissance is, as Ruggiero has noted, in accordance with the views of Sade with respect to this crime. Sade, as Ruggiero cites, observed that the rapist ought not to be penalized for his act since he "has done no more than place a little sooner the object he has abused in the very state in which she would soon have been put by marriage and love." Rape, for Sade, as for Italian Renaissance judges, was on a continuum with marriage, even serving to expediate the process of entering into a socially harmonizing state, and could be socially utile, or at least not socially disturbing. The conjunction of sexuality and violence is normalized, pervasive, and viewed apathetically in sadism, as it seems to have been in the Renaissance. That the analogy between sadism and the phenomena of rape in the Italian Renaissance can be pursued further, will be shown in the following discussion of Foucault's *The History of Sexuality I.*

II. Rape and Sadism in *The History of Sexuality I*

SADISM BEFORE THE INVENTION OF SEXUALITY

The arguments from the first four books of *The History of Sexuality* are familiar: Foucault effectively undermines our belief that we are "other Victorians" whose sexuality is repressed, that it is only with great difficulty that we overcome our socially-inflicted inhibitions and dare to name our desires, whisper the taboo secrets of our sexuality, which, we feel, reveal our individuality, essence, or deepest selves. We think with envy of the Rabelaisian pre-Victorians who were able to speak freely of their sexuality, before the curtain of repression fell which only now, through our valiant efforts to speak (with the aid of analysts), are we beginning to lift. On the contrary, Foucault claims, with the Victorian age and since, nothing has been spoken of more than sexuality, though the forums in which it can be spoken have changed, having been effectively medicalized. One speaks more than ever about one's sexuality, but now in the form of confession to one's priest, or, more importantly, one's doctor, one's psychologist, to the experts, authorities, and statisticians. For those not literally in analysis, those who speak of their sexuality only to their lovers and confidants, Foucault would argue that this whispered speech nevertheless expresses an internalization of the language, concepts, and categories of the sexologists, the network of such discourse being cast wide. As with speech, one likewise writes more than ever about sexuality, but now in two forms which follow those of speech: confessional erotica, on the one hand, and scientific texts, which categorize and normalize, on the other.

The narratives of Sade, along with the masochistic fantasies of nineteenth century English and German-language erotica, the anonymous *Confessions of my Life* and the biographies of Casanova, are all examples of confessional erotica: proofs of the modern compulsion to describe one's desires and experiences exhaustively, which impulse would never have occurred to a fifteenth century writer or libertine. On the other end of the discursive spectrum are the legion of professionals – priests, psychologists, psychiatrists, biologists, sexologists, criminologists and doctors – who take these confessional writings, and the confessions of the clinic, and isolate, label, and diagnose them. Sade and Sacher-

Masoch were among the first to undergo, on the basis of their literary work and involuntarily, such analysis - the latter, to his misfortune and public shame, in his lifetime. Krafft-Ebbing - who, overcoming for the sake of science his disgust and offended decency, coined the terms "sadism" and "masochism," and that odd hybrid, "sadomasochism" - is one of Foucault's examples of the professional sexologists.

In the first sections of *The History of Sexuality I*, the claim is that sadism, like masochism, presbyophilia, hair-despoiling (which perversion Krafft-Ebbing has a particular disapprobation for), homosexuality, mixoscophilia and the other conglommerations of symptoms distilled by the sexual scientists, was not merely named at this point, but through naming, was in a sense produced. The act existed before, but not the type, not the person whose identity pivoted around this name. To schematize: by confessing to an act, a person is labelled accordingly, and then all of his history, activities, inclinations and thoughts are understood (by himself and others) in light of this label, because sexuality has become understood as, even before Freud, the key to an individual's essence. The sexual act one engages in or fantasises thus crystallizes one as a type – a homosexual, a pedophile, a masochist – which one then understands oneself in terms of, and conforms to, become limited by. Even if the psychoanalytic context in which one confesses, to oneself or to an analyst, claims to reform or heal a person of a perversion, it in fact effectively fixes one as that sexual type. What would once have been just an act, now becomes the key to one's being. Thus Foucault writes, "[I]t is possible that the West has not been capable of inventing any new pleasures, and it has doubtless not discovered any original vices. But it has defined new rules for the game of powers and pleasures. The frozen countenance of the perversions is a fixture of this game."[30] Men and women before the modern era may, then, have engaged in acts that would now be called sadistic, masochistic, homosexual or pedophilic, but the person was not a sadist, a masochist, a homosexual or a pedophile. These words did not exist before the nineteenth century because the entities were not there to be named. Accordingly, the person who performed a sadistic or heterosexual act one day, could perform a masochistic or homosexual act the next, or at another stage in his life. Acts were just that, part of the repertoire of available human behaviours, whether forbidden or condoned. Today, on the contrary, the heterosexual does not one day decide to engage in

a homosexual act, at least not without soul-searching before or after, which analysis doubtlessly reveals that he was a homosexual all along, that all his life activities can be understood in this light. Likewise, the sadist does not one day want to be humiliated, or the masochist decide to beat a woman (though as late as the tales of Sacher-Masoch he might). Following soul-searching and confession, scientific discourse tells a person what category s/he belongs to. S/he recognizes this category as her identity, and so stays there, never – or not easily - trespassing on other sexualities. Sadism is nothing new, then, but the sadist is.

These conclusions are easily seen to be sustained by the foregoing discussion of rape in Renaissance Italy. Men were viewed as having a variety of types of sexual activity available to them, ranging from the violent to the non-violent. These most commonly included the rape of women, courtship and consensual affairs, marriage, adultery, and sodomy. The courts attempted to steer men away from the more harmful (in their view) of these, adultery and sodomy, through leniency with regards rape and through the legislative encouragement of marriage. None of these activities, some of which would now define the person involved as a "homosexual" or a "sadist," was viewed as intrinsic to the perpetrator's character. Rather, they were seen as the result of a man's circumstances and stage of life, for instance of a temporary "possession" by passion (as in the case of rape) or the deprivation of more socially acceptable sexual encounters (as in the case of sodomy and adultery). In the absence of legislative discourse which defined a person according to his sexual acts, persons appear to have moved fluidly between what would later come to be understood as "sexualities."

To return to Boccaccio's and Botticelli's *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*, it will be seen in the following chapter that neither Anastagi nor Nastagio, the two protagonists of the tale, is a sadist in the sense that his entire sexuality is defined by this sort of act, though both resort to sadistic demonstrations within the fable. On the contrary, we know that previously each had attempted to woo his beloved in a courtly manner, resorting to violent demonstrations only when this failed. Anastagi is eventually restricted by divinely inflicted punishment to violent acts against his would-be bride, but not because it is inherent in his character to behave in this way. The "countenance" of his behaviour is frozen by celestial decree, not as the result of the sort of sexuality he possesses.

Likewise, there is nothing to indicate that Nastagio will be restrained to Sadean demonstrations within his marriage, just because he resorted to this method once. Sexual acts in Botticelli and Boccaccio, as in the view of Renaissance life which has emmerged from our study, are the products of contextualized scenerios, rather than of the perpetrator's essence.

FROM BLOOD TO SEX: SADISM AND POWER

Part Five of *The History of Sexuality I* does not consider the sadist so much as sadism and the paradigm of power it assumes. In this essay, Foucault describes two models of political power, one dating, with transmutations, from ancient Rome to the seventeenth century, the other from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. The older model of power is defined by Foucault as organized by a symbolics of blood, and being a power of death. The most extreme form of this older symbolics of power would be the *patria potestas* of the father in ancient Rome, which granted the head of the household the right to take the lives of his serfs, wives, and children – all those under his rule – arbitrarily, as he might dispose of any of his possessions. This right of the ruler to take the lives of his subjects was dilluted over the years so that the sovereign could not kill those under his rule randomly, but only if in some way his own life, honour, or property were threatened by an external force or by the subject himself. In such cases, the ruler could demand a subject to give his life in battle to defend him, or he might execute him for his trespass. Power was thus demonstrated through the spilling of blood, and was held by certain persons according to the blood that flowed in their veins: the blood of the sovereign line. As Foucault notes, the only way in which this sovereignty was a power over life was in so far as life might be *seized*. Life could be taken away but, otherwise, little interest was taken in the day-to-day existence and bodies of subjects.

The second form of power which developed in the classical and modern ages, on the contrary, is exerted over life – what Foucault calls "biopower." As opposed to a symbolics of blood, biopower is an analytics of sex. Capital punishment – the sovereign power of the sword, of blood, of death - became less and less acceptable not, for Foucault, because of the birth of humanitarian feelings, but because historic

developments required new forms of control over the minutest aspects of the lives and bodies of subjects. Capitalism, for instance, required the efficient use of docile bodies, and a maximized and controlled production of more docile bodies. This brought about the development of a new form of power which exerted itself over life – the disciplining of the body, the monitoring of sexuality and reproduction, the control of population growth, population management - making the *seizure* of life a scandal, a contradiction. With the power of blood replaced by a power exerted over life, the death penalty became a limit-case, justified only when the person executed posed a biological threat to the population, a threat to life itself, as in cases of high treason or serial murder. Likewise, wars are no longer waged in the name of the sovereign, or the honour of his blood, but in order to defend life more generally, to protect entire peoples – though the result, ironically, with these stepped-up stakes and with the greater docility of the mobilized forces, is more wholesale slaughters than ever before. While the power over life was formerly merely "deductive," in Foucault's words, it now needs to "incite, reinforce, control, monitor, optimize, and organize the forces [of life] under it," and thus became invested in life at its every and minutest levels.[31] As Foucault goes on to note, it was this "taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body."[32]

How does sadism as a form of power fit into this delineation of two paradigms? Because Foucault sees the paradigm of biopower beginning in the seventeenth century and well underway in the eighteenth, we would expect him to situate the work of Sade securely within the second paradigm, which seems fitting of sadism as, one might think, an "analytics of sex" *par excellence*. On the other hand, Marcel Hénaff, a Foucaultian whose work will be discussed extensively in the following chapter, situates sadism on the cusp of two paradigms of power, which he separates according to feudalism and capitalism. Because sadism seems to be a power which is interested in spilling blood *and* in controlling the body, we might expect Foucault to agree with Hénaff, placing sadism between the two paradigms. Like biopower, sadism is a power which, reappropriating Foucault's terms, tends to"qualify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize," *and* it is a power, which, like that of sovereignty, "display[s] itself in its murderous splendor."[33] As will be seen in the following chapter, sadism interests itself in death *and*

in sex, in blood *and* anatomy, is sovereign *and* quasi-capitalistic. Hence either the claim that Sade was a prophet of modernity, or the claim that he was situated at the border of two eras, would have been predictable, and precedented, on Foucault's part. And yet, Foucault's final statement on sadism claims just the opposite.

Ultimately, for Foucault, Sade's interest in sex has nothing in common with the eugenics and disciplining of the body which characterize modernity. "Sex," he claims, is in Sade "without any nature... is subject to the unrestricted law of a power which itself knows no other law but its own."[34] The monitoring, ordering, and control of bodies and sex in Sade is decidedly unproductive, has nothing to do with reproduction and the control of populations, with disciplining bodies on the level of anatomy and biology. Bodies in Sade are disciplined to fit docilely into an erotic machinery, it is true, but not within a framework of managing life, but on the contrary to satisfy the sterile lust for death of libertines whose power is absolute, sovereign, and ultimately justified by their (aristocratic) blood. Foucault thus sees Sade as superficially taking the analytics of sex which he was contemporary with, but pulling it backwards in time onto a model of power which is one of death, through and through. Foucault acknowledges in this section, in a startling shift from his earlier work, the existence of "overlappings, interactions, and echoes" between historic moments. He goes on to use nazism and psychoanalysis as examples of such "interactions." Unlike these latter phenomena of modernity, however, he characterizes sadism less as a hybrid than as an archaic entity almost entirely out of sinc with the historic moment in which it found itself written. Despite the analytics of sex involved, Foucault stresses the bloodiness of the power which sadism entails, recanting his earlier thoughts in *Madness and Civilization* on the subversiveness and modernity of the marquis' texts and practices.[35]

Situating sadism in the Renaissance, and hence under a paradigm of blood rather than sex, is consistent with some of the observations which arose in the foregoing discussion of rape cases in the Italian Renaissance. Foucault claims that during the Renaissance and the paradigm of blood, power was not aimed at infiltrating the beds and bodies of men and women in order to exert control over the minutae of corporeal existence and over population. This position needs to be nuanced, since concern was expressed over birth control practices and even over positions of heterosexual

intercourse. Further, sexual acts which were viewed as contrary to nature, the laws of God, or the interests of civic order – here I am refering to cases of sodomy, sex between (female) Christians and (male) Jews, sex with nuns, and adultery – were also condemned, at least rhetorically, depending on the decade and city in question. Demographic disasters such as famine and plague, prone to being interpreted as the wrath of God at the moral laxity of a city, could result in augmented curtailing of conditions such as the debauchery of nunneries or the prevalence of sodomy in a city. At other moments of demographic growth, however, little interest might be taken in controlling the sexual lives of the population. Even heterosexual and homosexual sodomy, birth control practices, and relations with nuns, might be surprisingly tolerated in a given period so long as they remained discreet. Foucault is certainly correct, in any case, in his assertion that there existed nothing in the Renaissance comparable to the internalized network of power which infiltrated the bodies and beds of the population at its day-to-day and minutest levels in the modern era. The judicial tolerance of rape in the Renaissance is an example of such lack of interest in sex before the shift in paradigm powers which Foucault describes. Further, the manner in which rape *became* of interest to the courts the moment that a trespass of blood was involved, and the greater attention paid to the sanguinary aspect of the crime than the sexual, also sustains Foucault's discussion of paradigms of power.

Preliminarily, then, we may conclude with Ruggiero that Sade may have been sane in the Renaissance, his expressed views of rape being consistently upheld by the decisions of Renaissance courts. Rapes were seen, as in Ruggiero's citation of Sade, to be on a continuum with marriage, and acceptable as such. As mere sex acts, they were not even that interesting, and were thus allowed to proliferate, as in a Sadean dream. Yet a problem arises: the sort of rape case which Sade is refering to in Ruggiero's citation has little in common with the sorts of rapes which frequently occur in his novels. The case in Ruggiero's citation would be what the Renaissance courts would deem "normal," because it involved mere sexuality, and not blood. But Sade's dreams are not just of sex acts. Indeed, we have seen that Foucault views sadism as more significantly sanguinary than sexual, and as such places Sade's writings under the archaic symbolics of blood rather than the modern analytics of sexuality. The crucial aspect of Sadean acts is not the sex

performed but their particular form of violence, of blood-letting and deathliness. As has been seen, Renaissance courts, instruments of power under a paradigm of blood, were not cavalier with crimes which involved sanguinary trespass.

Ruggiero's citation of Sade involves a specific form of rape, one that was acceptable in the Renaissance because it placed, in Sade's words, a woman in a state that she would have been placed anyway by marriage. This means that she is not mutilated, killed, or incestuously raped, as none of these states are entailed by or facilitate marriage. "Normal" rapes rarely occur in Sade's narratives, however. Although Sade kept to Renaissance laws of blood with regard to his nobiliary code (most rapes in Sade, as in the Renaissance, are of working class persons by aristocratic libertines), he makes exception for cases of incest. In such cases, women of aristocratic blood are raped by all variety of relatives, their fathers, their sons, and even, with some help, their daughters. While many other rapes in Sade do not involve incest, the bloodshed involved may be massive. Because Sade's rapes involve transgressions of blood as well as mere sex, Sade would not, in fact, have found his legislative opinions entirely upheld had he lived some centuries earlier. Because Sade's fantasized crimes involved specific lettings and proximities of blood, had he enacted them he would have found himself viewed as incorrigibly criminal, in a manner that mere rapists were not. The difference is that in the Renaissance, it would have been the sanguinary aspects of his crimes that would have made him innately criminal, a threat to society, whereas in the modern era, on the contrary, it is the marquis' sexuality which has been endlessly diagnosed and construed as ill. In the Renaissance, Sade would have been incarcerated, exiled, or killed in order to prevent him from repeating his crimes of blood in a given city, whereas in the era in which he lived, he found himself incarcerated for his perverse sexuality.

CONCLUSIONS

It has been shown that a form of Sadean sexuality, divorced from its transgressively sanguinary side, was prevalant and normalized in Renaissance Italy. It has also been seen that Foucault views the model of power in sadism to be one, less of sexuality, than of blood and death. This symbolics of blood dates, not to Sade's own era, but to the pre- and early modern periods. Some aspects of both the sexuality and the deathliness of

sadism can thus be related to the Renaissance period. Perhaps we could say that the sexuality which is crystallized in Sade was diffuse in the Renaissance, whereas, in an contrary manner, the power of death which remained a sovereign privilege in the Renaissance becomes diffused in Sade, randomized beyond all reason. If we try to situate Sade in modernity, therefore, we find that his sexuality is abnormal and his form of violence archaic, whereas if we place him in the context of the Renaissance, his sexuality is normal and his violence is paradigmatic of Renaissance power, but the latter has been wrenched from the hands of the sovereign and run with unacceptably. In his particular and crystallized juxtaposition of sex and blood, it would be going too far to conclude with Ruggiero that Sade would have been quite sane in the Renaissance, but we may say that his madness would have been viewed as alarming in different ways, punishable for different reasons. The following chapter will consider sadism less as the sexual practice analyzed here, but rather in terms of the formal properties characteristic of its expression as these are manifested in Renaissance art.

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[1] Guido Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1980); Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995): 31.
[2] Ruggiero, *Boundaries of Eros*: 101.
[3] Ibid.: 31.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ruggiero, *Violence In Early Renaissance Venice*: 166.
[6] Ruggiero, *Boundaries of Eros*; see table on page 94.
[7] Ibid.: 102.
[8] Ibid.: 102.
[9] Ibid.: 98.
[10] Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice*: 169.
[11] *Renaissance Encyclopedia:* 214.
[12] Richard Trexler *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence* (Birmingham, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies: 1994): 394, and f. 72.
[13] Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice*: 170.
[14] Ibid.: 164.
[15] David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Tuscans et leurs familles*. (Paris: E.H.E.S.S., 1978).
[16] Ruggiero, *Boundaries of Eros*: 32.
[17] Ibid.
[18] This is seen consistently in the rhetoric surrounding sex crimes discussed by Ruggiero in *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice* and *Boundaries of Eros.*
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ruggiero, *Boundaries of Eros*: 42.
[21] Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice*: 163.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Jacques Roussiaud, *Medieval Prostitution* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

[24] Richard Trexler, "Florentine Prostitution in the Fifteenth Century: Patrons and Clients," in *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence.*
[25] Ibid., f. 4.
[26] Cited in Trexler, Ibid.: 374. f. 4
[27] see Cristelle Baskins, *Cassone painting, humanism, and gender in early modern Italy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998) and Lilian Zirpolo, "Botticelli's *Primavera*: A Lesson for the Bride," in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, edited by Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).
[28] I am thinking of Botticelli's *Primavera*, discussed by Lilian Zirpolo in this light, and *The Birth of Venus*, depicting many of the same figures.
[29] Trexler refers to the "enormous population of unmarriageable females who, as Florentines well knew, were prime candidates for prostitution... this unwanted womanhood was used by the male population of Florence as a source of cheap labor and sex," including forced sex: 411. See also Roussiaud, *Medieval Prostitution.*
[30] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*, tranlated from the French by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1990): 48; originally published in France as *La Volenté du Savoir* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976).
[31] Ibid.: 136.
[32] Ibid.: 143.
[33] Ibid.: 144.
[34] Ibid.: 149.
[35] Ibid.: 150.

Chapter Two: Sadism and Botticelli's *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* Panels

I. Repetitions

A woman is depicted virtually identically three times. Each time she is shown half-running, half-falling in a clearing in a forest, naked, with arms flung in the air, leapt upon by hounds and pursued by a mounted knight. The fourth image of the woman breaks the repetition of action and pose only to show her outstretched on the forest floor as the knight, bent over her prone body, creates a large vertical gash in her back, removing her heart and viscera with his blade and hands, which are then eaten by the dogs. The figure of the knight and his white horse in the first three panels of Botticelli's *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* are likewise painted almost identically in each of these hunt scenes, the horse is posed with front legs in the air and hind legs on the ground, the knight leaning forward on his mount, red cape fluttering behind him, his sword swung diagonally above his head, and within a meter of his victim. The gesture of the naked woman's outflung arms with wrists bent, tilting her hands towards her body, is repeated in the figure of Nastagio in the second and third panels of the story, and in the poses of many of the horrified guests assembled in the third panel. As Georges Didi-Huberman has pointed out, this doubling of actions, poses, and gestures in the four panels, as *spalliere* commissioned for the walls of the Florentine nuptial chamber of Lucrezia Bini and Giovanni Pucci, would have accumulated further as the occupant of the chamber turned around in the room, clockwise and counterclockwise, in a dizzying insistence on the tale's horror and violence.[1] One contemporary visitor to this room and viewer of the works, however, Giorgio Vasari, merely described the four paintings as "full of charm and beauty" ('*molta vaga e bella*').[2] There was an aesthetic pleasure to be had in this visual doubling and redoubling of violence to the body. The following study will consider this visual pleasure according to the properties of an aesthetics of sadism.

The story of Nastagio degli Onesti, illustrated by Botticelli in four panels, is taken from the fifth day of Boccaccio's *Decameron.*[3] The character Nastagio is described as loving unrequitedly a woman of higher social status than his own. In futile attempts to attract her he has spent his patrimony lavishly and fallen into bouts of suicidal

depression, until his friends and family urge him to go away from Ravenna for a time in order to save his remaining wealth and recover emotionally. It is in this retreat that we find him wandering in the forest of Chiassi, contemplating suicide, when he hears terrible screams and sees a woman run into the clearing, pursued by hunting hounds and a mounted knight brandishing a sword. Nastagio, unarmed, nevertheless takes up a branch in an attempt to protect the woman from hounds and hunter. The knight, Guido Anastagi, in a tale which begins by closely following Nastagio's own, explains to his witness that in his lifetime he had loved the woman he is now intent on killing. She had rejected Anastagi in love and so despondent was he that he took his own life, and was damned for this crime. His beloved had remained unrepentant and thus, for her cruelty, had joined him in hell upon her own death, whereupon they were allotted the punishment which Nastagio is witnessing: Anastagi is condemned to hunt the woman he had once loved for as many years as there were months that she scorned him. His hunt of her, however ferocious, is not wild, for Anastagi tells Nastagio that he pursues and kills her in fixed locations where she had once thought or acted cruelly towards him, and at predetermined days and hours of the week. Hence, for instance, every Friday at the hour between eleven and noon he chases and slaughters her in the clearing into which Nastagio had stumbled. After killing her in the pine clearing, he removes her cold heart and other entrails with the blade which had been the instrument of his suicide, feeding these viscera to his hounds, after which his beloved comes back to life, arises, and the terrible hunt begins again, the damned pair moving to other predetermined sites at other times to enact further scenes of terror and pain. Upon finishing his tale, Anastagi takes up his sword and runs furiously at the young woman. She is described by Boccaccio as lying on the ground, her face against the earth, screaming and crying as her rejected suitor cuts her back open from one side to the other, removing her internal organs and throwing them to the dogs. As foretold, Nastagio then sees the dead woman rejuvenate, rise up, and begin to run again, screaming, the hounds and knight fast on her heels, until they are out of sight.

These are the scenes we see in the first two Botticelli paintings, each of which represents several moments in the tale within a single panel. [figs. 1, 2] In the first picture, we see in the background to the far left a tiny group of figures standing in front

of the tents which Nastagio has had installed in the forest for his retreat. One tree separates this narrative moment from the next, in which Nastagio wanders despondently in the forest, eyes downcast, preoccupied with thoughts of his scorned love or perhaps of suicide. Another tree away we see Nastagio reaching for a branch in order to intervene in the scene taking place on the right hand side of the panel, that of the knight and dogs closing in on the fleeing and falling woman who was Anastagi's beloved. As Christina Olsen notes, while Boccaccio describes Nastagio as horrified by what he sees and taking up the branch in order to defend the woman, Botticelli depicts him as curiously calm and "sluggish," apathetic as he picks up the bough, which he seems to aim at the woman as if half-heartedly to ward her off rather than using it to beat back the hounds or the knight.[4] The sense we have from the painting is not so much that the woman has found an unexpected protector in the clearing, therefore, but that she is surrounded by aggressors, the hounds and knight bearing down on her from behind while Nastagio bars her escape and threatens her with a stick from in front.

As the fable continues in the second panel, time is divided both from right to left and from foreground to background. To the right in the foreground we see Nastagio gesturing in alarm as Anastagi kills and removes the viscera from the prone and naked woman in the central section of the picture, while to the left we see the dogs eating the entrails which the knight has thrown to them. In the background, we see that the hunt has begun again, as the chase scene in the foreground of the first panel is telescoped, the direction of action turned from left to right, in the distance of the second painting.

Though described by Boccaccio as terrified by the vision he has seen, his hair standing on end, Nastagio immediately sees a useful end to his experience. Quickly recovering from whatever trauma the vision from hell may have caused him, he calculatingly thinks to mark the spot where it had enfolded before leaving the clearing. He then organizes yet another lavish banquet for his beloved and other guests to attend, this time to take place on a Friday in the place in the forest where he has witnessed the horrible punishment of the damned pair. As planned, the meal is interrupted when the knight and his hounds bound into the clearing in chase of their victim. Once more, Anastagi forestalls the murder for a moment in order to explain his actions to the people he finds in the clearing. He then slaughters the woman, feeds her heart to his dogs, and

recommences the hunt of his quickly revived victim. As Nastagio had anticipated, his beloved recognizes the parallels between her situation and that of the damned woman, and changes her ways in order to avoid the other woman's fate, agreeing to marry Nastagio. Boccaccio notes that in addition to this capitulation on the part of Nastagio's bride, all the women of Ravenna, having seen or heard of the events in the forest, were thereafter more docile than they had been in the past to the pleasures of men.

In the fourth and final panel of Botticelli's series, corresponding to these happy developments from the perspective of patriarchy, we see the wedding feast of Nastagio and his bride, accompanied by many elegant men and ladies of Ravenna. The guests sit in two symmetrical rows, served by willowy, liveried servants who graciously hold sumptuous dishes of food aloft, beneath the architectural canopy of a loggia of Corinthian capitals, in the single image of the series that does not seem anachronous to Vasari's description of the work as a whole as "charming" and "full of grace." The third and fourth panels thus both portray meals, with an assembly of guests seated around tables draped in white cloth. [figs. 3, 4] In the third panel, however, the guests have leaped from their seats in horror, spilling the contents of plates and goblets, gesturing wildly, as the hunt scene which we have already seen depicted in the foreground of the first panel and the background of the second is once more played out in the centre of the picture. By contrast, in the final painting, that of the wedding feast, the forest clearing is replaced by a harmonious architectural structure, the guests remain seated and composed, no gory interuption occurs, and the meal is shown proceeding in an orderly fashion.

The repetition which Botticelli has inscribed formally on his paintings through reiteration of poses and gestures is also a crucial element of the textual source, in ways which Botticelli could not convey pictorially. Reading Boccaccio, we find that the story of Nastagio's troubled love affair resonates in Anastagi's tale, while the very names of the two male protagonists echo one another. Furthermore, repetition proves to be characteristic of the punishment of the knight and his beloved: the act of violence is not only the same every time, but occurs always at the same day of the week and hour and in the same place. Unable to convey visually the repetition of names and days of the week, Botticelli, on the other hand, brings in new doublings across his panels which would be unspecifiable in a written text. For instance he chooses to show the horse suspended each

time at the exact same point in his gallop, to catch the swing of Anastagi's sword and the bent of multiple characters' wrists at the exact same angles in each scene, freezing the woman's pose between running and falling, the billowing of her scant veil and her hunter's cape, identically each time. Furthermore, Botticelli creates a resonance between two lavish feast scenes in the third and fourth panels, whereas Boccaccio left the nature of the wedding festivities unspecified.

In addition, repetitions or resonances between art and life were carefully orchestrated by the painting's commissioner, Antonio Pucci, father of the groom: the final panel represents a wedding feast, and, according to fifteenth century Tuscan marital traditions, Lucrezia Bini and Giovanni Pucci would have come to the room decorated with the panels for the first time together to consummate their marriage after just such a celebratory banquet.[5] A likely portrait of Antonio Pucci is found in the man in black in the third panel, just as Antonio would have attended the real-life wedding banquet which the panels echo. Furthermore, Lucrezia's family, like that of Nastagio's beloved, was of a higher social status than that of her upwardly-mobile husband, the Pucci family being merchants of the lesser guilds in Florence who, having found favour with the Medicis, were newly affluent and able to arrange marriages to families such as the Bini for the first time.[6] The coats of arms of the bride and groom's families are prominently placed, along with that of the Medici, in the third and fourth panels representing banquets, making the connection between the Pucci-Bini marriage and that of Nastagio and his bride explicit. That Lucrezia Bini is meant to associate with the coersion inflicted on Nastagio's bride, and the violence done to her even less fortunate counterpart, is also made clear by the manner in which Anastagi's sword cuts across the Bini coat of arms which hangs on a tree. Thus, in a not very subtle phallic symbolism, the bride's standard is impaled by the weapon of her groom's counterpart. The caution which these panels give to the Bini bride against possible resistance or class arrogance towards her husband, and the gratification that the fable provides the groom and other male members of his family, who were the works' patrons, is thus clear. With such a gendered ideological content, the cruelty of the depictions is perhaps not so "unheard of" as Didi-Huberman exclaims. Indeed, nuptial decorations, depicting such ideologically-laden, misogyny-saturated scenes as the rape and the suicide of Lucretia, the battles and rapes of the Amazons and

the Sabines, and the murder of Virginia by her father, though normally less insistently gory than the Pucci commission, often provided brides with bloody warnings as to their expected comportment.[7] What shall be examined in the following discussion, therefore, are not so much the ideological or social purposes of Boccaccio's tale and its depiction by Botticelli, but the formal characteristics and related psychic functions of the violence portrayed, which violence Didi-Huberman has described as "*cruauté tranchante, répetée, sadique, insistante.*"[8]

II. The Aesthetics of Sadism

"Cutting," "repeated," and "insistent," are the adjectives which Didi-Huberman juxtaposes with "sadistic," which qualities are analyzed as narrative and formal elements of sadism by authors such as Gilles Deleuze, Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, Georges Bataille, and Marcel Hénaff.[9] As shall be seen in the following sections, the repetition, the obsessive and monotonous insistence on certain narrative elements and descriptions, and the depiction of cutting, of the body opened, vivisection and dismemberment, and the desacrilization of the symbolic body - all of which are so apparent in the Botticelli panels - are traits of Sade's texts and the aesthetics of sadism.

THE SADEAN BODY

The first odd thing about the body of Anastagi's victim, as Didi-Huberman observes, is that she is naked for no apparent reason. Anastagi has arrived in hell not in customary Quattrocento Tuscan apparel, but rather in antique Roman armour such as the god Mars was often represented wearing in Roman statuary.[10] He is thus elevated in attire upon his arrival in hell, so why did his beloved arrive without her clothes? If this is part of her punishment, it should be remembered that Anastagi is supposedly being punished too. Though her mortal crime was merely a cold heart, his crime – self-murder - is apparently greater, and yet he seems to be rewarded the pleasures of vindication against his tormentor as well as honorific raiment, whereas the woman is stripped and much more clearly punished. That Anastagi's penalty is scarcely fearful is clear from Boccaccio's tale: there is no mention of Nastagio deriving a lesson from what he sees, of realizing

that he must refrain from committing suicide in order to avoid Anastagi's fate. On the contrary, he benefits from observing Anastagi's actions and achieves his amorous aims as a result. Moreover, he receives a vicarious pleasure in seeing a *Doppelgänger* of his beloved punished for her cruelty. Nakedness seems to be an added humiliation inflicted on the female party alone. It serves to augment her exposure to the punishment which is her divinely-inflicted fate, and yet it is scarcely necessary for these purposes given her already excessively vulnerable situation.

This nudity, inexplicable, therefore, in terms of the demands of the narrative, is explained by Didi-Huberman in terms of the famous dream in which one finds oneself in public having forgotten to get dressed, a dream which Freud analyzed.[11] Didi-Huberman thus compares the third Botticelli panel, in which the woman is slaughtered naked in the midst of Nastagio's banquet, with a nineteenth century print in which a woman arrives naked at a card-party on the arm of a well-dressed gentleman, to the amazement of the bourgeois card players. This is a somewhat incongruous juxtaposition of images but is consistent with Didi-Huberman's desire to read Botticelli's oeuvre in terms of Freud's study of dream interpretation. And yet, the gaucheness of arriving at a banquet naked seems to be the least of Boccaccio's woman's problems. Didi-Huberman's interpretation presumes that the dreamer is identifying with the victim of the hunt, but were this the case, surely the dreamer would be more preoccupied with the impression of being bitten by hounds and charged by an armed and mounted knight, than with the humiliation of having this done to her naked and in public. On the contrary, taking the aesthetic analysis of sadism as our starting point, rather than Freud's model of dream interpretation, it will be argued that the viewer identifies not with the victim of the hunt but the hunter, as Deleuze shows that the gathering momentum of sadistic depictions and the absense of speech on the part of the victim forces the spectator or reader to identify, not with the person tortured, but with the active and expressive torturer, unlike in masochism.[12] The woman is naked, it will be argued, not because Boccaccio or Botticelli was expressing some remnant of a dream in which he forgot to get dressed, but because these panels function at least partially according to a sadistic aesthetic, and the Sadean body is naked by definition.

Roland Barthes writes, "In Sade, there is no striptease... Here, perhaps, is the reason. The striptease is a narrative: it develops in time the terms ('classemes') of a code which is that of the Enigma... Now, in Sade there is no bodily secret to seek, but only a practice to achieve."[13] The body in Sade is never enigmatic but always already naked. If it is not already naked, the sadist commands the victim to undress, at once. This must be accomplished for the Sadean narrative to begin. Undressing is thus not part of the sadistic sexual scenerio, but its prerequisite. Consequently, there is no fetishism or voyeurism in sadism either, with due respect to film theorists since Laura Mulvey.[14] There is no fetishism in sadism because no part of the body is either unsymbolizable or idealized, no part ever replaced by anything else. There is no voyeurism because entire visual mastery is already assumed as part of the sadist's possession of the body, whereas voyeurism suggests only oblique visual access and no physical possession. The sadist is the master of the gaze as of everything else and hence never put in the degrading position of a peeping tom. Everything must be offered immediately to his eye, never revealed in tantalizing bits or through the furtive, key-hole glimpses with which the masochist satisfies himself.

Describing this entire lack of privacy, intimacy, and secrecy in sadistic narratives, Hénaff claims that visuality in Sade is a sort of "erotic panopticon" in which "exposure is total."[15] There is no "hermeneutical coquetry" as the body is immediately placed in tables of desire, symbolized, as a body, literally: as anatomical parts. As such, Hénaff compares the "libertine eye" at once to that of the anatomist and to that of "a skilled, hurried butcher" who "carves up the prime cuts, paying no attention to the offal."[16] The move from complete visual access to the body, to its physical possession, to its butchery and offal, is apparent in Botticelli's panels. That nothing is unspeakable, unrepresentable, or unsymbolizable about the body, is likewise clear in the very theme and showing of the naked female body's vivisection: her body, beyond being merely naked, is exposed and *opened* for the masterful eye of the spectator, without the slightest hint of prudishness, apology, or disgust. Indeed, the dismemberment of the body seems to function as part of the desirability of the depiction, just as in Sade the internal (normally taboo) functions of the body are of even greater delight than the smooth surface of the skin.

The hunt of the woman, her murder, which, as shall be discussed below, simulates a rape, and moreover her *vivisection*, are described by Didi-Huberman as "*d'une cruauté inouïes*."[17] Yet we see images in the Renaissance of human beings, such as Actaeon, being hunted, and depictions of killings and rapes are commonplace. What is most unusual here, then, if not unheard of, is surely the vivisection. The only other context in which something like this would have be seen in Renaissance visual culture, other than in rare and extreme cases of public corporal punishment, would have been in anatomical drawings and models. Indeed, Didi-Huberman, having moved in his book, *Ouvrir Vénus*, from a discussion of the curious *hardness* of Botticelli's most famous Venus, the apparently *sealed* body of *disegno*, to an account of the artist's *opened* bodies, such as the hunted woman in the Nastagio panels, leaves the artist at this point to discuss eighteenth century medical Venuses. He thus finds a relation between Botticelli's bodies and these life-size female dolls, objects of science rather than art, that could be opened to reveal anatomically correct and grotesque interiors. This path from the aesthetics of the sealed and contained body, to the dispassionately scientific revelation of its unaestheticized interior, can also be traced in terms of the Sadean body, which Hénaff describes as a "short circuiting of the body of literature and that of science," and as "defined by its plastic outlines, classified by its anatomical elements… the body literally, to the letter."[18] Hénaff hastens to add that by describing the Sadean body as the body "literally," he does not mean the body "naturally," or a "primitive" body, but the body of science or of the slaughterhouse. The Sadean body is hence simultaneously a body contained or sealed by "plastic outlines," and a body which opens, comes apart, of offal and excrement.

This seems to express the tension in Botticelli's images between the hard, cold, and lifeless impenetrability of bodies, which has been associated since Vasari with the artist's training as a goldsmith, and the frequent insistance on their opening or dismemberment, of their gory penetration. Didi-Huberman thus speaks of the castration of the sky in *The Birth of Venus*, of the startling and unusually confrontational depiction of the headless trunk of Holofernes in *The Discovery of the Body of Holofernes*, of the opened bodies in the *Purgatory* and *Hell*, as well as the dissection of the female figure in the *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*. The same body in Botticelli can be curiously impermeable and frightfully permeated. The hunted woman in the Nastagio panels does

not seem to be of flesh and blood, and yet we see her flesh torn open and her bloody entrails fed to dogs. This is the mechanized, functional body of Sade: it takes the poses of suffering, and yet we do not identify with this pain. We observe the woman in the Nastagio panels gesture and scream as though fearful and pained, and yet revive and begin to run again, as if she has felt and suffered nothing. In Sade, the same body may not revive and be tortured anew, but it is discarded and replaced by another body, which will do just as well in the repetitious mechanical operations of sadistic pleasure. The organization and mechanization of pain, serves to deprive the body of soul or depth. The body is desacrilized by having its agony displayed and classified dispassionately. Just as the notion of the self's organic unity is shattered through the cutting up and quantification of parts in Sade, so the related belief in this body as a manifestation of interiority becomes untenable as the body's suffering is repeatedly used and discarded.

SADISTIC INSTRUCTION: THE BRIDE'S LESSON

A lesson, it has been seen, is being given to the bride, whether we mean the future bride of Nastagio degli Onesti as she observes her counterpart's fate, or Lucrezia Bini as she takes in the décor of her new environs.[19] There is nothing surprising about the content of this lesson from a gendered Renaissance perspective: submit. What is perhaps more interesting for the present purposes is the pedagogical *method* of the lesson, or how it is conveyed. Boccaccio devotes but one sentence to describing the change of heart of Nastagio's beloved: "So great was the terror aroused in the lady by this spectacle that in order to avoid a similar fate herself, she changed her hatred into love." As Didi-Huberman notes, the authenticity of this "love" is somewhat unconvincing. Nastagio's bride, the daughter of Paolo Traversari (who we are told is beautiful but whose own name, as is typical of Renaissance nuptial discourse, we are not told), has not been wooed or persuaded. She has not grown to love Nastagio. Rather, it has been demonstrated to her through violence that it is imperative that she feign to do so, that she submit to his will. As Gilles Deleuze notes in his discussion of the language of Sade and Masoch, the masochist – who is just as manipulative as the sadist – proceeds towards his ends through education and persuasion, whereas the sadist instructs or demonstrates.[20] Both the masochist and the sadist take unwilling partners, but the masochist takes the time to

convince his partner to participate in his desires, which she is eventually persuaded to do for love. The sadist, on the other hand, instructs his victim of the imperative logic of submitting to him, and the submitting follows hard upon the lesson, without the temporal lag of masochism. The demonstration is carried out through violence as well as speech. As commentators note, the sadist speaks incessantly, while the victim is silent throughout the narrative, granted only a final scream of pain or death. The sadist is not disturbed by the violence: he is apathetic towards suffering but admiring of the elegance of the demonstration entailed. The object of the demonstration, even if she submits to its logic, remains fundamentally unpersuaded and unconsenting. That she does not love the sadist, that she submits out of fear, does not deter him. Indeed, it increases his pleasure. The sadist's *jouissance*, then, is first taken in the beauty of the logic of his demonstration, and second in its reward: the action taken upon the subordinated but nevertheless unwilling partner. As one of Sade's libertines exclaims, "I have proved it theoretically. Let us now put it into practice."[21]

Boccaccio claims that Nastagio feels appalled by what he sees, and yet he is described as entering into a discussion with Anastagi while the woman beside him is being mauled by hunting hounds. As in sadistic narratives, long-winded instructive and descriptive speech acts continue alongside outrageous violence, indeed commenting upon it. Like Sade's victims, Anastagi's beloved is given no words, tells no story of her own which might have contributed to our identifying or empathizing with her, but we are told that she screams as she lies on the earth. After his discussion with Anastagi, Nastagio steps back and watches the slaughter, perhaps already calculating how he can put this infernal encounter to good use. His hair may stand on end, but he immediately sees a way to employ the experience, and, marking the spot, begins to arrange his demonstration for his would-be bride.

As noted, Botticelli shows Nastagio looking quite complacent when he first witnesses the hunt of Anastagi's beloved in the first panel. In the second panel he flings his arms up in alarm, but by the third panel, as the hunter and prey surge into the clearing where the banquet is taking place, Nastagio's gestures have become instructive. As his guests leap from their seats in horror, Nastagio stands directly in front of the place where the woman's vivisection will take place and with his arms and glance seems to tell the

assembled company to calm themselves and pay attention to what they are about to witness. His look and didactic gesture are directed particularly towards the daughter of Paolo Traversari, at whom this demonstration is most explictly targeted, though, as Boccaccio notes, all the women of Ravenna are chastened. The methodology of instruction which takes place within the text and painting, and without, if we consider the function of the latter within the Pucci palace in Florence, is thus characterizable as Sadean.

REPETITION, MIRRORS, SPACE AND TIME

Coming into Madame de Sainte-Ange's boudoir, Sade has Eugénie ask why there are so many mirrors. Her instructor pragmatically replies, "*C'est pour que, répétant les attitudes en mille sens divers, elles multiplient à l'infini les mêmes jouissances aux yeux de ceux qui les goûtent sur cette ottomane.*"[22] ("It is so that, repeating the attitudes in a thousand diverse ways, they multiply infinitely the same pleasures in the eyes of those who taste them on this ottoman.") As Barthes and Hénaff have remarked, mirrors are never singular in Sadean texts, for the individual's reflection in such a singular mirror tends to be a trope for the soul or interiority, which are evacuated from sadism in its exclusive interest in the anatomical body. The function of the mirror in sadism is always, rather, to be multiple, creating a repetition of the same gestures and poses across multiple surfaces in the room. Such mirroring resonates with the aesthetic effect of the repeated scenes, poses, and gestures of Botticelli's Nastagio panels as they would have functioned in their original location, installed in the four walls of a single chamber. If this was the bed chamber, as seems to have been the case, the function of the already-noted repetition in the four panels is well-described by Madame de Sainte-Ange as *multiplient à l'infini les mêmes jouissances aux yeux de ceux qui les goûtent sur cette ottomane.*

If the images produced by Botticelli mirror and double each other across the room, repetition is just as omnipresent in sadistic time as in space. Hénaff defines time within Sadean poetics as "only the sum of its repetitions." Likewise we have seen that the tale as told by Boccaccio entails a repetition of the hunt at the exact same hours of the day and days of the week for a predetermined number of years. As Hénaff writes of the

sadistic narrative, "It could all continue, or it could start all over again. The ending is as arbitrary as any other sequence."[23]

The function of repetition in sadism is multifold. In part, it reinforces each of the other poetic devices which have been or will be analyzed. For instance, repetition serves the desire to quantify and ennumerate actions in sadism, in that it provides a manifold of each act and pose which can then be categorized and tallied. Likewise, repetition accords with the impulses towards both order and excess: actions are clearly controlled through their repetition, the monotonous accumulation of which nevertheless becomes immoderate, leading to dissipation, absurd expenditure, and exhaustion. The mechanization of the body and its suffering is also entailed in repetition: one sadist dreams of a torture that is so mechanistic that it will continue unabated even when he sleeps, just as the torment of Anastagi's victim continues, we are aware, even as she leaves Nastagio's and our sight, and even as the inhabitants of the Pucci chamber sleep. On a deeper level, repetition can be traced to sadism's relation to the death drive, repetition of painful acts being indeed the "clue" which led to Freud's discovery of this destructive impulse.[24]

SADEAN SPACE AND THE GAZE: SCHEMA AND THEATRE

It has already been seen that the space created by Botticelli's Nastagio panels as they were originally hung can be characterized as Sadean in terms of the repetitions of gestures and acts which were mirrored between them. Other Sadean aspects of the space Botticelli creates are their schematization and theatricality.

Scenes are often described in Sade as "tableaux," which Hénaff understands simultaneously in the senses of an artistic engraving and a scientific schema. As a schema, space is logically divided and bodies laid out within it as if in a scientific table. Similarly, as an engraving, bodies are placed in the space of the gaze, which space is divided up in a way which prefigures the cutting of the bodies which is part of the sadistic narrative. In such a way we have seen that the narrative moments of the Nastagio fable logically unfold temporally in terms of a horizontal and vertical grid, divided by trees and picture planes, which spacial splicing is repeated by the cutting of the woman's body. Bodies in the Sadean narrative are offered up in poses, which repeat themselves,

serving to distance the viewer from the objects of the gaze and make identification or empathy impossible, just as, it could be argued, the viewer finds her potential empathy with Anastagi's victim curiously inhibited by the quasi-scientific gaze the panel seems to require. There is no question in Botticelli, as Didi-Huberman puts it, "*d'une identification immédiate: se dresser fièrement avec l'arbre, hurler avec le vent, etc..*"[25] ("of an immediate identification: standing proudly by the tree, screaming with the wind, etc.").

The frozen nature of scientific tables and engravings is ultimately illusory in the case of sadism, however, which involves excessive and repeated activity. The staged engraving, therefore, is quickly animated into the stage of a theatre, various analysts recognizing the theatricality of sadism and sadistic space, and Sade himself identified his characters as "actors" in a theatrical scene.[26] Within the Sadean stage, the poses of figures remains emblematic rather than empathetic. Not only the poses of bodies are theatrical, but also the locations and landscapes of Sade's tales are described as appearing like sets, a series of "painted backdrops ready to descend from the rafters and frame the narrative."[27] The stageyness of Botticelli's three forest backdrops is immediately apparent, both Olsen and Didi-Huberman commenting upon it, and is probably one of the reasons the work is often assumed to have been painted by the artist's workshop with little actual assistance from the "master." Olsen notes that the musicians seated to the right at Nastagio's banquet in the third panel register little alarm upon the intrusion of the knight, hounds, and screaming woman, seeming to imply that they had been forewarned of the spectacle that Nastagio has staged. Olsen thus compares the premeditated and spectacular interuption of the forest banquet to the fifteenth century practice of holding theatrical performances, accompanied by music, between courses at elaborate court meals. The very theatricality of the hunt scene thus reverberates once more with the immediate experiences of the panels' intended viewers.[28]

Viewing the stage-like properties of the panels in a different light, Didi-Huberman describes the odd transitions of backdrops from one panel to the next, supposedly the same forest clearing, feeling the first panel "*toute hérisée de ramures brisées*" ("bristling with broken branches" and the second "*déchirer littéralement... comme une plaie ou comme un rideau de theâtre*"[29] ("tearing literally, like a wound or like a theatre

curtain"). The theatricality and supressed violence of the landscapes thus echo and yet make less credible the staged poses and violent destruction of the bodies before them.

ORDER AND THE SADEAN SCRIPT

The hyperbolical order in Sade's narratives has often been commented on. Everything in Sade is controlled, measured, quantified, and innumerated, whether it be number of ejaculations, quantity of ejaculate, number of victims, length and circumference of genitals, depth of penetration, or number of times each act is carried out. Every orgy is choreographed beforehand and tallied and recorded afterwards. The sadist is never carried away or enthusiastic, but apathetically enacts his script according to plan. Hénaff notes, however, that this imposition of order depends upon and occurs within a certain amount of chaos. Order is only established through the wildest and most excessive of violences and outrages, through desecrations that occassionally come close to undermining the complete mastery of the sadist, who is left dissheveled, spent, and – importantly - hungry.

This tension between order and chaos can be seen in Botticelli's and Boccaccio's accounts of the tale of Nastagio degli Onesti. For instance, Anastagi is described galloping wildly in pursuit of his prey on two occassions, both times to pause in his endeavor in order to calmly recount his story and describe the acts he is about to commit to the bystanders he finds in the clearing. He tells of the ferocious acts they are about to witness in the coolest of terms. For instance, Boccaccio has Anastagi describe his murder and dissection of his beloved in the following way: "that… heart… I tear from her body along with her other entrails, as you will see presently, and give them to these dogs to devour." "*That heart*" and "*as you will see presently*," show again the demonstrative nature of sadism, and the non-voyeuristic demand that everything be seen. Most striking, though, is the cold complacency of this aside. From this calm and instructive mode, Anastagi leaps back into furiously violent but predetermined action. Similar to Anastagi's apathy is the calmness with which Nastagio greets the scene in the first panel, lethargically lifting a branch with no expression upon his face. Formally, these scenes of apathy and restraint, juxtaposed with wild violence and dramatic gestures, spilled goblets

and falling bodies, take place on grid-like panels organized along horizontal and vertical axes, exemplifiying the curious tension between excess and order in Sadean texts.

The imposition of order on disorder and the establishment of mastery through chaos, is narratively inscribed by Boccaccio in terms of the nature of the punishment to which the unfortunate spectral couple have been damned. Though the hunt is frantic and agonized, it has been seen that it occurs always in the same locations on the same days of the week and at the same hours of the day, according to a divine plan. Likewise, Sade's orgies, however excessive, are predetermined by and follow the script of the libertine, ultimately establishing his mastery through the very extravagence of the outrages that have occured. In the same fashion, the excessive acts of the first three panels lead to the harmonious scene we see in the fourth panel. Marriage, epitomizing, in the Renaissance, the establishment of order and mastery, is thus founded in the Boccaccio and Botticelli narratives on prior moments of outrageous violence.

This founding of orderly nuptials on acts of frenzied violence was, as we have seen in the previous chapter, a common Renaissance trope both in art and myth: the social order of the Roman state was mythologized and frequently depicted in nuptial commissions as being established through the savage rapes of the Sabine women, and then of Lucretia. The former violence led to the institution of marriage in Italy and the population of Rome, whereas the latter act of cruelty, followed by the drama of the victim's suicide, led to the restructuring of that population as a republic. Furthermore, as discussed above, violent rapes frequently led to real-life marriages in Renaissance society. This aspect of the sadistic narrative of the Nastagio degli Onesti story would therefore have been unsurprising to Renaissance eyes.

THE TRIUMPH OF EVIL

Related to the establishment of social harmony through outrageous violence, found in the transition from the banquet scene in the third panel of Botticelli's series to that in the fourth panel, is what could be called, at the risk of understatement, the immorality of sadism. "[U]tterly odious, intolerable, to be rejected unconditionally," in the Sadean universe, evil – far from being punished - is rewarded.[30] Hénaff writes, "Evil – murder, rape, theft, torture, betrayal – triumphed, definitely."[31] In the Nastagio tale, a woman's

torture and murder, taking the form, as shall be discussed below, of a rape, and (in terms of position) of an "unnatural" sexual act by Renaissance standards, and Nastagio's machiavellian manipulation of the scene of divine punishment, result in his triumph over his unwilling bride. Nastagio has his desire, and his sexual gratification, as the result of this most painful scene, the agony of another. Likewise, while Anastagi is supposedly being punished for his suicide, his penalization, as has been noted, seems quite gratifying. He has, repeatedly, the satisfaction of avenging himself upon the woman who scorned him, and of doing so in a way which entails a possession and penetration of her prone and naked body. In a sense, like Nastagio, he achieves his desire, in however macabre a way, through what would normally be considered immoral actions: terrorization, torture, rape and murder. As a "lesson for the groom," violence is thus shown, as in the Sadean text, to be gratifying, useful, and unpunished.

RAPE AND STERILITY

Christina Olsen has convincingly argued that Renaissance viewers of Botticelli's panels would have understood the depiction of Anastagi bending over the prostrate and unclothed body of a woman as a reference to sexual intercourse.[32] Didi-Huberman also associates the scene of murder with a rape.[33] In particular, as Olsen further points out, because the female figure is lying on her stomach, the reference would have been to the 'retro' position of intercourse, which was condemned as bestial, unnatural for humans, and sterile. Despite the large vaginal wound that Anastagi is creating in his victim's back, through which he is penetrating her body with his knife, a reference to sodomy could also have been made by the positions of the figures. Sodomy, including heterosexual sodomy within the context of marriage, was condemned in the Renaissance as being, like the 'retro' position, illicit and sterile, though it seems to be the case that married couples occassionally controled their number of offspring in this way.[34] If Botticelli sought to bring to mind notions of illicit sexuality and sterility through the suggestive positions in which he placed the bodies of the spectral couple, reference to fruitless union is likewise inscribed in Boccaccio's text. As Olsen notes, the names of the damned couple, Anastagi and Traversari, are taken from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, in which they refer to family lines which died out through lack of heirs.[35]

Sexuality in sadism is contrived to be sterile. In Sade's *La philosophie dans le boudoir*, one of the first points underscored by Dolmancé and Madame de Sainte-Ange as they instruct an apprentice libertine is that the purpose of their activities is debauchery and never generation. As Madame de Sainte-Ange tells Eugénie, "*une jolie fille ne doit s'occuper que de* foutre *et jamais d'*engendrer" ("a pretty girl should occupy herself only with come and never with engendering"). As discussed by Lucienne Frappier-Mazur, mothers are the ultimate victims of Sade's libertines: pregnant women have their stomachs crushed and their children torn from the womb, and one mother is punished for her reproductivity by having her fertile womb injected with syphillus.[36] Further, the more illicit the manner of intercourse the more it excites the libertine, anality, as Freud notes, being privileged in the sadistic imagination because it is the first site of control for the child. Madame de Sainte-Ange expresses her excitement upon hearing that Dolmancé is not merely a celebrated atheist, but of the most immoral sort, and a "*sodomite par principe*" as well. Theologically-condemned and non-generative sexual positions are therefore privileged in sadist representations of intercourse. Unsurprisingly, the passive partners in these encounters are frequently unconsenting, as is, of course, the victim of Guido Anastagi.

III. The Economics of Sadism

Just as important as aesthetics, poetics, or narrative devices to a study of sadism or masochism, is a study of "economics." Indeed, it is primarily in these terms that sadism and masochism are considered by Freud. In his essay, "The Economic Problem of Masochism," for instance, the two perversions are examined in terms of the manner in which they manage excitation among the three drives which rule psycho-sexual activity: the death or Nirvana principle, the pleasure principle, and the reality principle.[37] The ways in which stimuli are allotted among these instinctual drives is thought of in terms of accumulation and expenditure of sums of tension, the pragmatics of postponing the discharge of stimulus, and so forth. For writers such as Barthes and Hénaff, who, unlike Freud, are interested not in clinical cases of sadism but in the study of Sadean texts, we find that consumption and expenditure, the replenishment and discharge of energy and

excitation, are likewise crucial to an analysis of the functionings of sadism. The "energy" which Freud is concerned with is tension, anxiety, and sexual excitation. With Sade and his literary and philosophic analysts, the concern is even more pragmatic or corporeal, the "sums" which are at stake being quantities of libertine semen. Given the rigourous physical stress placed upon the libertine body in texts constituted by repeated scenes of sexual excess, each libertine taking multiple partners and victims, the manner in which the libertines' energy is to be conserved such that they can continue is, indeed, a crucial question. Thus it is interesting but not suprising that, despite the extravagence of the orgies, Sade's libertines consistently withhold their orgasm, having as few as possible, and speak of semen always in terms of a "loss" or "cost." Despite their uncharacteristic parsimony in this respect, however, the libertine must eventually spend his or her semen, for it is the *jouissance* of the libertine body which is the object of the Sadean text. The expenditure must then be recuperated, however, for the serial nature of the sadistic narrative to be achieved. Thus, as Hénaff notes, although most authors find no need to reassure their readers that their characters are not starving, with Sade we always know precisely what the libertines are eating and how much of it (and the quantities, with as many as a hundred courses, are necessarily as excessive as the orgies). That rich meals serve to replenish sums of semen is frequently underscored by the Marquis de Sade. Every Sadean orgy is thus preceded and followed by a feast, with pauses for snacks, and, according to Hénaff, the scenes of feasting are no less Sadean or integral to the text than those of sexual debauchery:

> The moment of the meal is not a secondary decorative narrative element: on the contrary, it is a powerful narrative moment insofar as the libertine body is the narrative's only subject... the representation of the meal, by saving the body, saves the narrative itself. There is, then, a formal (textual, narrative) need to represent the meal, but it is at the same time an economic need: the meal restores the reserves as soon as they have been spent.[38]

Juliette tells us: "A delicious collation, which we took entirely naked, soon restored to us the strength necessary to begin afresh."[39] The repetition in Sade, which entails expenditure of resources (energy, semen), hence requires the representation of alimentary consumption, the restoration of the body and the replenishment of semen. The consumption, like the expenditure, is exorbitant.

The primary economic unit of Sade's texts is thus the libertine body, the strength of which, as its capital, it is the texts' function to monitor in terms of distribution, investment, expenditure, and renewal. Energy to go on with the orgies, and reserves of semen, are not, however, the only capital the libertine requires: cash and property are also imperative if the libertine is to have access to a multitude of passive bodies, fortified spaces in which to keep them, and quantities of food to waste. That the finances – semen, money, and food – are *wasted* is likewise crucial, for, as we have seen, sadism is fundamentally sterile, or, more generally speaking, nonproductive. The money and food that are invested in the libertine body, and the sexual energy it expends, are neither productive nor reproductive, but are squandered heedlessly. The libertine is thus de rigeur fabulously wealthy and, in Sade's texts, almost always aristocratic.[40] Moreover, Sade's libertines are aristocrats with a degree of power over human bodies which could only be thought under the economic system particular to feudalism. Hénaff insists that this feudalism which forms the political and economic foundation of sadism is characteristic, more specifically, of late eighteenth century feudalism (which *tenacious* feudalism he first has to argue existed); sadism's politico-economic foundation is, for Hénaff, therefore a historically specific feudalism *defiant* in its "mortal agony" of the rising pressures and influences of the bourgeoisie and capitalism. For Hénaff, libertine spending in the age that is normally characterised as feudal, the Middle Ages, would have been relatively unremarkable. It is crucial for sadism that its extravagence is situated in an era in which it was no longer acceptable or prudent: when such feudal expenditure was, moreover, nonchalantly suicidal.

Returning to Botticelli's panels, we are once more struck by the balance between – and the odd juxtaposition of – scenes of elegant dining and scenes of gruesome violence. While the first two panels are dominated by depictions of the human hunt, the third and fourth paintings represent courtly meals. The hunt intrudes upon the meal in the third panel, while the alimentary theme is present in the second depiction of the hunt, as Anastagi feeds the woman's entrails to his dogs, which are shown devouring the flesh ravenously. In Sade, likewise, feast scenes usually precede and follow the descriptions of sex and violence, but strength may also be replenished *during* the orgy through consumption of the victim's body or bodily products. The latter predilection in Sade is

the single element of the sadistic narrative to alarm and revolt even the marquis' most devoted "hagiographers," to use Barthes' term, just as it has been seen that it is Botticelli's brutal depiction of vivisection which delights the canines but most horrifies art historians such as Didi-Huberman.

Beyond the typically Sadean balance between eating and sexual violence, Christina Olsen has argued that "[g]astronomical, financial and amatory over-indulgence… are the themes of the pictorial narrative" of Botticelli's panels, and would have been understood as such in Quattrocento Florence.[41] Florentine viewers of the paintings would have been familiar with the Boccaccio tale and its antecedents in Dante and in moralizing medieval rereadings of Ovid's tale of Diana and Acteaon, both of which recount fables of human hunts in relation to themes of financial profligacy.[42] Nastagio's extravagent amatory, emotional, and pecuniary spending in the beginning of Boccaccio's tale would therefore have been understood in terms of contemporary discourses concerning prodigality, ranging from theological and sumptuary laws to nobiliary codes which made virtues of aristocratic largesse. Images of Anastagi's wanton violence, its implications of nonproductive sexuality, and luxurious dining, would have brought to mind conflictual medieval and Renaissance concerns with pecuniary, sexual, and alimentary consumption. Furthermore, Antonio Pucci's very commissioning of *spalliere* – a particularly lavish form of secular patronage – from an artist of Botticelli's reknown, for the purposes of commemorating his son's wedding, would itself have been both a flying in the face of sumptuary laws controlling nuptial expenditure and a self-aggrandizing (and unfounded) statement of his own claims to aristocratic magnificance.[43] Such reckless spending on the part of this social-climbing *nouveau riche* cannot be compared to the suicidal rejection of productive investment and curtailed expenses on the part of Sade and his aristocratic contemporaries, yet it is nevertheless characterisable as a defiant adherence to luxurious nobiliary codes in a period in which discourses on expenditure and parsimony were more polyphonic and conflictual than Hénaff would have them.

IV. Conclusions

In his recent preface to the English translation of *Sade: The Invention of the Libertine Body*, Marcel Hénaff describes the Sadean body as "so different from representations belonging to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries."[44] By the use of the term "invention" in the title of his work, we can assume that Hénaff does not mean that such a body might have existed earlier than these two centuries, and indeed, as he elaborates his claim, he seems to have only a very generalized conception of late medieval and early Renaissance depictions in mind when he contrasts earlier representations of the body to those in Sade. He continues, "Amorous desire now takes leave of the enchanted world of courtly love and gallantry..."[45] Certainly we can think of some Quattrocento depictions of the body which would suit this description, just as we could think of some Rococo paintings which would do so as well, but were late medieval and Renaissance conceptions of the body always so gallant? As if in repartee to Hénaff's generalisation, Didi-Huberman writes: "*Botticelli, lui, aura créé dans ses panneaux un type véritablement aberrant de chevalrie: c'est comme si l'on voyait saint Georges s'acharner sur la pauvre princesse, au lieu de tuer le dragon*"[46] ("Botticelli, seems to have created in his panels a truly aberant type of chivalry: it is as if we see Saint George attacking the poor princess, instead of killing the dragon"). Beyond this rebuttle, it is hoped that the above discussion has shown that Botticelli's presentation of the body is not entirely alien to Sadean aesthetics and economics.

The purpose of this challenge to Hénaff is in no way to suggest that sadism, or the functionings of the human sexual-psychic apparatus, or the experiences of the human body in general, have been uniform across diverse historical periods. Equally impetuous assumptions, however, are that there are sudden and definitive breaks between historical eras, and that the body and its desires offer no resistance to such breaks, afford no grounds for comprehension between one age and the next. The position of the current project is situated somewhere between these violences: the aesthetics of sadism discussed in relation to Botticelli's *spalliere* may be understood, much like the sadistic practices analyzed in the previous chapter, as neither atypical of the Renaissance nor a perfect epistemic "fit."

[1] Georges Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1999). On page 69 Didi-Huberman indicates that the four panels would have hung on four separate walls: "C'étaient, en réalité, quatre lambris (*spalliere*) peints pour les quatres murs de la chambre. On page 85, he discusses the effect of repetition this placement would have: "cette ritournelle de cruautés."
[2] Giorgio Vasari, *Le vite de'più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori*, Rosanna Bettarini (ed.), vol. 3, Florence, 1966: 514. ('quattro quadri, di pittura molta vaga e bella')
[3] Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), *The Decameron*, tr. Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (New York and London; W. W. Norton & Co., 1982).
[4] Christina Olsen, "Gross Expenditure: Botticelli's Nastagio Degli Onesti Panels," *Art History*, vol. 15, no. 2, June 1992: 155.
[5] This sequence of events typical of 15th century Tuscan weddings is described by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Zacharias, or the Ousted Father," in *Women, Family, and Ritualin Renaissance Italy*, tr. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985): 181-7. Most scholars, including Olsen and Didi-Huberman, assume that Botticelli's *spalliere* hung in the nuptial chamber of the couple for whose wedding they were commissioned. Rose Marie San Juan, however, suggests that they hung in the reception room of the Pucci Palace where "less intimate guests" such as Vasari would have been likely to see them: "Mythology, Women and Renaissance Private Life: The Myth of Eurydice in Italian Furniture Painting," in *Art History* 15, n. 2 (June 1992): 132; f. 24. Vasari does not specify in which room of the Pucci palace they were hung. The works were commissioned by Antonio Pucci, the groom's father, as Olsen notes in "Gross Expenditure": 163.
[6] Olsen, "Gross Expenditure": 161
[7] See, for instance, Christelle Baskins, *Cassone Painting, Humanism, and Gender in Early Modern Italy.*
[8] Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus*: 69
[9] The principle analyses of the formal properties of sadism, both aesthetic and economic, on which I will be drawing are Roland Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971); Gilles Deleuze, *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch*, which contrasts the properties of masochism extensively with those of sadism; and Marcel Hénaff, *Sade: The Invention of the Libertine Body*, tr. Xavier Callahan, (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), originally published as *Sade: l'invention du corps libertin* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978). Other interesting analyses which inform the following pages include Maurice Blanchot's *Lautréamont et Sade* (Paris:Éditions de Minuit, 1976); Roberta J. Hackel, *De Sade's Quantitative Moral Universe: Of Irony, Rhetoric, and Boredom* (The Hague – Paris: Mouton & Co. B.V., Publishers: 1976); Lucienne Frappiér-Mazur, *Writing the Orgy: Power and Parody in Sade,* tr. Gillian C. Gill (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).
[10] Olsen, "Gross Expenditure": 158
[11] Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus*: 87-89
[12] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty."
[13] Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola:* 161
[14] Laura Mulvey and many feminist and psychoanalytic film theorists writing since Mulvey's seminal article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (*Screen*, 1975), have understood the position of the male filmgoer as one of sadistic voyeurism involving a fetishisation of the female movie star's body. This is clearly problematized if, indeed, neither voyeurism nor fetishism has a part in sadism.
[15] Hénaff, *Sade*: 109
[16] Ibid.: 49-50
[17] Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus*: 65.
[18] Hénaff, *Sade*: 17-18.
[19] I take the expression, "a lesson for the bride," from the article, "Botticelli's *Primavera: A Lesson for the Bride*", by Lilian Zirpolo, in *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, Norma Broude and Mary Garrard, eds. (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).
[20] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" (*Présentation de Sacher-Masoch),* discusses sadistic instruction and masochistic education in Chapter One, "Sade, Masoch, et leur langage."
[21] Cited in Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 19.
[22] Marquis de Sade, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (Paris: Bookking International, 1994): 30.
[23] Hénaff, *Sade*: 20.

[24] Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in *The Standard Edition of the complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, volume XVIII, tr. and edited under the General Editorship of James Straches, in collaboration with Anna Freud (Vintage Books, Hogarth press: London, 1955).
[25] Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus*: 28.
[26] In *Juliette* he writes of lust "crown[ing] our actors," as cited in Deleuze, *Présentation*: 70.
[27] Hénaff, *Sade*: 119.
[28] Olsen, "Gross Expenditure": 164.
[29] Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus*: 83.
[30] Hénaff, *Sade*: 284.
[31] Ibid.: 6.
[32] Olsen, "Gross Expenditure": 154-5.
[33] Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus:* 84-5.
[34] Guido Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros.*
[35] Olsen, "Gross Expenditure": 154
[36] Lucienne Frappier-Mazur, *Writing the Orgy: Power and Parody in Sade*, translated by Gillian C. Gill (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996).
[37] Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id* and *Other Works*, translated by James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud, vol. XIX (1923-1925) of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Vintage, 2001): 157-170.
[38] Hénaff, *Sade*: 191-2
[39] cited in Hénaff, *Sade*: 191-2.
[40] There are occassionally wealthy bankers who join the aristocratic libertines, who may even own the chateaux in which the orgies take place, however they are never as at ease in such noble environs, as sexually well endowed, or as gifted in their libertine pursuits as are the aristocrats, and they sometimes end up as the victims of their noble peers.
[41] Olsen, "Gross Expenditure": 146
[42] Ibid.: 146-155.
[43] Ibid.: 161.
[44] Hénaff, *Sade*: xii.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Didi-Huberman, *Ouvrir Vénus*: 83.

Chapter Three: Missed Identification and Longing: The Aesthetics and Gendering of Masochism

I. Introduction: The Aesthetics of Masochism

Masochism is commonly understood as the other side of a sadistic scenario, one half of a "sadomasochistic" pairing or encounter. We think that the sadist takes pleasure in causing pain and the masochist in receiving pain, and hence that they must seek each other. Both Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Sigmund Freud worked according to such an assumption.[1] However on closer examination it becomes clear, as Gilles Deleuze was the first to have argued, not only that the pain-pleasure complex of sadism and masochism is among the less interesting (and in the case of masochism, not strictly necessary) aspects of the perversions, but also that the sadist and the masochist never meet, or that sadism and masochism are sexual and aesthetic worlds with nothing in common.[2] If we think back to the example of rape in Renaissance Italy, or to the Nastagio panels of Botticelli, both of which have been argued to be in some ways sadistic, we find that there is no masochistic element involved, and no masochist. Had Anastagi's beloved wished to submit to him, there would have been no story and no sadism. Indeed, the sadistic scenario requires an unwilling victim who will suffer in the sadist's hands and to whom he can demonstrate the logic of pain. As a result, the *only* type of person who is banished from the outset from the sadist's orgies and his narratives is, in fact, the masochist, who, the sadist thinks, would be too willing and too pleased. In fact, however, the masochist would be unwilling and suffering in a sadist's hands, for, as shall be seen, the masochist needs to persuade his partner into a very particular arrangement of his own devising, which relation is consensual, even contractual. (What we think of today as "S/M" practices are consensual and often contractual, and hence simply masochism.) Further, the masochist requires a degree of emotional involvement with his partner which is impossible within the sadistic scenario.

The sadist and the masochist are therefore sexually incompatible, however this is of little interest to the present study compared to the aesthetic divergence of the two

symptomatologies. According to Deleuze, who has concentrated his studies on the literary language of the two perversions, rather than on clinical cases, the sadist and the masochist lack a shared language or understanding from which a conversation might begin, and therefore cannot "communicate."[3] It is one of Deleuze's main arguments in "Coldness and Cruelty," his study of masochism, that the significant semiotic act of naming masochism and sadism and defining their symptomatologies derived from a reading of their literary sources, and it is important to return to close textual readings, rather than attending exclusively to clinical cases, to refine our understanding of the perversions. A return to the literary sources for which sadism and masochism were named demonstrates the impossibility of a sadomasochistic entity: opening books by the Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, the respective namesakes of sadism and masochism, one finds oneself in unrelated worlds in which different languages are spoken. Gaylyn Studlar provides one account of the differences between the two authors' texts when she writes:

> The Sadian narrative has clear-cut goals: to fuck everyone, to count the ways you can do it, to test your speed and vigor, to measure your acts and your victims in numbers. By contrast, the heightened emotion of expectation and arrested movement unify the temporality of the masochistic fantasy in which pleasure is taken in desire unfulfilled.[4]

As Studlar suggests, Sade's heros process vast numbers of anonymous victims for the purposes of logical demonstrations and impressive numerical tallies. The marquis' novels and stories employ a language of philosophical argumentation and mathematical calculation, and a vocabulary of anatomical precision ranging from the obscene to the scientific or clinical (the incessant "cunt," "clitoris," etc.). In opposition, Sacher-Masoch uses, not philosophy, science, and mathematics, but mythology, mysticism, and the extravagent and euphemistic language of romanticism, to carry his tales of – not sex – but agonized love. His most famous work, *Venus in Furs*, employs sentimental language to describe a man's (Severin's) excessive adoration of a single, impossibly elevated woman (Wanda). As a result of his persuasion and out of a professed belief in his own unworthiness, Severin is taken by Wanda as a slave, despite the fact that she would have prefered him to be her husband. Sacher-Masoch's account of this lengthy persuasion and

contractual arrangement results in a spiraling tale of frustrated, immobilized love, effusively described in romantic prose.

Carrying the analysis of sadistic and masochistic language to a study of the formal properties of painting, it can be argued that it is in a comparable fashion that Botticelli's use of *disegno* has been related by Didi-Huberman and in the preceding chapter to mathematical grids, anatomical diagrams and eighteenth century anatomical Venuses, whereas Titian's *colorito*, to be examined in the following chapter, has been deemed "feminine" since the Renaissance – with all the connotations of sentimentality, romanticism, and imprecision which go with the term. As is suggested by the long, uncompromising rivalry between the competing styles of Florentine and Venetian art, there could be no meeting of the aesthetics of *disegno* and *colorito*, any more than a dialogue between those of sadism and masochism can occur. Somewhat in the fashion that "S/M" is in fact just more "M," Tintoretto's claim to combine the *disegno* of Michelangelo with the *colorito* of Titian resulted in works that were even more "*non finito*" than Titian's, epitomizing, to Florentine eyes, the travesties of *colorito*, rather than being a "conversation" between the two incommunicable styles.

Beyond the scientific versus mythical-romantic divide of sadism and masochism, the aspect of the two perversions which is viewed as making a sadomasochistic encounter necessary - the pain-pleasure axis - does not emerge from a study of the languages of sadism and masochism as the most significant property of either perversion. Repetition and demonstration are more fundamental to the Sadean narrative than the simple infliction of pain, and it will be seen in the following chapters that suspension and persuasion, submission and waiting, are more important to masochism than are its infamous flagellations. Clinical studies have also shown that, at least in the case of masochism, pain is unnecessary for pleasure, while it is a form of passivity and dependence which is requisite.[5] As such, in discussing several mythological paintings by Titian in the following chapter, it will not be a question of violence being inflicted on, or enjoyed by, a victim, but rather one of the spaces and temporality of the works, of the manners in which these suspend the narrative, the body, time, sexuality, and suffering, and of the form of waiting and submission which such suspension entails.

If pain is less crucial to masochism than it is to sadism, so is sex. Unlike in sadism, there is little sexual *contact* in masochism, though a tortured longing, an arrested desire, pervade and suffocate the text. As a result of this strange absence of sex in the writing of masochism, certain critics discussing the stories of Sacher-Masoch, have managed to analyse his writing without making the slightest reference to eroticism, and Deleuze comments on masochism's extreme "decency."[6] Consequentially, Sacher-Masoch was a celebrated litterateur in his lifetime rather than a mere pornographer, his works receiving literary admiration rather than causing scandal. It was thus a shock and a shame to Sacher-Masoch when, late in the author's career, Krafft-Ebing, a contemporary in Sacher-Masoch's own nineteenth century Vienna, named a perversion for him in the widely read *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Krafft-Ebing perceived, however reductively, the sexual perverseness so often disguised in Sacher-Masoch's tales in, to cite Deleuze, the "innocent games of children, or the frolics of a lovely woman, or even the demands of morality and patriotism."[7] Even in the tales that are more explicitly about love relations, such as *Venus in Furs*, sexual acts are never described, and the woman's body is never fully revealed.[8] The masochist's body, in exact opposition to the Sadean body, remains, in Deleuze's words, "in a strange state of indeterminancy" except where he feels pain.[9] Likewise, the mythological paintings by Titian to be discussed in Chapter Four are not in the slightest way graphic, sexually explicit, shocking or obscene – as one could characterize, for instance, the sexualized violence and scientific exposure of Botticelli's *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*. On the contrary, *Venus with a Mirror* and *Venus Blindfolding Cupid*, both of which depict the maternal goddess in playful interactions with her toddler sons, appear charming and innocuous, and yet they will be found to employ various formal strategies of the masochistic aesthetic.

Masochism, Deleuze has shown, is an agonized waiting, more than an encounter. As a result, *suspense* - both as an abstract poetic device and as a literal narrative event (bondage, crucifixion, hanging) - rather than sex, is the pivotal element of the masochistic aesthetic. Bondage occurs in sadism as a technical necessity because the victim is unwilling, however in masochism, which is consensual, bondage is unnecessary as a means of constraint, but is desired in itself, or for the sake of suspension alone. Even in cases of apparent overlap, then, the masochistic aesthetic is on closer examination unlike,

and unrelated to, sadism and its artistic devices, which depend on repeated, accumulated and accelerating action, both sexual and violent, and a relentless obscenity. This chapter will consider the gendering of the psychic and aesthetic properties of masochism and of the participants, and the political potential of the perversion which results, before turning in the following chapter to the question of the relation of maochism to visual art, to the mythological works of Titian in particular, and to the era of the Italian Renaissance.

II. Gendering Perversions

THE "MASTER"

It has been seen that in sadism there is a decided hatred of the mother, who finds herself and her reproductive role punished throughout sadistic texts. The sadist, whether male or female, is said to over-identify with or over-invest in the father. Deleuze writes that "sadism is in every sense an active negation of the mother and an exaltation of the father who is beyond all laws."[10] Of female heroines in Sade, he states that "their actions, the pleasures they enjoy together and their common projects are all in imitation of man; man is the spectator and presiding genius to whom all their activities are dedicated."[11] Pierre Klossowski has argued that the sadistic narrative ultimately describes the destruction of the family by the father, and particularly through his incitement of the daughter to murder the mother (hence the use of female sadists).[12] More optimistically, Angela Carter has tried to see a redeeming potential in Sade from a feminist perspective, in that his desacralisation of the female body and his casting of women in roles of sadistic crime serve to liberate women through their demythologisation.[13] Women are freed through Sadean narratives of gore and violence from the ideological prison of their beautiful bodies and passive victimhood. Nevertheless, Carter must acknowledge that the mother is despised in Sade, and that the daughter is liberated from her submissive and victimised role only in serving the cause of patriarchal violence and through the victimisation of other women. Again, Carter offers a feminist reading of these aspects of the narratives in so far as they highlight women's active complicity in patriarchy, as opposed to the passive victimhood which feminism, particularly at the time Carter was writing, had stressed. Also reading from a recuperative and feminist perspective, one might argue that

by pushing the logic of patriarchy to its limits, Sade demonstrates its absurdity and ultimate intenability, and is thus subversive of patriarchy in his very excesses of authorial misogyny: the State confined Sade for some reason. Arguably this reason lies precisely in the widely-stated claim that the Sadean elevation of the father is an *over*-investment in and an *over*-identification with the patriarchal figure: it has, in other words, gone too far, thus rendering absurd what it seems to exalt.

However we view Sade's texts politically, it is important to note that from their traditional to their feminist and apologetic readings, there has been no dispute as to the fact that the sadist is a paternally-identified and patriarchal figure in the extreme. With masochism the exegetic history with respect to the familial identification of the participants becomes more complex and disputed. Because Freud assumed that masochism involved the same players as sadism, or was the flipside of the same perversion and encounter, it followed for him that the "master" in a masochistic scenario would be a sadist and hence fantasised as a father figure by the masochist. Unfortunately for his theory, Freud's masochistic patients unanimously defined their fantasised torturers as women, and indeed as maternal. Freud explained this conundrum as resulting from the masochist's superimposition of the image of the mother over that of the truly desired parent - the punishing father - as a ploy to avoid the overt homoeroticism of fantasising the father himself, all of Freud's masochistic patients being men. Freud thus makes the father the predominant figure in the masochistic fantasy despite the apparent significance of the mother. Moreover, Freud explains the genealogy of masochism as resulting from Oedipal conflicts, and thus situates the perversion within a psychic stage in which the father plays the crucial and authoritative role.

To explain: for Freud, the child who once desired the mother has now been faced with the father's interdiction and the threat of castration. He has consequentially forsaken the mother and turned to the father, whose jealous anger he now attempts to assuage, along with his own feeling of guilt for his former trespass, by taking on a feminine position, passivity, and by embracing lesser punishments than castration. It is to avoid castration and to find relief from the guilt of having once desired the mother, then, that the masochist comes to fantasise his subordination to the father whom he wishes to please by playing the role of a woman, which is understood by Freud as sexual

submission. Although the mother has already been abandoned as object of desire at this point, the child imagines her as the punishing parent to whom he sexually submits, only because the masochist's same-sex relation to the father makes a more transparent fantasy impossible within the heterosexism of the oedipal period. Despite the consistency of the image of a dominating maternal figure in the masochistic fantasies of his patients, Freud therefore renders the mother into a shadow figure: she has already been abandoned, she is not truly desired, and her image merely serves to mask a deeper desire for the father.

One problem with Freud's argument, besides its obvious counter-intuitiveness, is that masochistic suffering cannot be explained as "lesser punishments" that the masochist takes on to avoid castration, since there is no evidence of castration anxiety within masochism, and castration itself may even be desired.[14] Further, the punishments the masochist fantasises – castration aside – can be extreme, including death, hence hardly "lesser punishments." It would also seem odd that if the masochist desires punishment for having once desired the mother, the mother would figure as the object of desire in the fantasy, even if she serves as a mask. For Freud, the acceptance of punishment should demonstrate to the son's own super-ego that he *no longer* desires the mother, while a fantasy which is apparently *of* the mother seems at odds with this purpose. Would the psychic apparatus embrace consistently such a contradictory form of fantasy merely to avoid the suggestion of homoeroticism? If the child has passed into the oedipal phase, sex with the mother is just as taboo as homoeroticism, and hence it is nonsensical that the patient would avoid one fantasy simply by replacing it with another which is at least as forbidden. Freud's convoluted account therefore serves the purpose of keeping the identification of the torturer the same as under the model of sadism, and avoids the acknowlegement of the mother as an authoritative figure in fantasy, but fails to explain convincingly the most evident characteristics of the masochist's apparent object of desire.

In "Coldness and Cruelty," Deleuze dismisses Freud's hysterical avoidance and misrecognition of the centrality of the mother in psychic development, as well as Lacan's (in)famous rereading and reiteration of Freud's pater-centricity. The role of the master, or rather mistress, in masochism is seen as maternal on at least three levels. Deleuze recognizes three distinct kinds of maternal women in masochistic texts, which more or less correspond to the three mothers in Freud's *The Theme of Three Caskets*[15]: these are

the primitive or uterine mother, the oedipal mother, and the oral mother who "nurtures and brings death."[16] In a passage which warrants being cited in full, Deleuze explores the significance of the three mothers, and particularly of the oral mother, and elaborates his overturning of Freudian and Lacanian theory:

> In short the three women constitute a symbolic order in which and through which the father is abolished in advance – for all time. This eternal, timeless supremacy of the mother can only be expressed in the language of myths, which is therefore essential to masochism: everything has already happened, and the entire action takes place between the mother images... It is therefore surprising that even the most enlightened psychoanalytic writers link the emergence of a symbolic order with the "name of the father." This is surely to cling to the singularly unanalytical conception of the mother as the representative of nature and the father as sole principle and representative of culture and law. The masochist experiences the symbolic order as an intermaternal order in which the mother represents the law under certain prescribed conditions; she generates the symbolism through which the masochist expresses himself. It is not a case of identification with the mother, as is mistakenly believed. The threefold division of the mother literally expels the father from the masochistic universe.[17]

In terms of chronological psychic development, the uterine mother comes first, followed by the oral mother, who is eventually replaced by the oedipal mother. In Sacher-Masoch's novels, the same woman or different women will be portrayed in these roles, and in *Venus in Furs* Wanda proceeds through these roles in chronological order. The woman Wanda in the beginning of the novel, however, is not yet the masochistic ideal: she has not yet been persuaded to fulfill this role. By the end of the novel, the masochistic relation has degenerated and Wanda has exceeded her role. The uterine mother and the oedipal mother thus figure as polar extremes in the masochistic fantasy, but they are not the true mother of masochism, as is the oral mother who dominates Sacher-Masoch's texts. The oral mother is intermediate in normal psychic development but Deleuze explains that, because she is death as well as nurturing plenitude, as in *The Theme of Three Caskets*, she also comes "last of all."[18]

That she comes last of all in masochism is crucial to note and, to avoid misreadings of Deleuze, needs to be elaborated further: it is not the case that the masochist has been *detained* at the second, normally intermediate stage of psychic development, the oral phase, and has never passed into the third, oedipal period. On the contrary, he has passed through the oral and into the oedipal stage, and now *re*fantasises

the oral mother, attempts in fantasy to *re*turn. In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud realised that the repetitions of masochism, and of the death drive in general, were always a turning back to this earlier state, though they were never a successful return unless death itself occurred. It is due of this returning that, to come back to the citation above, "everything" in the masochistic fantasy "has already happened." The masochist is not in the present of the oral phase. The oral phase has "already happened" and is hence being returned to in a form of repetition quite unlike that of sadism: repetition in sadism moves the narrative forward, accelerates, whereas in masochism it is always regressive to the same point in the lost past, but failing and thus needing to be done again. As a result, the masochistic story is suspended and cannot move forward, and hence it is no story at all. Myths, religious imagery, mysticism, and dream are all used to evoke this fantasmic return to what has been irrecoverably lost. Because the masochist is fantasising from *within* the oedipal stage, however, there are traces and disavowals of the oedipal stage within the masochistic universe of myth and dream: the very existence of the oedipal mother in the fantasy, in the person of the torturess herself, is just one such trace. The oral mother of masochism is thus not the intermediate oral mother per se, but is a fourth mother who comes after the oedipal mother or "last of all": that is, she is an oedipal refantasisation of the oral mother.

This distinction between the oral mother per se and the fantasised oral mother of masochism is crucial because while the former is truly an authority over the child, the latter is a reconstruction for which the masochist is responsible, and hence has no authority in herself. She is *given* authority within the constraints of *his* fantasy; she is *created* as a tool for *his* desire. To return once more to the citation from Deleuze above, "[t]he masochist experiences the Symbolic order as an intermaternal order in which the mother represents the law *under certain prescribed conditions*," conditions prescribed by the masochist. Continuing, "she generates the symbolism through which the masochist expresses himself," and hence is a means to *his* expressions of desire, rather than her own. When the women in Sacher-Masoch's tales grow to enjoy their role, to exceed the masochist's expectations, the masochist ends the game, which he has had the authority to do all along, her authority being fictional. This is why, as shall be seen, the women who agree to torture masochists are not so much truly dominatrixes (or sadists), but are in fact

manipulated (or paid) by the masochist to perform roles which fulfill his wishes. The masochist orchestrates the masochistic fantasy as much as the sadist dominates the sadistic orgy.

At least one feminist reader of Deleuze, Gaylyn Studlar, has chosen to gloss over this nuance in her extensive and otherwise useful studies of "Coldness and Cruelty," in order to see the mother of masochism as the oral mother herself and thereby to exaggerate the feminist potential of the aesthetic model, reading the woman as truly empowered.[19] Masochism subverts and repudiates oedipal patriarchy, as will be argued below, but it necessarily functions *within* it, and it is the masochist whose behaviour is subversive, not that of the female torturer. The feminist potential of masochism is important and needs to be explored further, but it is not to be overestimated or totalized. In fact, a "total" feminism such as Studlar envisions, a full retreat from the patriarchy of Oedipus, would be ineffective, since it would exist outside of (and hence be irrelevant to) what it supposedly subverts. Thus the fact that it functions within the Symbolic is not so much a limitation on, but rather a prerequisite of, masochism's disruptiveness.

Because the masochist has passed into the oedipal stage before returning to the oral period in fantasy, the question of the father must be considered. In the oral phase itself, the father does not yet exist for the child, who is in a state of non-differentiation from and plenitude with the all-powerful mother alone. Were masochism traceable to the oral stage itself, the father would simply be absent from the masochistic world. However, instead of never having existed, we find in Deleuze that the father is "abolished" and "expelled," deprived of his symbolic function, and that there is a "transference of the law onto the mother."[20] Were this the oral stage itself, there would have been nothing to abolish and no one to expell, and authority would already be the mother's, rather than needing to be transfered (from the father, by the son) onto her. Further, Deleuze claims that it is not the son who is punished and subordinated in masochistic scenarios (and whom the masochist wishes to see punished and subordinated), but rather the image of the father in the child.[21] It is because it is merely the image of the father which is being punished, and not the masochist himself, that pain may be unnecessary to masochism. The guilt in masochism is guilt for resembling the father, *not* for desiring the mother. Once more it is clear that we are in the oedipal stage,

however rebelliously, and not in the oral, since there is a father who needs to be subordinated (and hence whose authority is obliquely acknowledged) and whose image has become integrated into the child in some way, enough for him to feel culpable of it. Clearly, the child has identified with the father by entering into language and the Symbolic, even if now he tries to (re)transfer all symbolic value back to the mother and is punishing and abolishing the image of the father in himself. He may now wish to (re)identify with the mother, but the image of the father is in him, and this identification with the mother is unaccomplishable. As Deleuze writes in the citation above, "It is not a case of identification with the mother, as is mistakenly believed."

Despite this caution, Gaylyn Studlar willfully understands masochism as situated in the oral phase per se and thus regrets Deleuze's denial of identification with the mother, attempting in her own work to correct this shortcoming. She writes, "Deleuze stops short of affirming the subject's identification with the mother, but the logic of that identification is widely supported in modern research on masochism. The child identifies with and also desires the mother in an inverted parallel of Freud's theory of masochism in which the son identifies with and ultimately desires the father."[22] Of course, the very fact that there is desire proves that there is no successful identification, since desire implies lack, loss, or absence. Had the child returned to the oral phase and reidentified with the mother, there would be no desire for her. The agonized and supsended longing which suffocates the masochistic text is the ultimate proof of the masochist's missed (in the sense of failed and in the sense of wanting back) identification. Importantly, it is precisely this *failure* of reunion and reidentification with the mother, the *in*ability to truly return to the oral phase, which results in the aesthetic properties of masochism - its repetitious and paralyzed returning, its use of myth and mysticism, as well as its tortured, forever suspended longing - and which results, it will be argued, in masochism's potential subversiveness. Even more fundamentally, there is no language, and hence no possibility of art, within the oral phase itself, and hence no masochistic texts; thus the fact that masochistic texts exist, tells us that the masochist is in the Symbolic/Oedipal universe, though a Symbolic which is subverted by echoes and incursions from what Julia Kristeva has called the maternal Semiotic.[23]

Applying Kristeva's argument in *La révolution du langage poétique* to masochistic language, masochism's failed attempts to return to the maternal body are precisely why its texts can be effective in undermining patriarchal law. Although the possibility of politics, political change, and revolution (each depending on language) exists only from within the Symbolic, paternal law itself is static. Remaining entirely within the Symbolic, then, no political or artistic change could occur; on the other hand, by returning fully to the Semiotic, or identifying entirely with the oral mother, the extinguishing of language – death – ensues. Kristeva's argument is thus that it is through flirtations with the Semiotic from within the Symbolic, through taking precarious positions between the two worlds, or through never attained returns to the Semiotic, that revolution or subversion can take place in art and politics. The accomplishment of reunion/identification with the oral mother, of ending the suspension, or of achieving the agonised longing, would therefore be the full stop of masochism: death itself for the masochist, and the end of the text and of its subversive political potential. This is why masochism is not about sex but about suspension, waiting, unattained passion, unrequited love, and a repetitious returning. The possibility of a feminist reading of masochism thus lies in attending to mis-, missed, or failed identification within the perversion, rather than, with Studlar, in identification itself.

To draw conclusions from the preceding section, it can be said that whereas in sadism the torturer is to be associated with the phallic and anal phases and with the father, in masochism the punishing figure is a rebellious oedipal fantasy of the oral mother. Because of the very different characteristics of these fantasmic "parents," sadism and masochism emerge as distinct and unrelated entities. Sadism is typified by excesses of sex and violence, and by a repetition which carries the narrative forward, while masochism is characterized by a suspension of sex and violence, in a repetition that is always a (failed) return, and hence a paralysis. Laura Mulvey has written, "sadism demands a story," and Teresa DeLauretis has rejoined, "a story demands sadism."[24] In either case, it is the repetitious action of sadism that "makes something happen" and moves the story forward. The movement, however, is forever within an excessively oedipal world which elevates the father and defiles the mother, and hence, paradoxically, can be called static – as static as the Symbolic itself. The repetitions in masochism seem

to function in an opposite fashion to prevent anything from occuring, however it is precisely in the unaccomplished returns of these repetitions that semiotic memories are carried into and destabilise the Symbolic. However less obscene masochistic texts may be, then, they are potentially more disruptive than their sadistic counterparts, which latter subvert only through the illuminated absurdities of excess.

THE SLAVE

Having considered the complex gendering of the punishing figure in masochism, it remains to consider that of the slave. The masochist, in theory, can be either male or female, but Freud's clinical studies of masochism are exclusively concerned with male masochists. Deleuze consistently uses the masculine pronoun for the masochist and although at one point he claims that the masochist may be female with little alteration to the story,[25] at other times his account seems to assume a specifically male subject.[26] Gaylyn Studlar accepts Deleuze's passing comment on the irrelevance of the masochist's gender, and claims that Deleuze "insists" on it, while really the claim is made quite gratuitously and is never elaborated. In her own studies, moreover, Studlar exclusively analyses narratives in which the masochist is male. A female masochist never arises in her writing, which is odd if it is the case that the masochist's gender is irrelevant: if it could just as easily be a female masochist, why is it never? Further, Studlar assumes that females can relate to the male masochist character and that his gender is of no significance because the narratives transport the viewer to the oral phase (hence before the distinction of genders), an assumption which has already been problematised. Recent clinical estimates claim that the ratio of male to female masochists is twenty to one.[27] Yet despite the apparent maleness of this perversion from each of these sources, masochism has been consistently defined as "feminine," beginning with Freud.[28]

Although it initially seems odd that masochism is deemed a "feminine" perversion given that most clinical cases involve men, to some extent it is the very so-called femininity of the behaviour which explains why the estimates of female masochists are so low. In other words, masochism is deemed feminine and hence within the spectrum of normality for females, and only becomes a case of clinical and critical interest when manifested by males. As a result, masochism in its less extreme

manifestations is widely understood as a more or less normal component of female psychology, but as a clinical entity it is characteristic of male patients. This would imply that there are many more female masochists than there are male masochists, but the former are less worrisome to the medical experts. This is but a partial explanation, however, for female masochism receives less clinical and art critical attention not only because it seems less odd, but also because it is very often less apparent, less flamboyant in its expression. It is pushed less far, is more concealed and dissimulated, buried in everyday life rather than forefronted in dangerous sexual practices. Furthermore, it is less often expressed discursively. It is not that there are no female counterparts to the author Leopold von Sacher-Masoch – there is, for instance, Pauline Réage, a.k.a. Dominique Aury, author of *L'histoire d'O*, which will be discussed below – but most authors describing a particularly female masochism, such as (one could argue) Marguerite Duras, keep to tales of long-suffering, unaccomplishable love, emotional paralysis, inarticulate longing, and self-starvation, rather than the literary and literal opening of veins, nailing of genitals, and flagellations of their male counterparts.[29]

The impression is thus that the majority of truly extravagant masochists, in literature, art, and life - the ones who take the suffering and sexual submission to its bloodier and expressive extremes, and hence get the attention - are male. Male masochism has found a voice, while female masochism remains quite silent. Consequentially, the literature on masochism has developed in two ways, coming respectively from psychoanalytic streams of cultural studies, on the one hand, and psychiatry, psychology and philosophy on the other. In the former case, scholars studying a fairly "normal" masochism, or masochism as it is discreetly embedded in mass culture, not surprisingly find it in "feminine" genres and assume that it is a female trait or problem. As such, studies of art and media genres such as romance and gothic novels, soap operas and sentimental films, will speak of the masochism of women consumers in such a way that male masochism would seem unheard of, simply because men do not consume these products and hence are not under consideration.[30] This is an example of the way in which female masochism is disguised and unobtrusive: women are masochists in their consumption, in what they read and watch, rather than in extravagant acts of sexual masochism or in literary writings of their own. Interestingly, within literary

studies, those focusing on masochistic readership consider female readers exclusively, while those concerned with masochistic characters in literature and masochistic writers most often consider male fictional figures and male authors.[31] Passive, silent, masochistic consumption is therefore a female phenomenon, while fictional masochistic acts as well as masochistic artistic expression are more often male. Within visual arts, we find a similar divide: female *viewership* is frequently deemed masochistic, whereas persons who express their masochism in art, and in artistic performances or acts, are most often male. Laura Mulvey and Mary Ann Doane, for instance, both consider female spectatorship as masochistic, because the female spectator must identify with the passive object of the male gaze. Studies of masochistic art, on the other hand, have focused on the work of such male performance artists as Chris Burden and Vito Acconci. Masochism may also be evoked in a general way to explain such widespread phenomena as women's tendencies towards self-sacrifice and of staying in unhappy, even abusive relationships, in the "bonds of love" or in "self-denial."[32] These are simply "women," however, not bona fide masochists or perverts in need of serious care. On the other hand, persons studying extreme or distilled cases of masochism in art or the clinic - such as Freud, Theodor Reik, and Deleuze – are dealing with masochists who are male, and the question of female masochism simply does not arise. Thus, depending on one's sources, one finds authors assuming that masochists are only ever women or only ever men.

The current study draws predominantly on Deleuze and other scholars interested in clinical and artistic expressions of masochism, and hence the model being used assumes and assuredly applies best to a male subject. The paintings discussed in the following chapter, therefore, involve male masochism exclusively. The difference from Deleuze and Studlar, whose studies of literary texts and visual culture respectively are also exclusive to male masochism, is simply that here there is no claim that the model would function just as well for female masochism. Deleuze's and Studlar's acceptance of this claim is particularly puzzling, since Deleuze argues, and Studlar accepts the argument, that masochism is to be illuminated through an analysis of the formal properties of its artistic expressions, rather than merely through assumptions derived from psychoanalytic theory and the clinic. Despite this methodological statement, it occurs to neither to look to the artistic expression of female masochists in order to determine

whether, in fact, the symptoms and aesthetics are just the same as in the case of male masochism. Both Deleuze and Studlar content themselves with a little-explored theoretical basis for presuming that the female masochist will be just like the male masochist in expression, and never check their assumption against a text, as one would expect given their methodological positions. To some extent this can be related to the fact, noted above, that there have been fewer cases of female masochistic expression in art, and yet Deleuze, writing "Coldness and Cruelty" in France of the 1960s, could not have been unaware of the scandal created by Pauline Réage's *L'Histoire d'O*, a spectacular example of non-dissimulating female masochism in literature.[33]

O was first published in Paris in 1954, with (adding to the scandal) an introductory essay on "Happiness in Slavery," by Jean Paulhan of the Académie Française, who exults that a woman has finally admitted what "we" knew all along: that when a man visits a woman he must bring a whip.[34] Paris buzzed for years over this book, agonized to know who hid behind the authorial pseudonym, and the scandal momentarily threatened Paulhan's position in the Académie.[35] A reading of *O* might therefore have occurred to Deleuze as the obvious means of testing the theoretical and clinical assumption that female masochism will follow the patterns and symptoms of male masochism, and such a test would have proved this assumption wrong. The formal elements of *O* are partly consistent with and partly at odds with the aesthetics which Deleuze discerns in his reading of Sacher-Masoch.[36] Indeed, one comes to wonder, reading this narrative of female masochism, whether its psychic genealogy is not entirely different from that of male masochism, and whether Deleuze's radical splitting of the sadistic and masochistic aesthetics can be as consistently upheld as in the latter case.

MALE AND FEMALE MASOCHISM AND THE SUBVERSIVE TEXT

Having argued that masochistic language, like the literary cases studied by Kristeva in *La Révolution du langage poétique*, is potentially disruptive to the patriarchal Symbolic, it may seem somewhat odd that it has, in its most revolutionary forms, been almost exclusively taken up by male writers and men, *O* being an exception to this rule. However, as in studies of masochistic texts, all of the literary cases discussed by Kristeva in *Révolution* also owe their existence to male pens. In the opening pages of *Des*

chinoises, Kristeva offers an explanation for the absence of revolutionary female writers.[37] *Des chinoises* is certainly among the most problematic of Kristeva's often problematic works, and has been condemned as orientalist, fatalist and homosexist among its other faults, yet some illumination of the silence of female masochism may nonetheless be derived from it.

Kristeva argues that due to the very different passages of male and female children into the oedipal phase, it is easier for males than for females to take ambivalent postures – the stance required for revolution of any sort - between the Semiotic and the Symbolic. Leaving the Semiotic (non-differentiation from the maternal body) for the Symbolic (language, identification with the father) is easier for males, not only because of their anatomical resemblance to the father, but because they have something to gain. They know that they will eventually become fathers, or authorities, themselves within the Symbolic, and will one day be able to replace the lost body of the mother with another woman's body: just as the father has the mother, they will have a mother replacement of their own. Castration anxiety is the catalyst which impels males to sacrifice the mother's body, but it is not normally a terribly difficult sacrifice, because it is compensated for by knowledge of future gains. The girl, however, is already "castrated," and hence lacks the original impetus to forsake the mother; furthermore, it is difficult for her to identify with the father, given that she, unlike her brother, is not treated like a "little man" with the concomitant privileges, and lacks an anatomical resemblance. Further, her identification with the father, or rather her acknowledgement of him and her acceptance of his law, is less advantageous to her than to her brother, and she forsakes the maternal body forever, simultaneously accepting her own female body as lack. Indeed, Kristeva claims that not all girls accept this untempting exchange, but remain with the mother's body. As such, they exist as corporeal beings without full access to language. It is "comfortable" for the girl to never entirely relinquish the mother's body, in which case she will either identify with the mother and become heterosexual, or desire the mother and become lesbian.[38] In either case, the girl does not escape the maternal, or, as Kristeva puts it in rather dramatic, troubling and normative terms, she does not commit "matricide" and enter into the Symbolic, and will, therefore, "remain in an eternal sulk before history, politics, society," existing in a "smug polymorphism" which is "so easy

and comfortable for a woman."[39] The "speech" of such women can only make itself heard through bodily manifestations, gestures, cries, hysterical symptoms.[40]

Alternately, the girl may relinquish the mother's body in an act which is far more painful than for the male child, because the male child need only defer his pleasure, whereas the female child is sacrificing hers. Electra-like, she enters the Symbolic through an act of "matricide," and identifies with power, the Father, the Law, and the pursuit of its avenues in politics, religion, and ethics, with a greater ferocity or desperation than her brother, whose entrance into the Symbolic has been easier, and can hence be treated more lightly. As a result, the male can play with language, explore its margins, trespass its borders, while the female cannot: her struggle to enter the order of language has been too difficult for her to question its rules; her break with the mother has been too painful for her to play with the idea of reconciliation. If she once allows herself to look back, she may never return, for what in the world could incite her twice? Return to the maternal body, unmitigated by the symbolic, threatens dissolution, delirium, chaos, and silence.[41]

Women, then, for Kristeva, most often either over-identify with the mother, and live silently incarnate existences, or else over-identify with the father, and become militants, devotees, or fanatics of the structuring systems of society, whether these be religion, ethics, fascism, or feminism (the latter being, for Kristeva, just one more form of patriarchal politics), because their sanity and life depends on it.[42] Only men can play easily between the realms, take up nuanced, ambivalent stances, because they are secure in the Symbolic, and their play rarely really destabilizes them. Holding a passport to the Symbolic, to use Kelly Oliver's metaphor, men may cavalierly transgress its rules, move back and forth across its borders, while women, as aliens, tread more warily, are less wont to leave a place they had to struggle to attain.[43] Men, on the other hand, may destabilise political regimes and write revolutionary poetry because they are in advantaged positions within the order against which they are supposedly revolting. "Revolution," a privileged term in Kristevan theory, is, as Kelly Oliver points out, never really more than reform, for it is always undertaken securely from within, and usually by persons who feel most secure of all in the position they are disturbing.[44] No political or

literary revolution can take place from outside the Symbolic, because outside there can be no articulation, no speech, no motivation, no power.[45]

The situation of female masochism – masochism being an ambivalent stance between the semiotic and symbolic realms - is hence complex: it is a precarious position between missed identification with and desire for the mother and partial identification with but rejection of patriarchy. As in the case of Marguerite Duras, it is a position of revolutionary writing, but, if we accept Kristeva's tragic pessimism, it is a nearly impossible position for a woman to maintain, and she falls most often into silence, expressing her resistance in hysteria and through the body, rather than in literature or politics, and as a result she is not heard or understood. Kristeva is surely too fatalistic, and accepts too readily a Lacanian view of femininity, and yet there is perhaps something in her theory which elucidates the silence of female masochism, and the fact that it is, paradoxically, the male masochist whose speech and behaviour has drawn a response – respectfully from literary theorists and philosophers, and concernfully from the medical world.

III. Conclusions

This chapter has argued that the formal elements of male masochism are different from those of sadism in relation both to its aesthetics and to its psychic genealogy and gendering. A reconstruction of the oral mother has been argued to be the authoritative figure in the male masochistic fantasy of perpetual return. This return, which is a rejection of the paternal Symbolic, has been found to be always missed, and it is this failure of identification which results in each of the aesthetic properties of masochism – repetition, paralysis, suspension, longing, suffering, and myth – and in masochism's subversive potential. Male masochism has also been deemed distinct from female masochism, and a partial, if problematic, explanation of the silence of the latter has been suggested. The following chapter will be concerned with male masochism in relation to the Renaissance, exploring the manner in which the aesthetic and gendered properties of male masochism, as outlined above, can be discovered in the mythological paintings of Titian.

[1] Krafft-Ebing described masochism as "the opposite of sadism" such that understanding sadism "alone is sufficient to establish the purely psychical character of masochism," i.e. by understanding sadism we understand masochism, as this is just the other side of the same coin, the other participator in the same scenario. See *Psychopathia Sexualis,* trans. F. J. Rebman, from the 12th German ed. (n.p., n.d. [orig. ed. 1886] (New York: Special Books, 1965): 132. Freud's understanding of the transience between sadism and masochism is perhaps even more extreme, as he saw the one as the mere turning outwards or turning inwards of the other, i.e. primary masochism was turned outwards as sadism which impulse could be turned inwards again as masochism proper. See, for instance, his views in "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905), "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915), "A Child is Being Beaten" (1919), and "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924). Nevertheless, Freud fathomed the complexity and deeply mysterious nature (which he claimed he never entirely understood) of sadism and masochism, and the particularly of the latter, as Krafft-Ebing did not.

[2] It will be argued later in this chapter that this claim perhaps holds true for male masochism and sadism alone. For reasons which will become clear later in the chapter, masochism as discussed in this and the following chapter should be understood as referring exclusively to male masochism, for which reason the masculine pronoun will be employed.

[3] Gilles Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty", in *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty and Venus in Furs*, (New York: Zone Books, 1989), originally published in France under the title "Le Froid et le Cruel" in *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967): 45 ff.

[4] Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure*: 126.

[5] Victor Smirnoff, "The Masochistic Contract," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 50 (1969): 665 ff.

[6] Ibid.: 10

[7] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 25.

[8] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*, tr. H. J. Henning, (London: Senate, 1996).

[9] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty.": 26.

[10] Ibid.: 60.

[11] Ibid.: 59.

[12] Pierre Klossowski, "Elements d'une étude psychanalytique sur le Marquis de Sade," *Revue de Psychanalyse*, 1933.

[13] Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography* (New York: Harper & Row/Harper Colophon Books, 1980).

[14] Michel de M'Uzan writes that the masochist "fears nothing, not even castration... [and] desires everything including castration which is within his grasp" in "A Case of Masochistic Perversion and an Outline of a Theory," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* 54 (1973): 462. Also Reik, *Masochism in Modern Man*, trans. Margaret H. Beigel and Gertrud M. Kruth (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1941): 428, who claims that castration anxiety is insignificant in masochism.

[15] Sigmund Freud, *The Theme of Three Caskets* (1913), in *Sigmund Freud: Art and Literature*, vol. 14 of The Penguin Freud Library, translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey (New York: Penguin, 1990).

[16] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty,": 55.

[17] Ibid.: 63-4.

[18] Ibid.: 55.

[19] Gaylyn Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure: Von Sternberg, Dietrich, and the Masochistic Aesthetic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Gaylyn Studlar, ""Masochism and the Perverse Pleasures of the Cinema," in *Movies and Methods*, vol. 2, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

[20] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 91.

[21] Ibid.: 66.

[22] *In the Realm of Pleasure*: 17.

[23] Julia Kristeva, *La révolution du langage poétique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974).

[24] Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16 (Autumn 1975): 14; Teresa DeLauretis, *Alice Doesn't* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984): 109.

[25]Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 68: "...in masochism a girl has no difficulty in assuming the role of son in relation to the beating mother who possesses the ideal phallus and on whom rebirth depends."

[26] For instance, when Deleuze writes that it is the father's image in the child which is punished, it is easier to see how a male child would see himself as embodying the father's image than it is to imagine a female child viewing herself this way. The desire for castration would also imply a male fantasiser.
[27] Estimate provided in Louise Kaplan, *Female Perversions: The Temptation of Emma Bovary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991): 25, cited in Laura Hinton, *The Perverse Gaze of Sympathy: Sadomasochistic Sentiments from* Clarissa *to* Rescue 911 (New York: SUNY Press, 1999).
[28] Sigmund Freud, "The Economic Problem of Masochism," (1924) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, volume XIX.
[29] Anita Philips, in *A Defense of Masochism,* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), has suggested the masochism of Duras' texts.
[30] See, for instance, Marianne Noble, *The masochistic pleasures of sentimental literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Michelle Massé, *In the name of love: women, masochism, and the Gothic*(Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992); Paula J. Caplan, *The myth of women's masochism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).
[31] For readership, see: Noble (2000) and Massé (1992); for masochistic male characters in literature, see Suzanne Stewart, *Sublime surrender: male masochism at the fin-de-siècle* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); Carol Siegel, *Male masochism: modern revisions of the story of love* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995); and Deleuze's study of Sacher-Masoch's characters. Dante's long-suffering love for Beatrice, his ordeals in trying to be reunited with her, John Donne's love poetry, and Guillaume de Lorris's half of *The Romance of the Rose*, have all also been evoked as cases of male masochism in artists and male literary figures, for instance in Anita Phillips, *A Defense of Masochism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).
[32] See, for instance, Jessica Benjamin, *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination* (New York: Pantheon, 1988); Richard Tuch, *The Single woman-married man Syndrome* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 2000).
[33] Pauline Réage, *L'Histoire d'O* (Paris: Chez Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1954).
[34] Paulhan writes: "At last a woman who admits it! Who admits what? Something that women have always refused till now to admit (and today more than ever before). Something that men have always reproached them with: that they never cease obeying their nature, the call of their blood, that everything in them, even their minds, is sex. That they have constantly to be nourished, constantly washed and made up, constantly beaten. That all they need is a good master, one who is not too lax or kind: for the moment we make any show of tenderness they draw upon it, turning all the zest, joy, and character at their command to make others love them. In short, that we must, when we go to see them, take a whip along," in "Happiness in Slavery," Preface to *The Story of O*, translated from the French by Sabine d'Estrée (Nw York: Ballatine Books, Grove Press, 1965): xxv.
[35] It only emmerged in the 1990s that the author was Dominique Aury, an editor at Gallimard and Paulhan's lover in the 1950s.
[36] Certain elements of the masochistic aesthetic remain present in Réage's text, for instance, it has been described, like Sacher-Masoch's work, as "mystical" and as strangely de-eroticized and "decent" – "anything but vulgar" – the sexual parts of the body are spoken of indirectly, and we are told when they are cleaned and perfumed. The masochist has persuaded the torturers to inflict her to agonies, and eventually to kill her, and it is debatable whether they do so dutifully or whether it pleases them. There is also a relation of sentimentality, love, and exalted adoration of the masochist towards one of her torturers, however there are other torturers who are anonymous, unseen, and unnamed. The bodies of the torturers are never entirely seen, as in Sacher-Masoch, while the masochist's body is spoken of in sanitizing and abstracting euphemisms. On the other hand, suspense is brief in *O* and action, sex, and violence are immediate and constant, and always dealt according to rationales which are elaborated beforehand, as in sadism. She may have persuaded her torturers, but they instruct her, and further, they are multiple, though one alone is the adored "lover." The tone shifts constantly between the apathy of sadism to the sentimentality of masochism, just as the story moves quickly between periods of suspension and of action. If time in *O* shifts rapidly between sadistic and masochistic temporaility – suspension followed by action followed by waiting again – space too is an odd juxtaposition of sadistic and masochistic decors: we are in a chateau and in cells, as so often in sadism, but there is also an attention to interior design, to fabrics and

furnishings, to colours and lights, as in a Sacher-Masoch tale, and lending *O* the same, odd and oppressive intimacy.

[37] *Des Chinoises* (Paris: Editions des Femmes, 1974), translated by Anita Barrows as *About Chinese Women* (New York and London: Marion Boyars, 1977).

[38] Ibid.: 37.

[39] Ibid.: 38.

[40] Ibid.: 37.

[41] Kelly Oliver, *Reading Kristeva: Unravelling the Double-Bind* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University press, 1993): 12.

[42] Kristeva also discusses the high membership of women in terrorist groups in "Women's Time" (1979), translated by Alice Jardine and H. Blake in *Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology*, ed. N. Keohane, M. Z. Rosaldo, and B. C. Gelpi (Brighton: Harvester, 1982).

[43] Oliver, *Reading Kristeva:* Ch. IV.

[44] Ibid.: 101.

[45] But what happens if a woman *does* write revolutionary language? Despite the general fatalism of her theory, Kristeva encourages women to reject both paths described above. Embracing neither the Semiotic nor the Symbolic, Kristeva suggests that women negotiate a space in between. They should identify with the father just enough to gain entry into culture, time, language, and history, but they should refuse to adopt fixed roles within this realm, insisting upon a shifting identity and never forgetting the semiotic music which they have left behind. In such a way, women, like male revolutionary writers, can introduce the "repressed," the maternal, the "incomprehensible" into language by maintaining an "impossible dialectic" between the Semiotic and the Symbolic, constantly alternating between "time and its 'truth'; identity and its loss, history and the timeless, signless, extra-phenomenal things that produce it." Kristeva therefore advocates that women balance between chaos and tyranny, anarchy and totalitarianism, the Semiotic and the Symbolic. She gives three examples of women writers who attempted this balance between two worlds, never settling safely in either, who used the forms of the paternal, of order, time, and language, in order to inscribe the maternal, the timeless, formless and incomprehensible. Underscoring dramatically the difficulty for women, aliens in the Symbolic, of taking such a stance, the title of Kristeva's chapter in *About Chinese Women* which discusses these three women – Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, and Maria Tsvetaieva – is called, "I Who Want Not To Be," and each of her examples, balancing precariously, eventually fell back to the Semiotic, drawn by "the silence with which she will abandon life," went mad and committed suicide: they "begin to slip, life itself can't hang on: slowly, gently, death settles in." In later works, Kristeva has discussed the masochistic writings of Marguerite Duras as a fourth example of a woman writer of revolutionary language. Kristeva's own writings, which, as in "Stabat Mater," allow (literal and evocative) memories of maternity to infringe on her philosophic argumentation, as well as her retreat from identity politics, including feminism, are surely offered as a fifth example of the ambivalent stance a woman might take. Like Duras' writing, further, Kristeva's is often melancholic, mournful of sacrifice. She writes she was "obliged to marry" for a French passport, and we might add, with Oliver, for a passport to the Symbolic, which is nevertheless never validated.

Chapter Four: "Under the Sign of Titian": Masochism and the Renaissance

I. Fur Fetish

WARM FUR

Venus sits on the edge of a mattress of striped black and gold cloth, a slight smile on her lips. [fig. 5] She is monumental, fleshy, her body and blonde hair adorned with jewels. A luxurious red mantle of velvet trimmed with fur and elaborate embroidery of silver and gold falls off her shoulders and is drawn around her waist, revealing her ample shoulders, breasts and stomach. One hand holds the mantle together over her lap and the other covers her left breast, but not in modesty or shame. She is serene, self-aware but not selfconscious: the *pudica* gesture indicates nothing except that she is Venus, goddess of love. Two chubby, winged toddlers, her sons Eros and Anteros, stand on the bed, one holding a mirror into which Venus gazes, the other attempting to place a wreath on Venus's head, which is somewhat too high. Venus and the bed are in the immediate foreground, with no space left between them and the picture frame. A thick black curtain falls behind Venus's shoulder, closing in the small boudoir. The space which opens where the curtain is drawn back is cast in dark shadow, and seems to come forward, pushing the bed toward the picture frame, crushing it in the shallowness of the pictorial space. There is no room to the right of the mirror-holding cupid, whose wing is pressed against the frame, nor to the left of Venus, whose mantle overflows the bottom and left edges of the canvas. One realises that Venus cannot stand up and the figures cannot maneuver in this warm, soft, and claustrophobic space, smothered in fine fabrics. The charming image of the maternal goddess, enamoured of her mirror image and served by her adoring sons, becomes slightly oppressive: there is not enough air, things are too close, the ground is too soft, it is impossible to move. The only other object in the room is Love's quiver lying on the bed, and only now does one notice the traces of blood on the arrows, daubs of red from Titian's brush, and begin to perceive the suppressed violence of the sentimental scene of the Washington *Venus with a Mirror*.

In "Coldness and Cruelty," Deleuze writes,

> [Sacher-Masoch's novel] *Venus* [*in Furs*] is set under the sign of Titian, with its mystical play of flesh, fur and mirror, and the conjunction of cold, cruelty, and sentiment. The scenes in Masoch have of necessity a frozen quality, like statues or portraits; they are replicas of art, or else they duplicate themselves in mirrors.[1]

The following chapter will explore the suggestions of this passage as to the relation of masochism to art, Renaissance painting in particular, and to five mythological paintings by Titian most specifically. A Titian painting which Sacher-Masoch had seen in Dresden and to which he refers as "Venus in Front of a Mirror" figures repeatedly in and seems to have been the inspiration for the author's most famous novel, *Venus in Furs*. We are told that a cupid holds Venus's mirror in this painting, as in the Washington *Venus*, but now he is apparently unaccompanied by his brother. At one point Sacher-Masoch's character Severin writes a poem to Titian's Venus, which translates as: "*Venus in Furs*. Cold yourself, you light up flames in others. Wrap yourself up in your despot's furs; for, cruel goddess of love and beauty as you are, they are more appropriate for you than anyone else."[2] Fur figures frequently in Sacher-Masoch's tales, as in this poem and in the literature of masochism more generally – the famous "fur fetish." According to the traditional explanation of fetishism, the fetishised object replaces the sight of the female genitals, or rather her unacknowledgable lack of (male) genitals. The (male) child sees that the mother lacks (male) genitals and, unable or unwilling to process what he has seen, he freezes the moment before he saw her lack as a means of disavowing what he saw next, her "castration" and the conclusions which follow: woman's inferiority and the possibility that he too could be castrated. Whatever he saw immediately before his eyes fell on the female (absence of) genitals becomes a fetish for him, standing in for the maternal phallus which he now knows, but disavows, the non-existence of. According to this explanation, shoes may be fetishised if he was engaged in an upward glance when he first saw the mother's "lack," or fur, presumably as a fetishising of the pubic hair which his eyes took in just before noticing that there was "nothing" beneath. In relation to the Washington Venus and the conspicuous use of fur in Titian, Rona Goffen expresses a similar view:

> Titian's goddess is more modest than her classical prototype, her sex concealed from view by the fur-trimmed mantle. Titian substitutes a fold of mantle for what

> it covers, contrasting its textures and Venus' soft skin, so that the viewer yearns to touch her, as indeed she touches herself – but the stricken beholder can only imagine, or visualize, this touch in his mind's eye as he watches her. Irigaray explains what he sees, or does not see: "While her body finds itself thus eroticized and called to a double movement of exhibition and of chaste retreat in order to stimulate the drives of the 'subject,' her sexual organ represents *the horror of nothing to see*...It is already evident in Greek statuary" – including, of course, the *Venus Pudica* – "that this nothing-to-see has to be excluded, rejected, from such a scene of representation. Woman's genitals are simply absent," or, in Titian's images, made present by fetishistic proxy, the shell in the *Anadyomene*, the velvet and fur in the *Venus*.[3]

Sacher-Masoch's description of the role of fur as a fetish, as expressed in his poem to Titian's Venus, is, however, quite different from the theory put forth by Freud, accepted by Irigaray, and applied by Goffen. Indeed, Sacher-Masoch's account seems to suggest that fetishism functions differently in masochism (and in general) from a phallus-replacement or disavowal of woman's horrifying "nothing-to-see."

Sacher-Masoch sees fur working in two ways, one practical and metaphorical, the other evocative. In the first case, fur is serviceable in so far as Venus is cold. Indeed, in *Venus in Furs* Severin pragmatically suggests that Titian draped his otherwise nude model in fur so that she would not catch cold in the northern Italian clime where he painted her.[4] Sacher-Masoch sets his heroines in northern climates – they are always complaining about the chill and catching cold: they sneeze. They stay indoors, near fires in rooms hung with heavy tapestries, wrapped in furs, to ward off the cold. This is a literalisation, however, of the more important coldness which emanates *from* them, or the coldness of their character and of the masochistic scenario: in the poem, Severin tells Venus that she needs her furs because she is "cold [her]self," not because the weather is cold. So crucial is this inner coldness that Deleuze isolates it as one of the key formal elements of masochism. Naming his study of Sacher-Masoch "Coldness and Cruelty," Deleuze writes, "the trinity of the masochistic dream is summed up in the words: cold - maternal – severe, icy – sentimental – cruel,"[5] and he refers to the "ice-cold sentimentality" of the woman in masochism.[6]

"Ice-cold sentimentality" initially strikes the reader as nonsensical: sentimentality suggests warmth. The sentimental-emotional relation in masochism, like the intimate spaces in which they take place, are, indeed, almost oppressively warm. The significant

coldness of masochism which is juxtaposed with this sentimentality lies, however, not in emotionalism, but in the negation of sex: scenes of sexuality and sexuality itself are *frozen*: that is to say suspended but also excessively cold. On the one hand, then, there is an almost overwhelming emotionalism in masochism, a sentimental bond with the woman, with whom the masochist is in heated, claustrophobically decorated settings - the small, close spaces of her cluttered, tapestried rooms. Sex, on the other hand, is suspended by the coldness of the woman reaching the zero point at which actions slow down, congeal, and freeze solid, paralyzed forever in an arctic iciness which makes even Venus sneeze. The emotional warmth and sexual frigidity of masochism are, of course, in strict contradistinction from the emotional apathy and sexual excesses of sadism, just as the intimacy and intimate spaces of masochism are opposed to the coldness of human interactions in sadism and the spaces (the fortress, dungeon, monastery, cell) in which sadistic scenarios occur.

The second role of fur fetishism which Sacher-Masoch points out in his poem to Venus is that it signifies the woman's "despotism," her cruelty and power. The masochist is not paralyzed before the woman due to the horror of her having "nothing-to-see," or her inferior state of lack. On the contrary, he is prostrated before her because she lacks nothing, because of her overwhelming plenitude and absolute authority. As seen in the previous chapter, all symbolic value has been transferred onto the mother: she is a memory of the oral mother of plenitude amplified further by her co-opting of the symbolic functions of the father, and hence to speak of her as horrifying in her "nothing-to-see," in her deficiency, is in exact opposition to the masochistic state of things. This is why, against Freud and as seen in Chapter Three, there is no clinical evidence of castration anxiety in masochism. Sacher-Masoch's understanding of fur – or of fetish in general – is, in fact, upheld by post-Freudian studies of fetishism which cast serious doubt on its relation to castration fears and to a disavowal of woman's lack.

First, a general point: Freud's very idea that the male child is horrified by the sight of the female genitals, or so-called lack of genitals, which idea was fully accepted by Lacan and his followers - including feminist psychoanalytic theorists such as Irigaray, Cixous, Kristeva, and Mulvey - is clinically unsupported, as is the association of this hypothetical experience with fetishism. This is a crucial point, since the postulated

horror over woman's surmised nothing-to-see, the child's supposed focus on what he does not see rather than on what he does see, has been an almost unproblematised springboard for much subsequent theory, including, at its worst, the conjecture of woman's troubled relation to vision, and consequent relegation to the tactile world. As John Ellis, Erik Erikson, and Griselda Pollock have all pointed out, however, male desire to see, and pleasure in seeing, female genitals devoid of any fetishising distraction, pubic hair or "fur" included, is amply demonstrated by the pornography sector.[7] Ellis, Erikson, and Pollock are among the few who have rejected Freud's positing of the trauma of castration and its association with fetishism within disciplines concerned with visual culture, in which fields Freudian and Lacanian misogyny have generally been left to run rampant. In psychoanalytic and clinical studies, however, Freud's view, and Lacan and company's elaborations of it, have long been problematized and largely dismissed.

Fetishism is now thought to derive from an earlier period in infantile development than that in which castration anxiety would occur, if it occurs at all.[8] As Studlar writes, "[l]ike masochism, fetishism is believed to demonstrate a prolonged need for primary identification with the powerful pre-Oedipal mother."[9] Studlar cites M. Wulff's research according to which, "the fetish represents a substitute for the mother's breast and the mother's body; we have come into complete opposition to the content of the letter of Freud with Friedjung... in which there occurs the following..."the fetish is a penis substitute for the missing penis of the mother, and hence a means of defense against castration anxiety – and nothing else"."[10] On the contrary, the fetish is a transitional object which the child uses to ease his or her detachment from the mother during the crisis of the end of primary identification with her, at a time when the child is threatened by his or her loss of the mother's body.[11] Fetishism's etiology is with the late oral phase and it is a means of partial detachment from the mother whose body is still everything, and which lacks nothing. It is not a recoiling from the vision of her horrifying sign of inferiority, but rather a signifier of attachment to her plenitude and authority, her absolute lack of lack: Sacher-Masoch's understanding of fur fetish as appropriate to woman's "despotism," her deified power and beauty, rather than her lack, is therefore closer to the mark than Freud's unfortunate conjecture. Fur as a symbol of authority and status is also more in accordance with the context of Titian's painting: in Renaissance Venice only the

wealthy could afford such a fur-trimmed velvet mantle as Venus wears, and some kinds of fur (as well as the colour red) were legally restricted to the garments of the elite classes.[12] The Renaissance viewer of Titian's work would therefore, like Sacher-Masoch, have seen Venus's fur garment as a sign of her elevated status rather than of the inferiority implicit in Freud's and Goffen's view of fetishism.

CROSS-DRESSED FUR

Interestingly, the fur-trimmed mantle which Venus wears in the Washington painting is a man's garment, and hence more than ever a signifier of authoritative power.[13] Titian painted *Venus with a Mirror* over a portrait of a married couple. While most of the earlier image is concealed by the later work, visible now only through x-radiography, Titian preserved the outer garment of the male figure alone, reusing it as the red velvet wrap which envelopes an otherwise nude Venus. [fig. 6] This decision cannot be understood as mere artistic parsimony on Titian's part, of little consequence to the painting's meanings. The Venetian viewer would have immediately recognized that Venus was cross-dressed - the colour red, for an outer garment, may itself have been gendered male[14] - and this would most likely have been understood as a reference to prostitution, as has been argued in the case of Giorgione's *Laura* (another Venetian nude wrapped in a man's red velvet, fur-lined coat).[15] Unlike other women in Venetian Renaissance society, courtesans kept male garments in their wardrobes in order to satisfy the tastes of a particular clientele. They also sometimes wore men's clothes so as to facilitate their movement in the city, and hence their solicitation of customers.[16] Indeed, prostitutes were prosecuted for transvestitism more often than for any other crime.[17] Further, the depiction of a nude woman half-draped in a man's discarded apparel, may also provocatively suggest that there is an undressed man in the vicinity whose raiment the woman has put on, again suggesting a scenario involving illicit sex such as (though not necessarily) prostitution.

Paradoxically, given her ice-cold asexuality with respect to the masochist, the woman in masochistic fantasies is often prostituted.[18] This functions on a most obvious level as a torture to the masochist: his own desire never accomplished, he witnesses the object of his love in the embraces of others. Prostitution functions to make this torture

repetitive, always the same, like all masochistic suffering. Prostitution in masochism is also a manifestation of the female figure's plenitude: she is at once an emblem of maternity; a chaste saintly, Madonna or Diana-like figure (to use Sacher-Masoch's own imagery); and a whore: in such a way, she takes on all symbolic functions. Titian's paintings of nude or semi-nude women - like those of Giorgione and of High Renaissance Venetian painting in general – have been much debated due to the notorious ambiguity of the status of the women portrayed: concerning works such as *The Venus of Urbino*, *La Bella*, *Flora* and *Laura*, it has been diversely argued that the women portrayed are portraits of noblewomen, portraits of courtesans, the artists' working class model/lover, an ideal of femininity (chastity, wifely virtues, etc.), depictions of mythological or literary figures – maternal, deified, chaste or otherwise – or mere "pin-ups."[19] Conflicting iconography within a single work, or the absence of clear iconographic clues, often serve to make a decisive conclusion impossible. In the *Venus with a Mirror*, for instance, the iconographic signifier (other than the *pudica* gesture) which tells us this woman is Venus, is the fact that she is in the company of winged toddlers, which we identify as Eros and Anteros. Such an identification could be read as a last minute decision on Titian's part, however, as the wings on the two cupids seem to have been added hastily: they are unconvincing and oddly placed appendages on the children's shoulders. On the other hand, if Titian had wanted to assure his viewer that the woman was a mythological figure, it is strange that he placed her in a Renaissance Venetian interior with a man's contemporary garment, suggesting that she is a sixteenth century courtesan. Given such conflictual iconographic clues within single works, it is debated whether the ambiguity of Venetian paintings of women is the result of our historical perspective: the confusion arises because we simply cannot read these works as Venetians of the Renaissance could (though the Renaissance sources are themselves confused) – or whether the ambivalence is intentional: Titian *meant* the viewer's interpretation of the women to function on various levels. If we consider this famous ambivalence according to the aesthetics of masochism, however, women in Venetian painting, such as the *Venus with a Mirror*, could be argued to be simultaneously maternal (she is shown with her sons), chaste (she is, as Goffen has claimed and as it will be argued below, untouchable), and prostituted (as the coat implies), because she recalls the

oral mother whose body is plenitude and who (rather than lacking *anything*) co-opts all symbolic functions, takes up every role, including that of the father: here, she wears his coat.

Goffen argues, however, that Venus wears *Titian's* coat. Goffen's main argument throughout her book, *Titian's Women*, is the highly problematic claim that when Titian painted women he painted himself, or that all his depictions of women (nudes, Venuses, courtesans, Magdalens, portraits) were self-portraits. She writes that "the subject of Titian's women is Titian himself."[20] "Titian's Women" being the title as well as subject of Goffen's book, Goffen is simultaneously claiming that Titian was painting himself when he painted women *and* that when she writes about Titian's paintings of women, she is really writing about Titian, the artist and the man. She justifies this leap through a series of simplified and decontextualised psychoanalytic claims regarding the son's ("Titian's") identification with the mother, his need to separate from her, his inability to do so, etc.. Goffen is hence engaged in the well-charted pitfalls of artistic psychobiography. More interestingly for the present purposes, without once using the term masochism, she is adopting many of the psychoanalytic arguments regarding the son in masochism which were considered and rejected in the previous chapter. For instance, she claims that Titian identifies with the females he paints, just as Studlar states that the masochist identifies with the woman in masochistic scenarios. Further, like Studlar, Goffen argues that because he thus "identifies," the male (artist/viewer/masochist) has regressed to the oral phase and hence gender is irrelevant with relation to the work of art. Finally, presenting Titian as feminist-friendly, Goffen echoes Studlar's feminist stakes in masochism in so far as she claims that this identification with and eroticized depiction of women is not a means of objectification or domination, but is rather a case of fascinated subservience and (in some cases) self-mortifying idolization of the women, even in paintings which show male-inflicted sexual violence to the female body.

Beyond the easily-targeted problem of reducing her project to psychobiography, Goffen's overall theoretical framework can be troubled, without even considering the problems which arise case by case in her interpretations of Titian's paintings. The critique often leveled at post-structuralist feminism – that if gender identity becomes entirely detached from the sexed body, purely discursive or socially constructed, such

than men can take up the "female" linguistic placeholder or social position as easily as women can, and visa versa, then there is no longer a possibility of feminist politics because there is no longer a distinct group (women, defined by their sexed bodies) in whose interests this politics is engaged - can, for instance, be directed at Goffen's position. All of the arguments employed with respect to Studlar's use of the term "identification" in the previous chapter can also be applied to Goffen's working assumptions. Critiquing Goffen's book is not, however, the aim of the current project. Rather, points that were elaborated in the previous chapter will be developed, against or nuancing Goffen's interpretations, in relation to Titian's paintings. That is, it will be suggested that, as in the masochistic scenario in general, the son does not identify with the maternal figure and it is not the son who is submitted to or punished by her, but the image of the father. To begin with, it will be argued that the coat Venus wears in the Washington painting is not the "son's" (that is, for Goffen's psychobiographic project: Titian's) but the "father's."

FLAYED FUR

Masochistic fantasies very often entail flaying of some sort. Deleuze writes, "[m]ost of Masoch's novels contain a hunting scene which is described in minute detail: the ideal woman hunts a bear or wolf and despoils it of its fur."[21] It is usually not the masochist who is flayed but an animal, and yet the masochist relates himself to the animal's position in some way: in one Sacher-Masoch story, the masochist is sewn at his request into a wolf's skin and hunted like a wolf.[22] In another tale, "The Wild Huntress," a Diana-like figure hunts game *and* poachers on her grounds. When she discovers poachers, she has them hunted by her hounds or captured and tied to the backs of stags so that she can hunt them herself. Hunting and despoiling human males is thus a possibility of masochist fantasies at its limits, but more often the violence is mediated: the woman simply wears pelts while she engages in lesser forms of flaying, such as whipping or cutting the skin. The masochist himself is flayed only symbolically in these ways – the true flaying, signified by the woman's fur, has already happened off-scene, in the past. The wearing of fur is thus a subliminated reminder of the woman's lust for the hunt and for the violence which predicates her authority: she trails death behind her in the pelts for which

an animal (or the father) was flayed. Sacher-Masoch, like Titian, has his heroines wrapped in or lying on furs in their boudoirs: once more, we just scarcely catch the whiff of death, sense the suppressed violence, of the sensuous and intimate scenes, but, importantly, that violence has already happened, and to someone else.

Anita Phillips suggests that the significance of flaying – or its lesser versions, whipping or cutting the skin – refers to the masochist's desire to "get out of his skin," that is, to be someone else for a while, which she sees as intrinsic to much of sexuality.[23] Yet what is wrong with his skin? As Phillips points out, masochists are usually people who are relatively empowered in life: the cliché is of the important politician or business executive who goes to prostitutes to be sexually degraded. It has also been pointed out that among women (lesbians specifically), white women tend to be more interested in masochistic practices and black women almost never.[24] One disgusted black lesbian feminist argues that female masochism is an internalization and eroticisation of women's surbordinate role in society. At the same time, she states, "I don't see many Blacks into such shit."[25] One would expect that if subordination in society led to its internalization and eroticisation, black women would in fact be more likely to become masochists. On the contrary, as this feminist points out, the only black woman she knows who engages in sadomasochistic practices at all, takes the role of the dominatrix in order to have her revenge on white women. The suggestion is that far from masochism being an internalization and eroticisation of social subordination, it is specifically those persons who have a degree of power in their regular life who want to "get out of their skin," or be dependent and disempowered for a few moments in their sexual life. As such, an authority all day, the politician or business executive goes to a prostitute during his lunchbreak to find release from the pressures of power, to be subordinate for an hour, before putting back on his "skin"/powersuit. Phillips suggests that if he is not elected next term, or loses his job, the same man might change his sexual tastes. The connection between having social power and masochism could be an additional explanation for the apparently greater prevalence of male over female masochism. "Getting out of one's skin" could be the shedding of one's position of power, or, we might say, one's inhabiting of the skin of the father – the position of the law, politics, authority, language - within the Symbolic, which is more easily and more often worn by men. It is the skin of

the father, then, that is flayed. It is perhaps because it is not the masochist's own skin that must be discarded, but that of the father, which he only inhabits to a certain degree – no one *is* the Name of the Father – that symbolic forms of flaying (a flick of the whip) will do. The real flaying has already happened in the mythic past: the father is always already "abolished" in the masochistic scenario. The trace of the flayed father is in the pelt which the woman wears. Returning to Sacher-Masoch's poem to Titian's Venus, furs are appropriate to her because she is a "despot," having overthrown and abolished – indeed killed, despoiled – the previous tyrant, the oedipal father.

The fur-trimmed mantle in Titian's *Venus with a Mirror* is, as seen, appropriately a man's fur garment. Goffen claims that Venus wears a man's coat because Titian identifies with her, and hence gives her a garment that he might wear, a hint of his own masculinity. Yet, more literally, this is a painting of a coat which belonged to – not Titian, the "son" (in the story Goffen is telling) – but to another man: a patriarchal figure shown with his wife whom Titian has painted out, abolished from the canvas. The man has disappeared but his pelt has been left behind, appropriated by Venus, who, having deskinned him, slips into his mantle and his role. The daubs of red paint on Cupid's arrows can be read as references to this killing and deskinning which has happened in the past, which predicates the moment we see. As in other images of Venus and Cupid by Titian, the arrows are over-sized for the toddler Eros, suggesting that they in fact belong to the adult-sized Venus, or that mother and son have collaborated in the hunt.

Goffen perceives that Venus's appropriation of male garments is not a sign of a man's domination over the woman, as one might initially think if we view the work in light of a prostitution scenario in which she dons her client's clothes to please him. In the Renaissance a woman who took on a man's clothes was seen as taking on his authority, and hence of doing a violence to him: after transvestitism, the second most frequent crime for which prostitutes were prosecuted in the Renaissance was wearing men's hats, while the aggressive *seizing* of men's hats ranks a high fifth.[26] When a woman put on men's raiment, it was thought that some man suffered from its symbolic and literal loss, as certainly seems to have been the case when prostitutes assaulted pedestrians for their headgear, leaving them hatless and emasculated. Prositutes might taunt the de-hatted man and oblige him to sleep with them (at the usual price) to get his hat back, or they

might simply keep the hat for their own purposes if he refused. One man, returning home without his hat after such an assault, was attacked by another prostitute for the shame of walking hatless.[27] Appropriately, then, Goffen writes that "the mantle's affirmation of male presence ... suggest[s] ... Venus' co-option of his garment" in an act that "is tantamount to her co-option of her unseen admirer, functioning in effect like a Roman trophy of war – The coat is no less a sign of her conquest of him than her taking his cuirass and weapons would be. The proof of this can be seen in that touch of blood we have already noticed on Cupid's arrow."[28] Only adjusting Goffen's claim slightly, it is not the pelt of Venus's "unseen admirer" that we see, but that of the dictator whom she has overthrown in order to establish her own despotic rule, and it is a trophy, not of war, but of the hunt.

A picture of the father and mother, the husband and wife, has therefore been painted out, replaced by an image of the mother alone with the son. He adores her, loves her, crowns her with flowers. What remains of the father is his pelt, a trace of punishment in an otherwise playful image. In such a way, as commentators have not failed to notice, is the suffering, violence, and eroticism of masochism so often and so strangely suppressed beneath the "innocent games of children, or the frolics of a lovely woman."[29]

II. Masochism and Vision: the Diana paintings

THE STRICKEN BEHOLDER

Of Titian's *Venus with a Mirror*, we have seen that Goffen claims that "the viewer yearns to touch her, as indeed she touches herself – but the stricken beholder can only imagine, or visualize, this touch in his mind's eye as he watches her." In the same context she writes that "[e]nticed yet unable to touch, the beholder understands that only sight can appreciate this beauty."[30] Visuality is important to an analysis of masochistic longing, as desire is most often suspended by the woman's coldness at this level of sight. In a passage which evokes the complexity and significance of the exchange of gazes in masochism, Sacher-Masoch writes: "In a kind of holy frenzy she glares with flashing eyes into those of her victim, who gazes at her devouringly, caressing her, so to speak,

through a mist of tears; she stares at that flesh, aware that he is at her mercy: his entire soul, his very thoughts, belong to her."[31] The masochist is said to visually *consume* the woman, to touch her with his eyes despite her fury, in a way that writers on visual culture such as Mulvey would see as implying domination and a form of violence to the female object of the gaze. Yet beyond the fact that the woman also "has the gaze" - flashing, glaring eyes, moreover - it is clear from this passage that the male gazer cannot possess the woman he desires: it is he who, in Sacher-Masoch's terms, "belong[s] to her." The voyeur looks, not to possess or subordinate, but because he cannot have, because he is arrested by the woman's authority or beauty, power or plenitude. He gazes because his desire is fascinated, fastened at the level of fantasy. Voyeurism, then, is not a position of power, not sadistic or possessive, but is a suspended gaze at what one cannot touch because one is unworthy, and hence is better described as self-deprecating and implying the very absence of power and possession.

The very different aesthetics of sadism and masochism result in divergent forms of visuality, and perhaps also in different genres (or types within a genre) of visual art. The coldness of masochism freezes actions, fastens scenes that seem to be just before the climax of sex or violence, such as the exchange of gazes – one longing, the other forbidding or enraged – that Sacher-Masoch describes. The suspension is not broken, however, and the masochist remains caught in the frozen moment which Deleuze describes as resembling "photographic" stills or *tableaux vivants*: the whip, the touch, violence, love, is forever about to fall but never falling. It is this agonised visual world in which the object of sight is stilled at the instant before climax, before dissolution, before touch, which explains for Deleuze Sacher-Masoch's interest in paintings, such as the works of Titian which he evokes.[32]

Like the photograph, paintings can fasten forever the *tableaux vivants* of masochistic fantasy. The serial action of sadism, on the contrary, is almost too quick for vision: everything must be immediately accessible to the sadist's gaze, but not because the visual consumption is important in itself, but simply because this is a prerequisite of his more significant tactile access to the body. Further, once he has had this sexual access, the body is discarded and forgotten, whereas objects of visual art tend to preserve the depicted body both physically and temporally, or for memory. Indeed, Sade notes the

inability of visual art to capture the beauty of the libertine scene: in *Juliette*, a libertine exclaims, "Ah, if only an engraver could record for posterity this divine and voluptuous scene! But lust, which all too quickly crowns our actors, might not have allowed the artist time to portray them. It is not easy for art, which is motionless, to depict an activity the essence of which is movement."[33] Given Sade's insight into the relation of sadism to visual art, it is unsurprising that the paintings which were analyzed as Sadean in Chapter Two involved a *series* of *spalliere*, each of which moves the eye from one scene to the next within a single work, and then into another panel, thereby allowing the movement required by the action and serial nature of the sadistic aesthetic. In such a way, the works transcend to some degree the normal temporal suspension of painting as an artform: "sadism demands a story" and a story demands motion and time. It is also suggestive of the accuracy of Sade's claim that the discussion of sadism in visual culture has revolved around film, a visual art which, as Sade could not have known, would defy the overall motionlessness and timelessness of painting and photography. Finally, Sade himself evokes the appropriately ephemeral visual artform of theatre in this passage, when he calls the libertines and their victims "actors," whose swift actions an engraver could not capture – the theatricality of sadism has already been discussed. In Titian, however, there is no story so rapid, so fleeting that the brush cannot save it. Rather, time is stopped: there is a suspended moment, a tremulous interchange of gazes, before the action, the touch, the climax which will never happen.[34] This intensity of gazes and photographic suspension of temporality, violence, and sex which characterizes masochism is nowhere so apparent in Titian's works as in his paintings of Diana, chaste goddess of the hunt.

B(L)INDING LOVE: PLAYFUL MASOCHISM

Titian's *Venus Blindfolding Cupid*, also known as the *Punishment of Cupid*, is not, strictly speaking, a depiction of the virginal, misandrous goddess of the hunt, but rather of her unlike sister, Aphrodite, the amorous, adulterous and fecund deity of love. [fig. 7] Nevertheless, quite unprecedentedly, Titian includes two nymphs armed with bow and arrows – the normal companions of Diana – in a depiction of Venus with her two sons. The wood nymphs, who, armed as such, we would expect to see in the forest grotto or at the hunt, now find themselves, oddly, in the typical spaces of masochism: the cluttered

boudoir of a punishing woman. It could perhaps be argued that the nymphs are not Diana's, but companions of Venus, who, as Goffen suggests, merely hold arms because, upon Venus's command and as part of his chastisement, they have deprived Eros of his weapons. Yet Venus is not normally shown with female companions, but rather alone, or with her lovers, Mars or Adonis, or with the fruits of her love, Eros and Anteros. Further, the weapons, even more so than in the Washington *Venus with a Mirror*, are outsized for the cupids, the bow being larger than either child and the quiver almost as great, implying that they belong to the women themselves.

Though iconographically odd, if we seek to explain *The Punishment of Cupid* in terms of the properties of masochism, it can be argued that elements of Diana are being juxtaposed with an image of Venus in order to create a picture of female punitive authority which, once more, takes on all symbolic functions. Venus is shown, quite unusually, as a chastising figure, while Diana is well known for her stern castigation of figures such as Callisto and Actaeon. On the other hand, whereas Venus is sensuous and maternal, Diana is cold and violent. While Sacher-Masoch's women, attempting to take up all these roles within a single person, are temperamental and equivocal, placing Venus and Diana together constitutes the impossible masochistic ideal, not in a single person but in a single work.

In *Venus with a Mirror*, punishment is merely referred to through the traces of blood and the man's mantle which Venus wears, signifying an off-scene killing and co-opting of authority. Suspension, in this work, is but a sensation the viewer has in the claustrophobic intimacy of Venus's boudoir: he feels he cannot move and cannot breathe in this space, and hence no action can take place: time stands still. In *Venus Blindfolding Cupid*, the space is again crowded and overwhelmed by fabrics, but a window opens up onto the airy mountains of Pieve di Cadore. On the other hand, punishment is more explicit, if more playful: the nymphs are armed and Venus is binding the eyes of one of her sons, while looking at the other with an ambiguous glance. Goffen writes that her "expression suggest[s] that he has reason to fear similar punishment," but one could also see the calm, backwards glance and slight smile of Venus as indicating maternal fondness. In an ambivalent look, perhaps Titian has managed the conflictual demands of the masochistic ideal: she is at once "cold - maternal – severe, icy – sentimental – cruel."

Anteros's look, in turn, is downcast, while Love, and Love's eyes specifically, are being bound. The punishment of Eros thus involves a playful bondage and a suspension of vision. While in *Venus with a Mirror*, Goffen has argued that the viewer, like the cupids, can do nothing but look at Venus, but is paralyzed to touch, here even the sight of the male is threatened, forbidden, tied up by the castigating woman, whose look freezes even as it is warm.

DIANA DISCOVERED BY ACTAEON: MASOCHISM PROPER

In *Diana Discovered by Actaeon*, a male, mortal hunter has stumbled into a grotto where Diana is bathing with her nymphs. [fig. 8] His sight of her nudity is unintentional, and yet, as in Diana's punishment of her own nymph Callisto, innocence is irrelevant. Though male and armed, accompanied by a hunting hound, Actaeon is instantly fearful before Diana's naked beauty, dropping his bow in alarm. Physically he recoils: his body leans back and he holds up his arm as if to block the offending path of his eyes. Her fixed, enraged glare, however, tells us that he is already doomed. Titian's viewer knows the sequel to the moment we see: Diana transforms Actaeon into a stag and he is hunted by Diana and, in Titian's words, "torn to shreds by his own dogs."[35] The dogs do not recognize their master in the stag they kill, though he, despite his metamorphosis, remains conscious of his identity and hence suffers more. Titian's depiction of the moment that Actaeon discovers Diana, or, more to the point, that she discovers that he has seen her, is charged with the knowledge of his impending punishment, which is fearfully foretold by the gaze of Diana which sears through the space separating victim and goddess.

In masochism, as in the punishment of Actaeon, the victim is innocent of the crime. As seen, it is the father's *imago* which must be abolished. Because of this, the punishment may be merely symbolic or even playful, as in the *Punishment of Cupid*, or, when more fearsome, it may be put off - about to happen, it imbues the scene with its imminence. What is at stake, in Anita Phillips's words, is the "getting out of one's skin," the skin which resembles the father. Actaeon, in the punishment which is ominously foreshadowed in *Diana Discovered by Actaeon*, appropriately finds his skin punished: it is transformed into that of a stag, and it is shredded by dogs. Importantly, the punishing

(abolishing) of the father pre-dates the masochistic scenario, while the punishment of the masochist (if it is not symbolic) is impending rather than present. The masochist is thus put in an agonized state of suspension, longing for the inapproachable woman, expecting pain, attending sex or violence just before it happens, though it may never happen. If it happens, the masochistic scenario may well dissolve.

The scene of *Diana Discovered by Actaeon* is one of masochism proper: Actaeon is paralyzed by fear, expecting retribution for his trespass to be an instant away, frozen by the furious gaze of the punishing woman so that he cannot move, and he sees but even his vision is offending. We are in the mythic past in so far as the father has *already* been abolished – the woman is already the authority: Actaeon does not think for a moment of overpowering her – which the use of mythology, in Sacher-Masoch as in Titian, facilitates. Though set in the mythic past, the future - our awareness of the punishment about to befall Diana's victim – saturates the moment. But this moment does not come, and we are hence fastened to a now which is also long gone and never to come. Time is in a state of arrestation, with present, past and future oppressively unified in defiance of linear temporality. While of Sade, as of the scenes in Botticelli's Nastagio panels, motion, action and time proceed, and hence it can be said, "It could all continue, or it could start all over again," in *Diana Discovered by Actaeon* the transfixion of gazes, Actaeon's upheld arm and agonized awaiting of retribution, must not move, proceed in time, but are rather suspended forever.[36] Appropriately, Titian's *sequel* to the painting, *The Death of Actaeon*, was never completed.

THE *DEATH OF ACTAEON*: MASOCHISM SURPASSED

A masochistic narrative proper cannot end, since arrestation of the story is its most significant property. Paralysed in agony, the only thing to do with it, in a sense, is put it out of its misery: the achievement of the masochist's desire, of the death drive, is ultimately death, whether (for Freud) biological, or (for Lacan) textual. Freud understands the death drive, of which masochism is the paradigmatic expression, as desiring the organic extinguishing of life – which morbid theory created an outcry in the psychoanalytic community.[37] Lacan, more moderately, and rereading Freud in terms of structural linguistics, sees the death drive's resolution in the dissolution of language[38]: as

in Kristeva, a true return to the maternal, the fulfillment of incestuous desire, will kill, not necessarily the speaker or writer, but language, which is left incomprehensible or silent. As such, to end a masochistic scenario either the masochist must die, or the masochism of the text must be put out: that is, it will either become indecipherable or silent, or will be transformed into something which is no longer masochism. Some of Sacher-Masoch's characters get killed by their torturesses, which ends the tale, but in other cases the women exceed their role without killing the male, and then the masochist stops the game and the text: in *Venus in Furs*, for instance, Wanda goes too far, surpassing Severin's fantasies. At this point she has him beaten by her new lover and leaves him, and he ceases to be a masochist; having learned that it is preferable to beat women than adore them, Severin's memoirs end on this singularly unmasochistic note. The note, or the formal properties of the last pages of Sacher-Masoch's tales, are not, however, sadistic, even if both main characters seem to derive pleasure from inflicting violence. Masochism may cease, dissolve, die, or become something else, but it can never enter the unrelated world of sadism. Severin's decision to become a "sadist" is a sentimental, heartbroken one, as is Wanda's; they are never apathetic. Further, the suspended repetition of masochism, once broken, ends the story, rather than turning into the repetition of sadism, which makes the story endless: "it could all begin again." Deleuze claims that both masochism and sadism may degenerate into entities which in superficial clinical terms resemble the other, but a study of their formal elements demonstrates that there is never an overlap, not even at the limits and death of either perversion.

In the *Death of Actaeon*, masochism is at its limits and is about to be (or is perhaps already) surpassed. The painting begins to dissolve until, at the site of the suffering body, it is almost illegible, and, ultimately, it falls silent, is left unfinished – apparently unfinish*able*, as Titian lived many more years with the work in his possession, without ever adding the final touches or sending the promised work to its patron, Philip II. [fig. 9] With the *Death of Actaeon* we are brought closer to the victim's punishment than in the earlier *Discovery*; indeed we are brought too close. Diana runs onto the left side of the canvas, her left arm extended with bow poised to shoot Actaeon – poised, but never to shoot, for the bow has no string, and the contracted fingers of Diana's right hand hold no arrow. Remaining with the depiction of Diana, then, the moment of Actaeon's

punishment is still arrested, though now it is unbearably imminent, not only because the arrow is not shot, but because it was never painted. To the right of the canvas, however, we see Actaeon already transforming into a stag, and his hounds are upon him, their claws tearing his flesh: the skin's punishment is occurring. While the left side of the image may have maintained masochistic suspense at its very limit, to the right it is exceeded, and the masochistic scenario is left behind, the image dissolves. While Diana is confidently painted, relatively defined, her body delineated, her white skin and red garment luminous and clear against the dark ground, Actaeon's transforming body is insubstantiated before our eyes, his stag's head almost indistinguishable from the brushstrokes and the (non)colour of the foliage behind him. As in Botticelli's Nastagio *spalliere*, this is the moment itself of the human hunt: his body, like that of the daughter of Paolo Traversari, is already opened, not yet dead but surely dying. As in the case of Anastagi's victim, leaped upon by hounds, the body is not suspended, but falling. Sadism goes further: the body is also shown dead, and shown precisely, its entrails devoured. Already in the *Death of Actaeon*, however, the suspension is broken, time proceeds, the action is happening, a story is concluding, and masochism has been left behind. The properties of the work are not transformed into the aesthetics of sadism, however, because when it seems to, the moment dissolves in unbearable emotion, rather than, as in sadism, being dissected in its precision, repeatedly and apathetically. The act which brings a close to masochism may be one that characterizes sadism, but it happens only once, and this is enough to extinguish the scene, while in sadism it is only the beginning.

III. Masochism and History

MASOCHISM AND SACRED LOVE

Male masochistic writers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have drawn heavily on aspects of late medieval, Renaissance and Baroque life and art, such as courtly love, the cult of the Virgin, and depictions of the sufferings of male victims and martyrs in Christian art. In tales reminiscent of the medieval and Renaissance adoration of Mary, for instance, Sacher-Masoch bestows the title of "the mother of God" on one of his heroines, the head of a religious sect. He calls another heroine "Mardonna," and speaks

of "woman – the virgin - …the sovereign idol!"[39] The male victims of such Madonnaesque torturesses may be presented as Christ-like, their suffering clearly referential to the Passion, as in one story in which a man is crowned with thorns and flogged, and in tales involving masochistic suspension by means of crucifixion.[40] Also drawing on Christian themes which had long since died out by the time he was writing, Sacher-Masoch has one of his protagonists muse on "the dreams of Paradise that will make him like one of those saints of old whose flesh was purified by being incessantly mortified," such saints as Jerome who were so often depicted in Renaissance art. Similarly, the sufferings of particular martyrs such as St. John the Baptist are frequently evoked.[41] Sacher-Masoch's character Severin in *Venus in Furs* envies the fate of Holofernes, and Michel Leiris, in his twentieth century account of male masochism, writes of his passionate identification with Cranach the Elder's depiction of the unfortunate general – or rather of his severed head in the hands of a beautiful Judith.

Of course, the fact that Renaissance religious beliefs and their reflection in art have proved fruitful for masochistic fantasies in later centuries, in no way demonstrates that they served a similar function in their original context, any more than Sade's recourse to spaces and themes of medieval and Renaissance fortresses, monasteries, and feudal economics immediately implies the existence of sadism in the pre-modern period. On the other hand, the tendency of male artists to include self-portraits in their images of martyrs and other unfortunates is surely suggestive that some sort of psychic investment and pleasure in suffering – frequently at the hands of a beautiful woman – existed as early as the Renaissance. In an early work, Titian painted his features on the severed head of St. John the Baptist, held in the arms of a lovely Salome who is gazed upon adoringly by a third, male figure.[42] [fig. 10] Salome's expression as she gazes at the Baptist's head, like that of Venus in *The Punishment of Cupid*, is strangely ambiguous, and could be read as either callous and cold, or as sentimental, introspective and sad. In an early example of the same tendency towards self-deprecating self-portrayal, Donatello is said to have placed his own features on the decapitated head of Holofernes in his bronze *Judith*. Similarly, Carravagio depicted himself as Holofernes in his gruesome depiction of the moment at which Judith slices through the male figure's neck. Moving from decapitations (in which area the examples can be further multiplied) to flayings,

Michelangelo portrayed himself as St. Bartholomew's sheath of skin in the Sistine Chapel's *Last Judgement*[43], while Titian includes his own features on the face of King Midas who sadly observes the flaying of Marsyas.[44] [fig. 11]

The stories of King Midas and Marsyas are unrelated – the two figures should never appear in the same scene – but it seems that Titian conflated them because both protagonists were guilty of aesthetic misjudgement: Midas overestimated the flute-playing capabilities of Pan, judging them superior to Apollo's, while Marsyas had the hubris to deem his own musical skills comparable to the god's. Midas is punished with ass's ears, while Marsyas is stripped of his skin. Watching the punishment of Marsyas in Titian's canvas, the aged and humiliated king, depicted as the artist himself, compares himself to the even more unfortunate satyr. In Titian's version, following the example of Guilio Romano, the flayed Marsyas is suspended upside-down for his punishment. However, while Romano represented the male and specifying attributes of Apollo – his genitals and his arrows – Titian casts the torturer's pubic region in shadows and removes the signifiers of the god, other than the laurel wreath which he places in Apollo's curling blond hair. Titian simultaneously feminizes Apollo by rendering him paler than any of the male figures in the work and endowing his beardless face with a sweetness of expression that, if not quite androgynous, de-emphasises the masculinity of the torturing figure. The use of the theme of punishment through flaying and suspension, the sentimental gazes, the elision of the sexual explicitness present in Romano's version, and the resignation of the suffering satyr, all indicate elements of a masochistic aesthetic.

With the exception of Titian's *Marsyas*, these images of self-deprecatory self-portraiture are found in works of religious art, and functioned in a specifically Christian context. Writing on Christianity in *Powers of Horror*, Kristeva notes the tendency of Christianity to joy in [*on en jouit*] abjection: the drinking of Christ's blood; the eating of his body; the relics; the milk; the tears; the Father-Son-Holy Ghost hybridity which troubles the monotheism of the Hebrew God; the tales of saints sucking the wounds of lepers; the eroticised love of the wounded body, the broken skin, on the part, for instance, of "brides of Christ" and female saints. The fascination and adoration of God is expressed in orality, in swallowing and ingestion, in the breaking down of the boundaries between God and man, in failed or missed identification with him, through the

representation of his suffering, opened, and human body. Christ is so often depicted drinking of mortal milk, and his blood is drunk by mortals. Like the Christian God(s), Mary becomes more hybrid and ambivalent over the centuries, becoming quasi-deified as her cult grew, while her humanness was also emphasised, and often through the fluids of her body – her milk, her tears at the Passion. The intactness (the non-abjection) of Mary's goddess-woman's body was always at issue, needing to be theologically bolstered by hagiographic inventions, such as of her bodily assumption into heaven (that she could never be a corspe, rot, lose that intactness). All this is in strict opposition to the abominations of abjection in Judaism, in which the wounded, discharging body is ejected from the temple, in which God is so Other from man that he cannot be named or represented, moreover embodied, identified with, wounded, eaten and drunk, or that concern over his rotting could ever arise. Orality, with its incestuous connotations – the masochistic moment - is the locus, not of adoration as in Christianity, but of the severest abominations, which Kristeva has argued function as incest taboos: not cooking a calf in its mother's milk, etc.. While sexuality is despised by but pervades and perversifies Christianity at every level, in Judaism it is obligatory, spoken and hence contained.

Intriguingly, Kristeva sums up the pleasures of Christianity's relation to abjection with the line: "such are the pangs and delights of masochism," and it is characteristics that have been found to be masochistic, and to characterise the paintings analysed above, that are deemed by her to be "abject by definition": ambiguity, failed identification with the mother, "the violence of mourning for an "object" that has always already been lost," the breakdown of the skin.[45] Whatever the bloodflow, the explicit discussion of body fluids, in Sade - or in *Leviticus* - they are, for Kristeva, anything but abject, because it is through such naming that abjection is contained or expelled, leaving nothing heterogeneous or ambivalent. Kristeva thus finds that the extreme *discretion* and *hygiene* of Proust, his strangely oblique description of unseen sex, followed by washing – a discretion which is comparable to that of Sacher-Masoch – is abject – and hence subversive of the Symbolic order, we might add masochistic - in a manner that Sade is not. In Christianity, as in Proust or Sacher-Masoch, such things are always the issue but never named: no theologian ever *said* that the debate over Mary's Assumption pivoted around the issue of her abject, decomposing body. Because it is not said, such abjection

haunts Christianity: even once it was more or less decided that Mary's body was assumed, and hence penetrated by neither man, nor childbirth, nor death, relics of her milk, pleasures in her lost, leaking body, continued to be adored. Abjection needs prohibition, hence the law, whereas masochism abolishes the law of the father – found in Sade, in the Hebrew bible – which might have contained it. This is accomplished through the suffering of the son, the suspended, suffering Son who troubles the logos – the Oneness, or the language and its prohibition - of the Father: in the beginning there was the Word, but the masochist remembers something before this symbolisable beginning.[46]

MASOCHISM AND PROFANE LOVE

In *The Boundaries of Eros*, Guido Ruggiero writes:

> Lately the thesis has been proposed that in the Renaissance there was a feminization of life engendered by the virtual domination of the childhood years by young mothers who, because they were so much younger than their husbands, bridged the generational gap between fathers and sons. In a society that put strong demands for masculinity on males, the dominating woman of a child's early years may well have created deep tensions in young males, especially when those young males found themselves in prolonged, relatively powerless adolescence. In such a situation the victimization of extremely young and clearly virginal females takes on a deeper meaning. Such crimes provided a violent and hence more masculine (by Renaissance terms) means of expressing power and sexual superiority over the female. And similarly, her virginity and extreme youth at marriage helped to assure a wife absolutely unlike the once powerful mother – a wife who was too innocent and untrained to be a threat to the male just leaving adolescence and still insecure in his power. As the marriage manuals and moralists of the Renaissance loved to point out, a young virgin wife was still maleable and could be trained to serve her husband and his interests well. Was not our young man being told here as well that in her virginity there was a guarantee of a weak woman whom he could handle?[47]

As discussed in Chapter One, men frequently married in their late twenties or early thirties to brides half their age and just past menarche. The erotic taste for very young women or girls on the part of adult men of the Renaissance is indicated, as Ruggiero points out, by the proclivity of men to rape *puellae* – girls as young as eight or ten years old - and this inclination is carried into the preference for extremely young brides. An

adolescent would therefore have had a mother who was still in her twenties, while his father would be distanced from him by a great age, being already, by Renaissance standards, quite old. The non-participation of fathers in Renaissance childraising – exasperated by the strict public-male/private-female divide of Renaissance life – would have further distanced the father from the child's domestic experience. The authoritative figure as well as the object of intimate, filial love of a Renaissance childhood would therefore have been the mother in most cases, while the father would very often have been absent, distant, off-scene, and probably unloved.

Courtly love can be partly explained as a revisiting of the relation of the male child to the young mother. The woman in courtly love is socially elevated above the lover, as the mother has authority over the child. The beloved woman, like the mother, is often already married, making her sexually as well as socially inaccessible, and sexually more mature than the adoring male. Nevertheless, she still has time to hear the lover's outpourings and to receive his flattery, much like the mother is intimate with the child while simultaneously putting limits on this intimacy. The goal of courtly love, like the incestuous desires of masochism, is not marriage, but rather a spiritual affair, or perhaps – though not normally – adultery. While some scholars have viewed courtly love as a sign of respect for women in the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, a proof that misogyny was not so rampant as other sources would indicate, others have pointed out the utter irrelevance of the literature of courtly love to what we know about the real lives of medieval and Renaissance women.[48] Certainly, no man's wife was the object of his courtly love, or of any similar sort of elevation by him or treatment. As Ruggiero's study makes clear, a man looked for an entirely different type of woman in his bride – the innocence of extreme youth, maleability, inferiority, sex – than he would in the object of such courtly adoration.

The radical divide between the women men adored and the women they had sex with has been frequently analysed in relation to medieval and Renaissance ideology: the madonna/whore distinction is present in theology (the Mary/Eve paradigm, under which all further discussion of Christian women fell); in literature (Dante's Beatrice versus Chaucer's Wife of Bath); and in art: for instance, to keep to the study of Titian, in the early murals for the scuola of St. Anthony in Padua, a wife is deemed adulterous and

murdered (by her husband), while two mothers find themselves exonerated and provided with proofs of love (by their sons). Goffen notes that such an "exaltation" of the mother juxtaposed with negative portrayals of the sexuality of wives, is typical of Renaissance representations.[49] The Titian works are, according to Goffen, supposedly somewhat different, since the wife who is murdered for adultery is, in fact, innocent. It is significant, however, that Titian chose not to indicate her innocence through any pictorial clues, such as through the depiction of her resuscitation by Saint Anthony, which would have been iconographically standard for such a hagiographic tale. Instead, however, Titian chooses to foreground the wife's violent death at her husband's hand, and to portray St. Anthony pardoning her husband, which suggests that the artist's views of wives and mothers, or whores and madonnas, was not so different from those of his contemporaries. Given this ideological uniformity between theology, literature, and art - between Titian's paintings and those of less innovative artists - it is not surprisingly that the unbridgeable divide between the women one loved and the women one impregnated is also a factor in Renaissance life: the current example is the dominant mother of Renaissance childhood versus the *puellae* whom men raped, and the scarcely-older brides whom they married.

Casting this discussion in terms of masochism and sadism: many of the particularities of rape in the Italian Renaissance have already been analysed in Chapter One as sadistic, while it is not difficult to see the commonalities between the scenario of a dominant mother, an absent father, and courtly love, with the psychic etiology of masochism discussed in Chapter Three. The father, though the true authority in Renaissance society, is (,it is possible for the child to believe,) abolished, or already absent, in the childhood world of the Renaissance home. The mother, older and an authority over the child, is nevertheless not so distant from him – she is still youthful - and she is confined (literally, in the Renaissance) to the sorts of intimate spaces which characterise masochism. His love for her, like that for the beloved of courtly love, is intense and infantile, self-deprecatory, and forever suspended, a returning to a moment that is already lost The agonised pleasures of this frustrated, claustrophic and suspended longing find artistic expression in the writings of courtly love (and perhaps in the worship of, and depictions of Mary), and resonate in the works of Titian discussed above. At the

same time, as Ruggiero suggests, such masochistic love is relieved by the very different kind of relations which characterised Renaissance men's other interactions with women: that is, rape and marriage to maleable young brides. Such young brides were the spectators of paintings such as Botticelli's *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*, *The Birth of Venus* and similar images of nuptial rape that characterise cassoni. Once more, such a juxtaposition of sexual possibilities within the life of an individual man – masochism with the mother and the beloved, sadism with the rape victim and the wife – like the ability to equivocate between courting a woman and raping her, and courting her again, indicates that Foucault is correct that sexual identies were only distilled in the modern period, whereas in the Renaissance there would have been no sexualities, but only contextualised sexual acts.

CONCLUSIONS

While sadism was seen in Chapter Three to reiterate and invest in patriarchal law - as was shown to be the social function of rape and of such paintings as Botticelli's *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti* within their original, nuptial context - masochistic textual practices were argued to have greater subversive potential. This potential, however, it was further argued, is not to be exaggerated, for – *especially* in the Renaissance - it is the result of a specifically male fantasmic construct: in masochism, woman is only empowered within a son's dream. Indeed, it will be this chapter's ultimate conclusion that in a Renaissance context the subversiveness of masochistic textual/sexual practices was indeed very slight. The Renaissance child's view of the world, in which the mother dominated the household and was invested with symbolic authority, or in which the object of his courtly love was impossibly superior to him, corresponded little with the manner in which the woman he thus elevated in his desires would have experienced her world. Diana, the wild, chaste huntress of Titian's paintings, was painted for men – was a male fantasy.[50] The similarly misandrous and independent Amazon queen, like the unnamed daughter of Paolo Traversari who attempts to reject her suitor, is raped and married or killed in the decorations of cassoni and nuptial chambers - painted for women, and not for their fantasies, but in greater resonance with their Renaissance lives.

[1] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 69. The point that masochism – in Sacher-Masoch's tales and in Titian, such as in two of the four images to be analysed in this chapter – uses mirrors is significant, and not to be confused with the use of mirrors in sadism, which was discussed in Chapter Two. In sadism it was noted that mirrors are always multiple, in order to accumulate bodies and in order to avoid the introspective nature of gazing at one's reflection in a single mirror (there is no "soul" in sadism, but only anatomical parts, seen from all angles in multiplied mirrors). Masochism, on the other hand, does not accumulate bodies, but idolised the body of one, individual woman. She is often shown with a single mirror, therefore, never will many, which serves not only the introspective and romantic function of masochism, but also as a capturing or freezing of her image – she is always still before the mirror, as in a famous scene in *Venus in Furs* - somewhat like the photograph or painting, which will be discussed below. Indeed, in *Venus in Furs*, it as a result of being spellbound before the frozen image of Wanda posed before a mirror that Wanda and Severin decide to have a portrait painted of her in exactly this pose, to preserve it timelessly. This painting is shown hanging beside a Titian painting of "Venus Holding a Mirror" in the opening scene of the novel. Both sadism and masochism are interested in mirrors, therefore, just as both employ bondage and entail repetition, but as in the latter two cases, the function of the mirror or mirrors is entirely different in one perversion from in the other.

[2] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus im Pelz*, translated by H. J. Henning as *Venus in Furs* (London: Luxor, 1965): 33.

[3] Rona Goffen, *Titian's Women* (New Haven and London: Yale University press, 1997): 137.

[4] *Venus in Furs*: 28.

[5] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 45.

[6] Ibid.: 52.

[7] John Ellis, "Photography/Pornography/Art/Pornography," *Screen* 21 (Spring 1980): 120; Erik Erikson, "Womanhood and the Inner Space," in *Identity, Youth and Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1965): 296; Griselda Pollock, "What's Wrong with Images of Women," *Screen Education* 24 (Autumn 1977): 30.

[8] Robert Dickes writes that the stage at which fetish might serve to replace the mother's phallus, as opposed to her breast and body in general, is a "late stage of the development of a fetish. Ordinarily ... *never reached*": Robert Dickes, "Fetishistic Behaviour: A Contribution to Its Complex Development and Significance," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* 11 (1963): 327. Even more strong, S. Nagler writes that castration anxiety and the notion of a female phallus-replacement has no formative role in the development of fetishism: "Fetishism: A Review and a Case Study," *Psychiatric Quarterly* 31(1957): 725.

[9] Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure*: 40.

[10] M. Wulff, "Fetishism and Object Choice in Early Childhood," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* 15 (1945): 465-468, cited in Studlar: 40.

[11] Importantly, on this model, female fetishism can be explained, while on Freud/Lacan/Mulvey/Irigaray's model, there can only be male fetishism and hence the existence of female fetishism – it does exist – poses a problem.

[12] Stella Mary Newton, *The Dress of the Venetians 1495-1525* (Aldershot, 1988).

[13] Goffen, *Titian's Women*: 138.

[14] Stella Mary Newton, *The Dress of the Venetians 1495-1525*: 18-19. Discussed in Junkerman, f. 21: ""The colour red, especially for outer garments, may itself have been gendered, if not strictly so. Patrician men wore red togas for official occasions, and members of the government in high offices were required to dress in one of several significant shades of red, which could be arranged in an ascending hierarchy from *paonazzo* to *scarlatto* to *cremesino*."

[15] Anne Christine Junkerman, "The Lady and the Laurel," *Oxford Art Journal* 16, n. 1 (1993): 49-58.

[16] Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981): 166, 175, 175 n. 118, 177.

[17] Richard Trexler, *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence* (Birmingham, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994): 394- 7; see also table 7, page 399.

[18] Sacher-Masoch prostituted his own wife as well as his heroines, which Deleuze discusses in "Coldness and Cruelty." Prostitution is a function of the female masochistic *Story of O*, though naturally it functions differently: the masochist is tortured directly through prostitution, rather than in the witnessing of it.

[19] Junkerman gives a summary of such conflicting scholarship, which tries to define the status of the women in Venetian High Renaissance paintings, which she deems essentialist and unproductive:"The Lady

and the Laurel": 49 ff.. *Titian's "Venus of Urbino*, ed. Rona Goffen (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), is a book-length study of the debates concerning the identity (courtesan, wife, goddess, pornographic object, womanly ideal, artist's mistress, patron's mistress, patron's father's mistress) of the *Venus of Urbino*.

[20] Goffen, *Titian's Women*: 10-11

[21] Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 61.

[22] For a discussion of this tale, see Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 94.

[23] Anita Phillips, *A Defense of Masochism*: 8, 73.

[24] Maryel Norris, "An Opinionated Piece on Sadomasochism," in *Against Sadomasochism: a Radical Feminist Analysis*, ed. by Robin Ruth Linden, Darlene R. Pagano, Diana E. H. Russell, Susan Leigh Star (East Palo Alto, California: Frog in the Well, 1982): 107.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Trexler, *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence*: table 7: 399.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Goffen, *Titian's Women*: 138 ff.

[29] The citation, also quoted in Chapter Three, is from Deleuze: 25. Theodor Reik writes also that masochism "contains a playful element": *Masochism in Modern Man*, trans. Margaret Beigel and Gertrud Kruth (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1941): 310; also Deleuze: 145, 163; also Studlar, *In the Realm of Pleasure*: 96-7. Studlar claims this playfulness relates to the fantasies of masochism being based on infantile desire and a "parody of guilt," on "deceptive play."

[30] Goffen, *Titian's Women*: 136.

[31] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, "Girls Who Whip Men," in *The Master Masochist: Tales of a Sadistic Mistress* [this title, obviously, is the editors, as the terms "masochist" and "sadistic" were not yet coined when Sacher-Masoch wrotes the stories assembled in this sensationally presented, introduced and illustrated collection], translation by Eric Lemuel Randall (London: Senate: 1968): 60.

[32] Deleuze: 69 ff.

[33] Cited in Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty": 70.

[34] For an interesting discussion of some of the differences between the viewing experiences (and audiences) of painted panels on furnishings and *spalliere* such as Botticelli's, and of "high art," mythological "set pieces" or independent easel paintings such as Titian's – also intended for domestic viewing, but of a different order – see Rose Marie San Juan's article, "Mythology, Women and Renaissance Private Life: The Myth of Eurydice in Italian Furniture Painting," *Art History* 15, n. 2 (June 1992): 127-45.

[35] Cited in Goffen, *Titian's Women*: 253.

[36] Hénaff, *Sade*: 20.

[37] For an interesting discussion of the history of the theory of the death drive, in Freud and Lacan and in its reception by the psychoanalytic community, see Richard Boothby, *Death and Desire: psychoanalytic theory in Lacan's return to Freud* (New York: Routledge, 1991).

[38] See Boothby; also Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Essays on the Pleasures of Death* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

[39] Sacher-Masoch, *The Master Masochist*: 59.

[40] Ibid.: 97.

[41] For instance, ibid.: 59.

[42] Rona Goffen writes that *Salome* "includes the artist's visage as the decapitated head of Saint John the Baptist," in *Titian's Women*: 225.

[43] John T. Paoletti and Gary M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Hary N. Abrams, Incorporated, 1997): 403

[44] Goffen notes that these are Titian's features, in *Titian's Women*: 285.

[45] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), originally published as *Pouvoirs de l'horreur* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1980): 5.

[46] At this point it should be noted that there is no question of a set of binary oppositions being established, such that if Christianity is masochistic, Judaism is sadistic – rather, the more limited claim is that the Sadean and Judaic texts are both structurally *opposed* to the abjection of masochism in Christianity, though perhaps in very different ways. Similarly, masochism is not proposed as an *exhaustive* explanation of the rituals and beliefs surrounding Christian suffering and desire. Given these two cautionary notes, Kristeva's suggestion in *Powers of Horror* that the pleasures of Christian abjection are – and *were* – masochistic,

which has been further developed here, might suggest a very pervasive pre- and early-modern form of masochism. The thesis will not be further explored here, however, because the current work has been interested, not in religious, but in secular art and life. Further, to pursue the association of masochism and Christianity in relation to self-deprecatory self-portraiture in Christian art, can only lead to conclusions which psychoanalyse the artists, which is not the intention or interest of the present work. The concluding section will therefore abandon the theme of sacred love in order to suggest elements of masochism in lay aspects of Renaissance life.

[47] Ruggiero, *The Boundaries of Eros*: 154.

[48] Bonnie S. Anderson and Judith P. Zinsser, in *A History of Their Own: Women in Europe from Prehistory to the Present*, v. I (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), write of the development of courtly love, "Wives and daughters of the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries benefited from these changed attitudes. In real life as in the romances, women became a man's means of proving himself": 315. Andrée Kuhn Blumstein, in *Misognyny and Idealization in the Courtly Romance* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, Studien zur Germanistik, Anglistik und Komparatistik, 1977) notes, however, that such "idealization of women... seems to have been idealized by the critics": 2.

[49] Goffen, *Titian's Women*: 13.

[50] Indeed, it seems that many of Titian's mythological paintings for King Philip were veiled when women were present, and hence were intended only for the eyes of Philip and his *male* companions. See Jane Nash, *Veiled images: Titian's mythological paintings for Philip II* (Philadelphia: Art Alliance Press, 1985).

Conclusions

This thesis has endeavoured to use the aesthetic or formal analyses of sadism and masochism, as these have been derived from readings of the marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch by philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Marcel Hénaff, Gilles Deleuze, Roland Barthes, Maurice Blanchot, and Georges Bataille, in order to offer a reading of selected aspects of Italian Renaissance painting and life. This has involved the adaption of literary analyses to interpretations of works of visual art and to lived history. It has also entailed the use of theoretical models which were inspired by late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century texts, and developed in the structuralist and post-structuralist milieu of twentieth-century France, to understand objects and events or phenomena of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy. Each of these adaptions, from literature to painting, from art to life, and from modern texts and concerns to the Renaissance, may be questioned at some level. The first two moves, from literature to painting and from art to life, have not troubled me much. In the former case, Sade and Sacher-Masoch themselves evoke visual art at moments when words fail, or else explicitly analyse the ways in which visual art can or cannot capture the structural elements of their perversion. Secondly, that these readings can say something about such subjects as religious ritual and belief, rape, marriage alliances, and family structure, with all the implications these have had for the ideology and experience of gender, is the main reason for which they were undertaken. Indeed, it is partly because I felt that my use of modern theories about sadism and masochism to explain what I have learned about gendered life in the Italian Renaissance "worked," that it seemed that the third move, from contemporary theories about modern texts to the art of Renaissance Italy, was justified.

Nonetheless, this final leap has troubled me more than the first two, and certainly complexified the writing of this thesis in ways that did not immediately occur to me. What began as a nagging methodological doubt turned into one of the central questions of this thesis: did sadism and masochism, as s/textual activities, even exist in the Renaissance, and if they did, how did they differ from their modern forms? A playful sketch by Guilio Romano in the Louvre, which depicts a smiling man in bondage on a bed, being mounted by a woman who, though also smiling, grasps him firmly by the

throat, reassured me that the sexual practices existed in some form. [fig. 12] This, despite Foucault's assertion that bondage would not be sexualised before the end of the classical era (the seventeenth century), which surely the sketch itself refutes. Despite such a refutation, this assertion in *Madness and Civilization* was one of my first explicit indications that the historicity of sadism and masochism was something I ought to be doubting, or that it had troubled other writers, and I soon found Bataille and Hénaff in Foucault's company, grappling with the same concerns, but without resolving them to my satisfaction. In the end, it is a later understanding of sexual perversion on Foucault's part, elaborated in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*, which has seemed to be most supported by the historical evidence and objects of art that I was analysing. That is, modernity has invented no sexual acts but only sexualities or sexual identities. Free from crystallisation within sexualities, sexual acts were diffuse, a repertoire of possibilities available within the constraints of *other* kinds of identification (i.e. class, ethnicity, gender), to be selected within these contextualised constraints. One did not need to be a "sadist" to enjoy raping a woman, then; "anyone" might do it, and without dire penalties (though of course not a woman, and not a man of the popular classes or a Jewish man if the victim was Christian, noble, etc.). This does not mean that the acts and pleasures were not sadistic, but rather that the perpetrators were not sadists, because these men could also be courtly lovers, the most gentle of husbands, etc., as the sadist is not. Given the non-existence of sadists in the Renaissance but the existence of sadistic pleasure and desire, it has made sense to me to analyse *spalliere* by Botticelli and his workshop in terms of the aesthetics of sadism, without hinting at the concomitant claim that the artist, his assorted assistants, or his patrons were "sadists." In a similar way masochism has been elaborated as diffused in the abjection of Christian religious experience, as a product of the family structure of the Italian Renaissance household, and as an aesthetic according to which one may read certain mythological paintings by Titian, who, with his clients, is nevertheless never suggested to be a "masochist." The claim this thesis makes is rather this: some aspects of the various pleasures that these artists and their patrons had available to them in the making and viewing of paintings were sadistic – as in the case of Botticelli's workshop and Antonio and Giovanni Pucci – and masochistic – as in the case

of Titian and his patrons and buyers. The same artists and patrons would have taken other pleasures in the same works, and in other objects they created and bought.

A final issue with which this thesis has been concerned is the political nature of the sadistic and masochistic aesthetics, or how works deemed sadistic and masochistic function ideologically. When I considered this question theoretically in Chapter Three, in light of explorations of the topic on the parts of French philosophers such as Foucault, Barthes, Deleuze, and Kristeva, I concluded that masochism ultimately has greater subversive potential with respect to gender ideology than sadism. Masochism elevates the mother and abolishes the father, however only in a playful way and always by the son, as a result of which subversion becomes *possible* but at the same time is *limited.* Sadism, on the other hand, asserts the power of patriarchy, betraying it only through the absurdities of its enthusiasm, and is hence more of a stabiliser than a subversion, though this stabilising effect is threatened by its own excesses. Looking at the same political question in more concrete terms at the end of Chapter Four, and in light of my conclusions with respect to the artworks analysed and the contexts in which they functioned, I found the paintings deemed sadistic indeed worked in such a way as to reinforce patriarchal norms and accepted Renaissance gender ideology. In contradistinction from this predictable stabilising effect, the subversive potential Lucrezia Bini might have found in them, if any, is less clear – this, despite the typical sadistic excess of the works' extreme and explicit violence and assertion of patriarchal law: that sadistic works, through their very radicality, truly undermine paternal law, as its defenders suggest, is thus cast into doubt. The paintings deemed masochistic, on the other hand, have all the elements which might have rocked the assumptions of such gendered ideology taken to its limit in Botticelli's *Nastagio degli Onesti* series – on the most obvious level, for instance: the empowered woman, the submissive male – and yet they failed to fulfil a subversive political function in any historically interesting way. Given the constraints of history – who would have seen these paintings, for example, and in the context of what already established worldview – I could not see Titian's mythological works as having any real influence on the political gendering of the lives of Renaissance men and women. Such failures, both for the hopeful potential of sadism and for that of masochism, are some of the disappointing results of applying exuberant

postmodern theory to history and real lives, but, as philosophers most often forget, it is also why it is crucial.

In conclusion, then, in the absence of sadists and masochists, I have found some works of the Italian Renaissance to have been sadistic in their formal properties, and others masochistic. Each of these works as they have been thus interpreted shed light on the gender politics of the Italian Renaissance, but none can be said to have truly undermined these politics: the Botticelli panels, because even in their excesses they could be incorporated into, indeed embellish, the patriarchal home and its stakes in these politics; the Titians, because as the portable treasures and private delights of their male patrons, they were fantasies with which such patriarchs diverted themselves, kept from eyes which might have seen them otherwise.

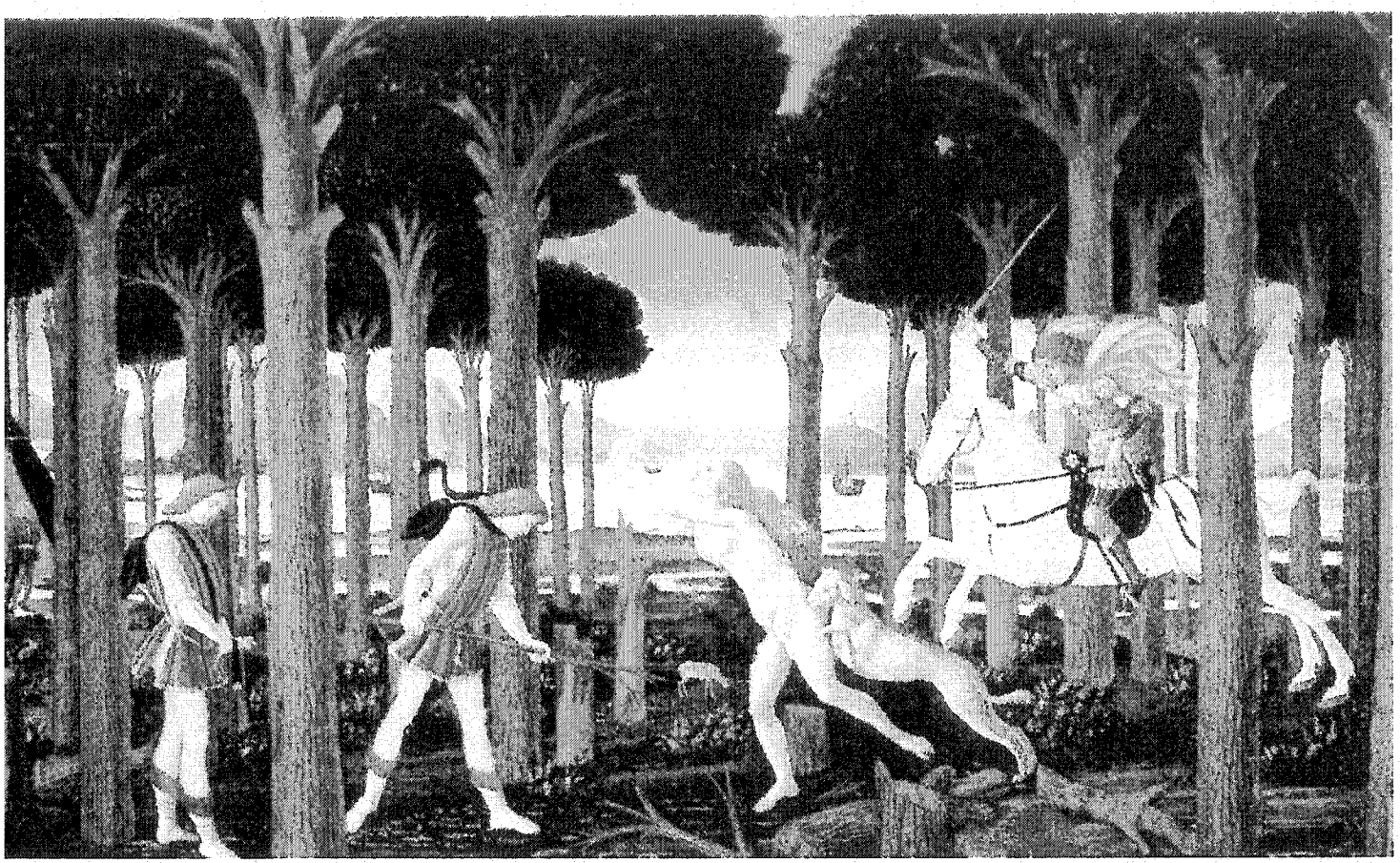

Figure 1: Botticelli and workshop, *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*, first panel, c. 1483. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

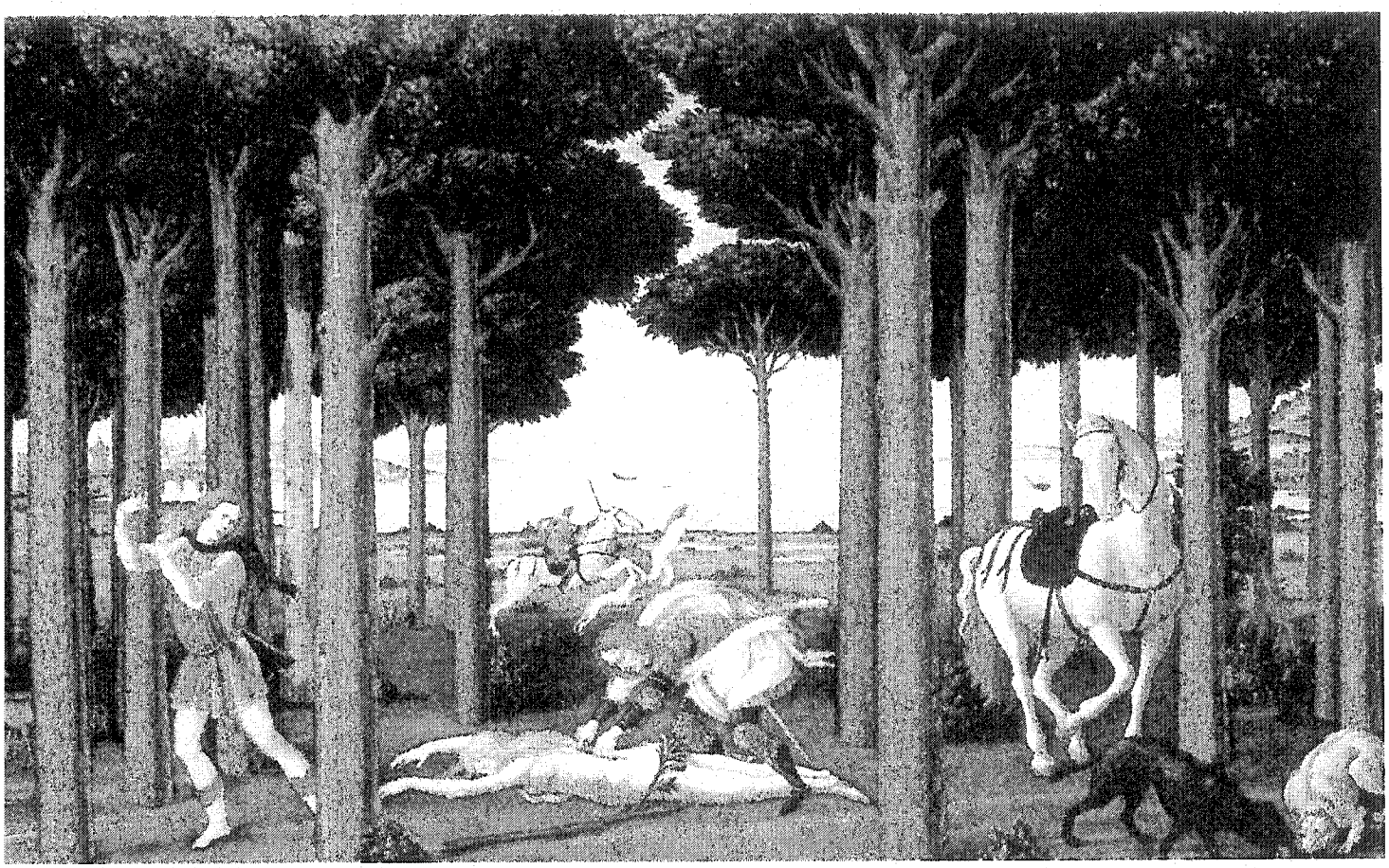

Figure 2: Botticelli and workshop, *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*, second panel, c. 1483. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

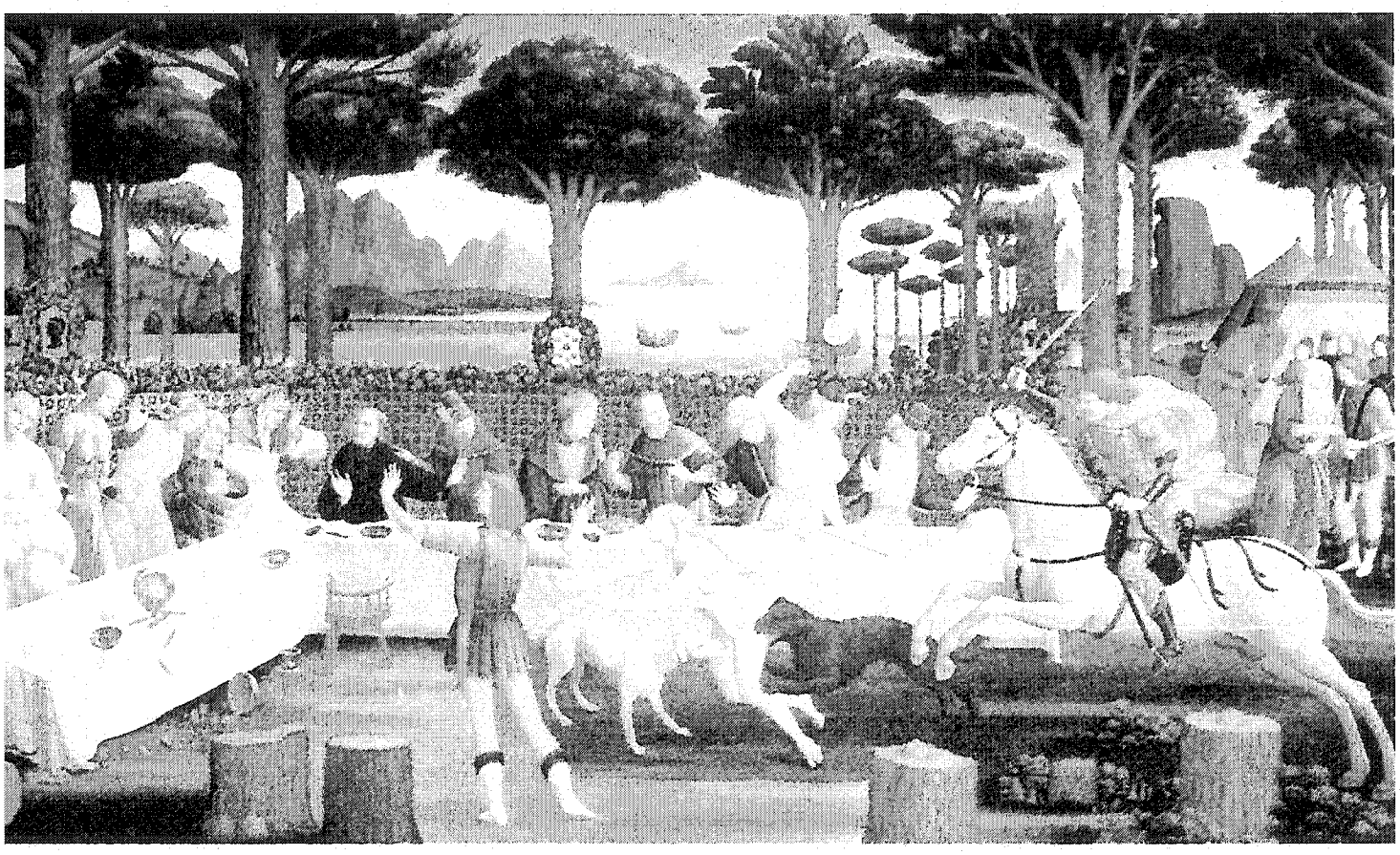

Figure 3: Botticelli and workshop, *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*, third panel, c. 1483. Museo del Prado, Madrid.

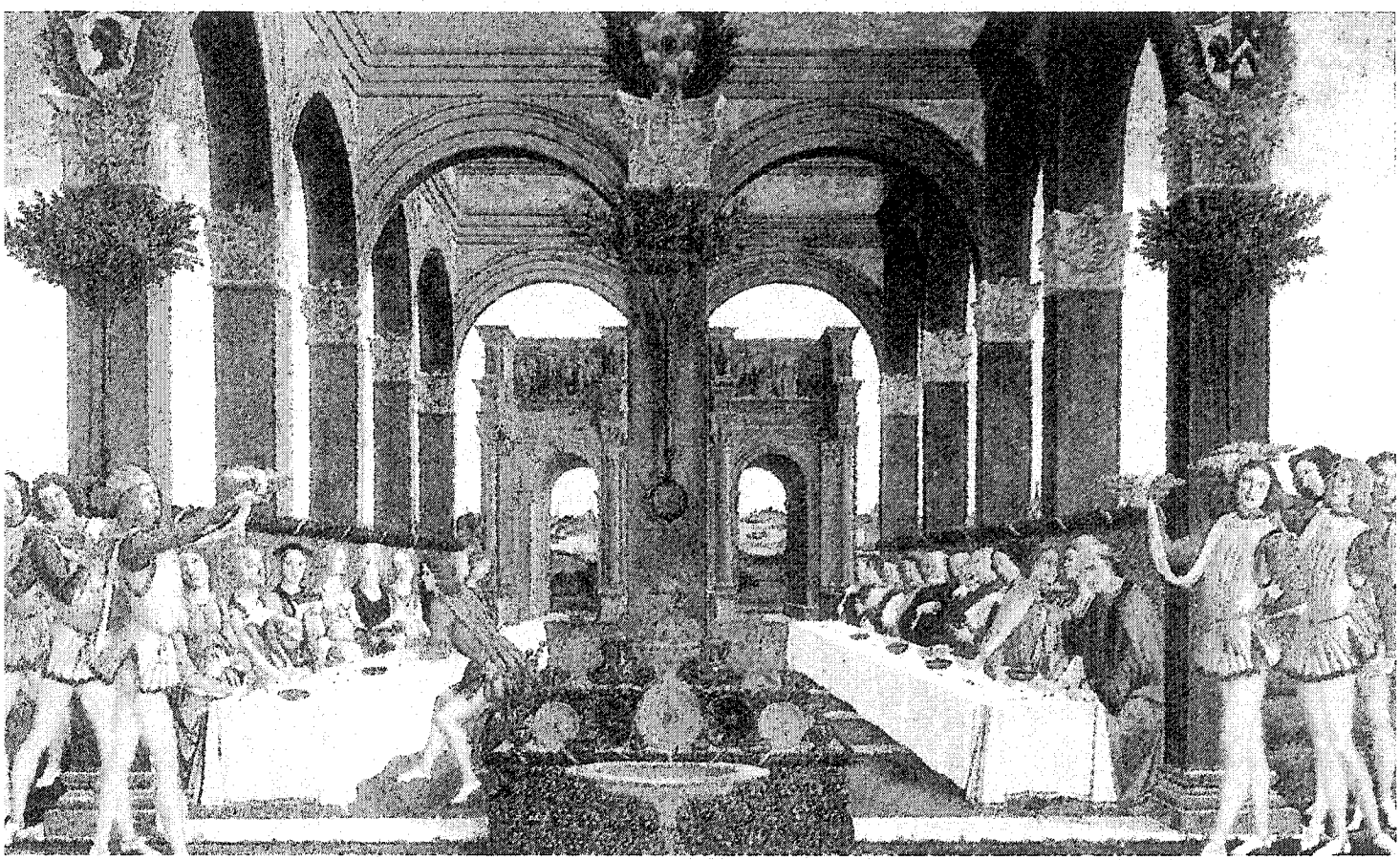

Figure 4: Botticelli and workshop, *Story of Nastagio degli Onesti*, fourth panel, c. 1483. Private Collection.

Figure 5: Titian, *Venus with a Mirror*, c. 1555. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Andrew W. Mellon Collection.

Figure 6: X-radiograph of figure 5.

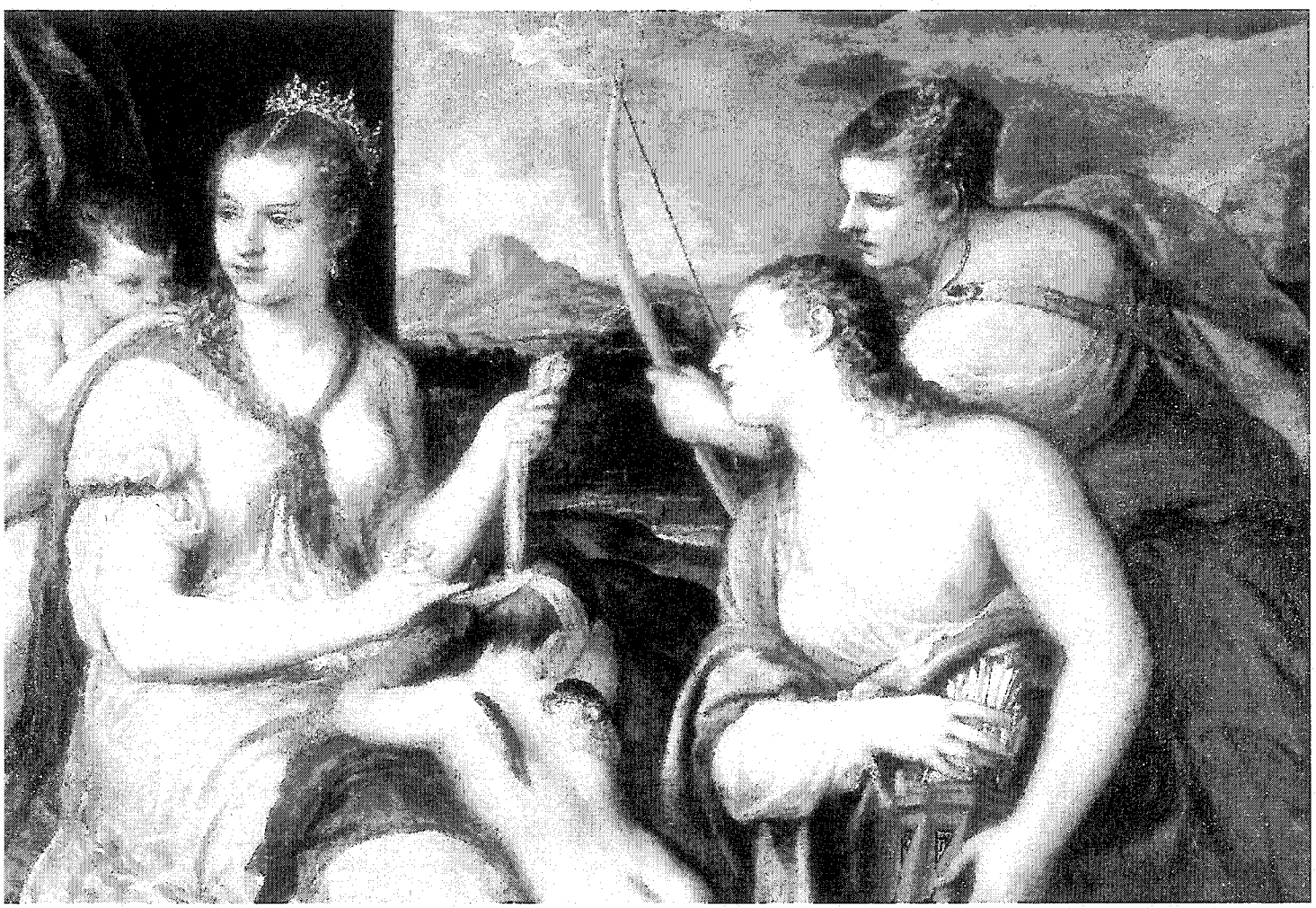

Figure 7: Titian, *Venus Blindfolding Cupid* (*Punishment of Cupid*), c. 1560-65. Rome, Galleria Borghese.

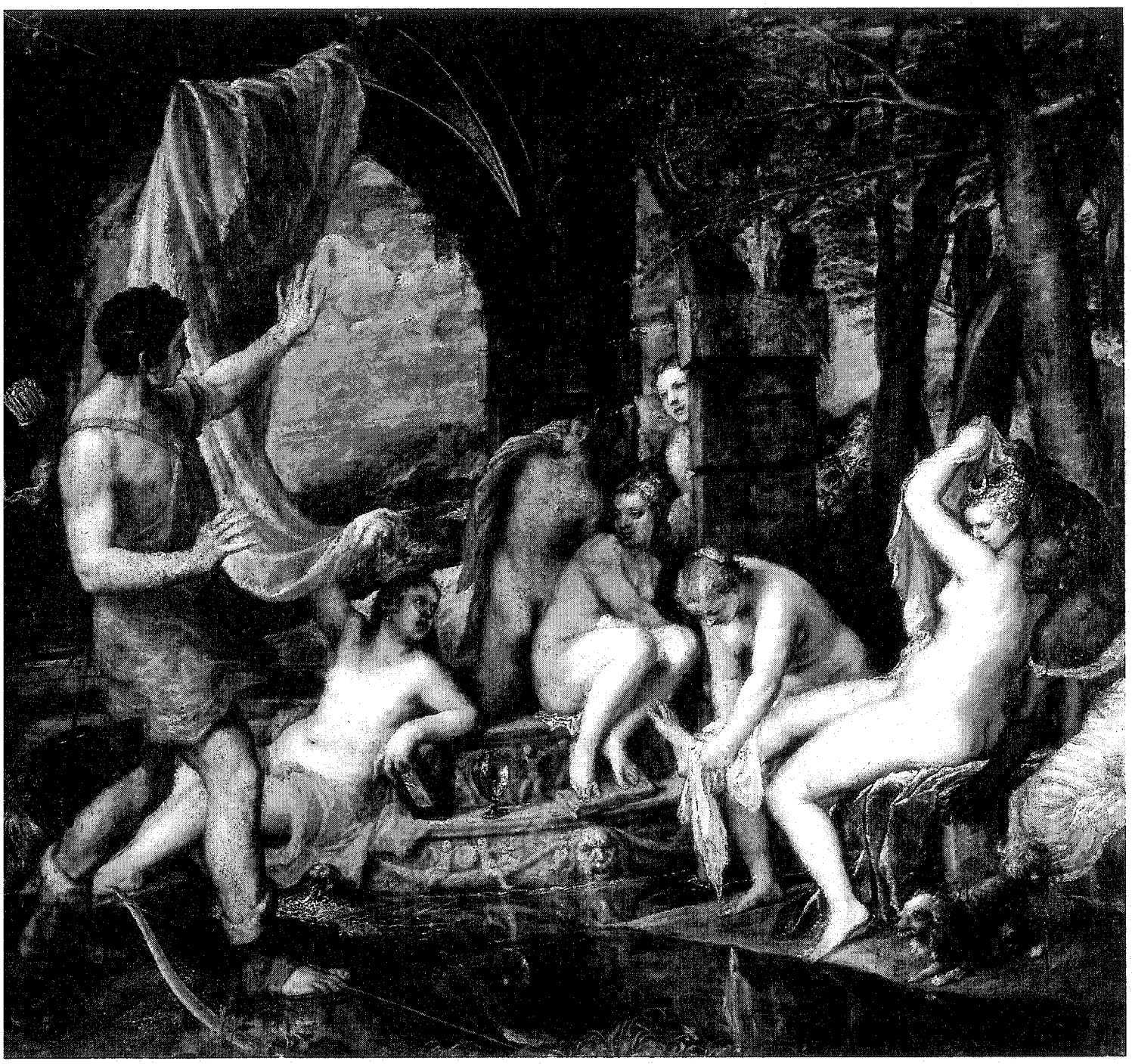

Figure 8: Titian, *Diana Discovered by Actaeon*, 1556-59. Edinburgh, Duke of Sutherland Collection, on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland.

Figure 9: Titian, *Death of Actaeon*, c. 1559-75. London, The National Gallery.

Figure 10: Titian, *Salome*, c. 1515. Rome, Galleria Doria-Pamphili.

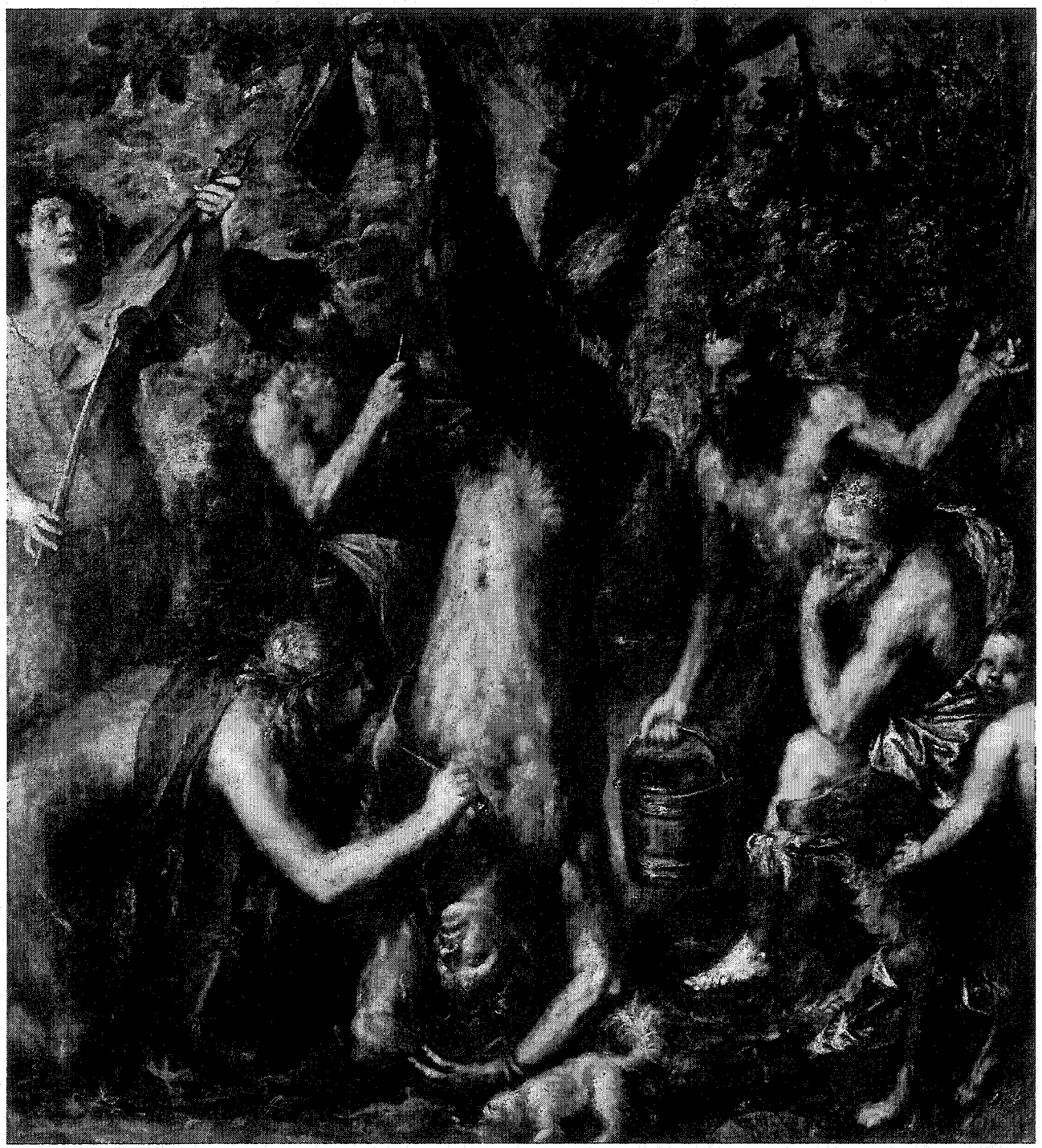

Figure 11: Titian, *Flaying of Marsyas*, c. 1570-75. Kroměříž, Czech Republic, Archbishop's Palace.

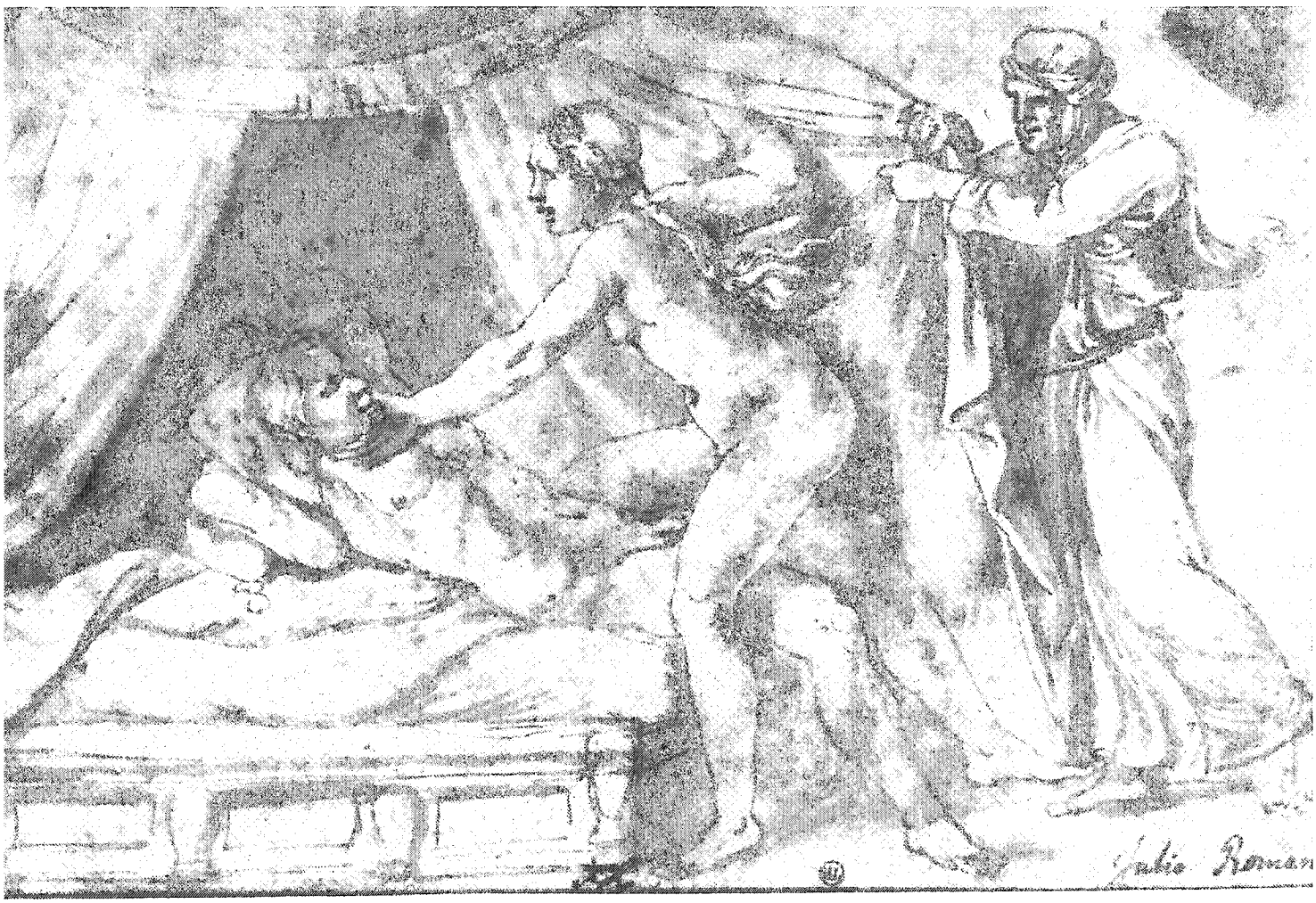

Figure 12: Guilio Romano, *Amorous Scene*, 1520s? Pen and ink with wash. Musée du Louvre, Paris.

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