

INNER EXPERIENCE IS NOT PSYCHOSIS: BATAILLE'S ETHICS AND LACANIAN SUBJECTIVITY

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LACAN AND BATAILLE

Despite his personal proximity to Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan makes very few direct references to his work. Indeed, the only mention of Bataille's name in the 878 pages of the *Écrits* is in a footnote to "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis."¹ This article declares that Daniel Schreber, the prototypical psychotic, was exposed to inner experience by his insight that "God is a whore."² Lacan affirms that his mention of inner experience is an allusion to Bataille, and refers the reader to *Inner Experience*, which he calls Bataille's central work; and to *Madame Edwarda*, in which "he describes the odd extremity of this experience."³ Lacan here identifies the experience of *Madame Edwarda* with Bataille's "inner experience," and stipulates that both are identical to Schreber's psychotic break.

"On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" was written in 1958 and generated by a seminar Lacan gave in 1955-1956.⁴ He had known Bataille for twenty years, having been a participant in Bataille's *Acéphale* group.⁵ Lacan was also the companion of Sylvia Bataille (née Maklès), Bataille's first wife, following their separation in 1934; Lacan married her in 1953.⁶ Sylvia remained close to Bataille for the rest of her life following their separation and divorce. Moreover, Lacan raised Laurence, Bataille's daughter, because her birth parents separated when she was four years old.⁷ The 1950s was a period of close contact between the two men; Lacan contributed some of the research for *Erotism*, published in 1957.⁸

Aside from this close biographical link and Lacan's explicit invocation of Bataille in his consideration of psychosis, Slavoj Žižek has argued for another point of proximity between their thought, a link that he finds dangerous and aims to overcome. In Žižek's view, it is in *Seminar VII* that Lacan is closest to Bataille in his formulation of transgressive *jouissance*.⁹ This is an influence that Žižek believes that Lacan subsequently escapes. I will argue that despite Lacan's personal friendship with Bataille, his statement in "On a Question Prior to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis" betrays a misunderstanding of *Madame Edwarda*. That is, while Lacan had commitments to the reconstitution of subjectivity that render Bataille's work illustrative of psychotic experience, close reading of Bataille's text reveals a distinct position on self and other.¹⁰ In consideration of

these two points of contact between Lacan and Bataille (on psychotic experience and transgression), we must note that the neurotic who is led to undertake an act corresponding to the essence of his or her desire is not said to be a psychotic.¹¹ To reconcile this apparent contradiction, it is necessary to realize that for Lacan, all subjects are potentially psychotic, and avoid this only by the fragile construction of an ego ideal.¹² Psychosis, then, is the result of a foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father and a denial of the Other of the Other, leading to direct contact with the real.¹³ From this perspective, Bataille's refusal of the Name-of-the-Father and of subjectivity (writing under a pseudonym) and emphasizing an immediate contact with otherness that identifies a specific alterity (the title character) with its ultimate guarantor can only be read as a psychotic experience.¹⁴ I will inquire into Lacan's theories of subjectivity and examine the impetus they receive from Bataille's ideas on ipseity, as well as their departure from his thought, as well as investigating the Lacanian approach to a Kantian ethical problem, as read by Adrian Johnston, with the end of comparing this to Bataille's own imbrication of eroticism and ethics. A close reading of Bataille will show an alternative position on alterity that escapes subjectivity, while remaining distinct from the psychosis diagnosed by Lacan and the irresponsible nihilism suspected by Žižek.

Lacan and Bataille attended Alexandre Kojève's lectures together; as a result, both of their reconsiderations of selfhood bear the mark of his revisitation of G.W.F. Hegel.¹⁵ Kojève emphasized the free human subject as mortal and conscious of his finitude, and characterized by a linguistic capacity in some sense reliant on this ability to die.¹⁶ Regardless of the substantial imprint on Lacan's thought of Bataille's reception of and intervention into these Kojévian ideas, Bataille does not himself seem to have borrowed any particular insight from Lacan's work, nor did he ever endorse the direction Lacan had taken with ideas that are in some cases derived from his own writings.¹⁷ Lacan's reformulation of subjectivity is not only an exploration of Freud's discovery of the unconscious, but also a reception of Bataille's experience of selfhood as disrupted by alterity. I read Bataille's disruption as essentially an ethical one, which Lacan partially undoes by his re-inscription of the philosophical precedence of a subject (however finite and decentered) over Bataille's sensitivity to the singular and the irreducibly other. Lacan's increasing systematization at the hands of Žižek and others (notably, Bruce Fink, Joan Copjec, Alenka Zupancic, Lorenzo Chiesa, and Adrian Johnston) has had the effect of formulating an ingenious and robust return to the ethics of a committed subject.¹⁸ This development has, however, been at the price of other aspects of Lacan's thought more intimately linked to Bataille's experiences, elements that are, in my view, more adequate to an ethics that allows for the possibility of an encounter with alterity.

Lacan alludes to Bataille on the question of psychosis. Unlike many psychoanalysts, Lacan was particularly fascinated by psychotic experience.¹⁹ For this reason, his interpretation of Sigmund Freud's inquiry into the Schreber case is crucial to an understanding of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Dr. Daniel Paul Schreber was a judge who intermittently became overcome by wild delusions. He recorded his thoughts and feelings in *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness*, to which Freud devoted an analysis.²⁰ Schreber's came to believe that he had died, that he could communicate with God and with devils, and that he lived in another world.²¹ He also became paranoid and convinced that his former physician was trying to kill him.²² At the core of Schreber's delusions was a messianic belief that he had been chosen as a redeemer for the world, and that this redemption involved his transformation into a woman as a result of a miracle.²³ At times, he was convinced that God had impregnated him while he remained a virgin.²⁴

Freud discerns homosexuality in Schreber's disorder; his paranoid delusions cover up amorous feelings towards his doctor.²⁵ Many of Schreber's beliefs revolve around solar rays and the sun; he declared, "The sun is a whore."²⁶ Freud writes that the sun is a sublimation of the father; he extrapolates that Nietzsche's song "Before Sunrise," from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, speaks to a longing for an absent father. Among Freud's very few direct references to Nietzsche is his claim that the *Übermensch* is the primal father.²⁷ Bataille strongly identified with Nietzsche; this suggests that from a Freudian perspective, he might share an eroticized fascination with the father, comparable to Schreber's.²⁸ Bataille's work does at one point seem to converge with this homosexual fascination with the father, and with identity between the sun and the paternal figure. In a very early fragment, written sometime between 1927 and 1930, which he later titled "Dream," Bataille writes, "I'm something like three years old my legs naked on my father's knees and my penis bloody like the sun."²⁹ Psychoanalysis

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would see this as an ambivalent fantasy of being castrated by the father as punishment for masturbation. This is as close as Bataille gets to Schreber's symptoms. However, a close reading of Bataille's subsequent texts shows a decidedly less central concern with fatherhood than Freud and Lacan emphasize, and a corresponding fascination with feminine alterity that differs from the psychoanalysts here discussed.³⁰

BATAILLE'S LITERATURE

Bataille's early surrealist writings also include "The Solar Anus," which features imagery that seems consonant with Schreber's delusion, but also introduces a concern with female alterity that is absent from Schreber's recollections. At the end of the piece, Bataille writes that "Love, then, screams in my own throat; I am the *Jesuve*, the filthy parody of the torrid and blinding sun."³¹ This seems to reinforce the identity between the father and the sun; the narrator affirms himself as a dirty simulacrum of the sun.³² A son can see himself as the distorted copy of his father, but this is subordinate to the affirmation of love screaming in his throat; this love does not scream at the father/sun. Bataille continues: "I want to have my throat slashed while violating the girl to whom I will have been able to say: you are the night."³³ So his desire is for a death that occurs simultaneously with transgressive contact with a feminine other, who he identifies not with the sun but with its absence, the night. "The Sun exclusively loves the Night and directs its luminous violence, its ignoble shaft, toward the earth, but it finds itself incapable of reaching the gaze or the night [...]"³⁴ In this passage, Bataille writes that the masculine authority, the sun, of which he is a copy, is not self-satisfied but aimed at the night, a night with which it cannot be in contact without losing it. The piece concludes: "The *solar annulus* is the intact anus of her body at eighteen years to which nothing sufficiently blinding can be compared except the sun, even though the *anus* is the *night*."³⁵ This final statement indicates that female alterity towards which his sodomistic desires are directed may appear as the sun for purposes of representation, but is in fact nocturnal and dark. The punchline of the narrative shows that the title is misleading; the disclosure of eroticism reveals that it is a crepuscular anus, not a solar anus, that is the focus of Bataille's obsession.³⁶

The other discrepancies with Schreber follow from this. Bataille's erotic concern is always with the otherness of night, while psychosis of Schreber's type eliminates the possibility of singular otherness in favor of identification with the universe. Lacan writes that for Schreber, "there is almost nothing in his surroundings that in some sense isn't him."³⁷ While otherness does exist for Schreber, it is an empty and superficial understanding of otherness as an abstract container with no singular content.³⁸ This identification leads Schreber to a partial denial of death.³⁹ While Schreber fantasizes himself as a redeemer, as Christ or Christ's mother, Bataille's invocations of Christ always emphasize a death of God from which there is no resurrection.⁴⁰ Schreber also forcefully denies sexual difference by his desire to become an impregnated virgin.⁴¹ Bataille, however, breaks with both the cult of virginity and the Sadian dismissal of sexual difference through the means of sodomy.⁴² Bataille's invocation of anal sex in "The Solar Anus" will be superseded by the encounter with God through sexual difference that takes place in *Madame Edwarda*.⁴³ This book, which Maurice Blanchot called "the most beautiful narrative of our time," is both a fictional narrative and a continuation of Bataille's conceptual inquiries.⁴⁴ It is comprised of two parts; a long preface and a subsequent *récit*. I will argue that the fictive narrative conveys certain insights that exceed the reach of Bataille's own explication. Bataille's language in the "Preface" creates the misleading impression that eroticism discloses a relationship to one's own death, which partly obscures the question revealed by the narrative: that is, the nature of the relationship to another.⁴⁵

Madame Edwarda is virtually plotless and has no characters of psychological substance. In summary: A restless narrator wanders into a brothel, where he encounters the titular prostitute. He performs cunnilingus on her in view of the other patrons. They leave the brothel and wander off together; while walking, Edwarda chastens the narrator, shouting profanities at him. They encounter a taxi-driver, with whom Edwarda has intercourse and orgasms. The narrative abruptly ends. We should note that the narrator is made sharply irreducible to the biographical Bataille. The story is published under the name "Pierre Angelique;" the author of the preface refers to the "author of *Madame Edwarda*," thereby dissociating the two.⁴⁶ For this reason, the first-person narrator of the story must be taken as empty and anonymous. *Madame Edwarda* is also minimally characterized and

is mainly described affectively; we are told almost nothing of what she looks like, and our attention is mainly brought to her raspy voice as her most distinctive trait. The cabdriver, the third character, is given essentially no substance at all. In this story that has hardly any plot and depthless characters, the main driving force is affect: Bataille's language constantly refers to boredom, confusion, terror, and madness.

Madame Edwarda first appears naked and accompanied by a "swarm" of women; she is named as the Madame and so given a title of hierarchical respect.⁴⁷ So she is "clothed" in her honorific, which under the circumstances appears inappropriate, and is otherwise exposed. The narrator relates his encounter with the Madame in a chain of linked clauses: "at a certain moment, her hand slid, I burst, suddenly, like a pane of glass shattering [...] I felt her break in two at the same instant: and in her starting, roving eyes, terror, and in her throat, a long-drawn whistled rasp."⁴⁸ The narrator appears to be describing a spontaneous and premature orgasm, which he experiences as a moment of rupture that is provoked by Edwarda and that is out of his control. She is torn along with the narrator; this laceration appears to describe a physical orgasm, though not necessarily. Our attention is drawn to Edwarda's eyes, which lack focus and are filled with fear (the object of her terror is not specified), and her voice, which the narrator specifies as "in her throat," that is, an expression of her body. The narrative characterizes this voice as the product of an "étrangement," a strangled outcry; she does not express comprehensible words.

Following this instant, the narrator invokes theological experience: "I became unhappy and felt painfully forsaken, as one is when in the presence of GOD."⁴⁹ Paradoxically, the narrator locates the feeling of being forsaken by the presence of God, rather than by His absence. "I was filled with unbearable sadness to think that this very grandeur descending upon me was withering away the pleasure I hoped to have with Edwarda."⁵⁰ Here the experience is explicitly characterized as unpleasant; he describes an initial awareness of the divine that separates him from the enjoyment he previously associated with Edwarda the prostitute. Then the appearance of God, initially diffuse, becomes localized into a single point, and rather than being separate from Edwarda and her pleasures, is revealed as interior to her being:

I was pulled out of my dazed confusion by an only too human voice. Madame Edwarda's thin voice, like her slender body, was obscene: 'I guess what you want is to see the old rag and ruin,' [*Tu veux voir mes guenilles?*] she said.

Hanging on to the tabletop with both hands, I twisted around toward her. She was seated, she held one leg stuck up in the air, to open her crack yet wider she used fingers to draw the folds of skin apart. And so Madame Edwarda's 'old rag and ruin' [*les « guenilles » d'Edwarda*] loomed at me, hairy and pink, just as full of life as some loathsome squid [*une pieuvre répugnante*].⁵¹

This passage begins with the separation between the human and the divine. The narrator is distracted from his initial apprehension of God by the human voice of Edwarda, which is linked to her body and which is characterized as "obscene." This establishes, first, that Bataille considers this voice to be an extension of the carnal body. Second, the narrative dictates that both the body and the voice should be considered as both offensive and exciting prurient interest. Edwarda's statement is her weary acknowledgment that the object of the narrator's scopophilia must be the "guenilles" (rags), which is a way of referring to her genitals that indicates dirt, multiplicity, and tearing. The narrator indicates that he has been hanging on to the tabletop, which suggests that he is in need of external support in order to prevent being pulled to the floor. He is required to contort his body in order to observe Edwarda.

She exposes her "crack," separating her labia. This name indicates a break or induced gap. At this point, the narrator describes Edwarda's crack as looking back at him, as hairy and pink, as filled with excessive life, and he likens it to "*une pieuvre*," an octopus, specified as repulsive and horrible. While the association of women with animals is standard, in contrast to the usual invocation of a Mallarmean faun or a Baudelairean cat, the narrative refers to the octopus as the figure for femininity—that is, a cephalopod with myriad legs, invertebrate, with three hearts, without hair, and whose skin is slimy and inky. Lacan will later describe the octopus as "the most beautiful animal there is," perhaps in tribute to Bataille's story.⁵² Bataille's anatomical diction is worthy of comment. Bataille almost never writes "vagin," in part because its medicalizing connotations interfere with the

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erotic effect he aims to produce. It is also significant that the etymological root of the word “vagina” is the Latin for “scabbard,” which makes it secondary to and complementary with the phallus.⁵³ Bataille’s avoidance of this term prevents the tendency to consider feminine sexuality as filled by the masculine organ. In *Histoire de l’œil*, the narrator applies the term “*cul*” (**ass**).⁵⁴ In this work, Bataille chooses a word that avoids mention of sexual difference.⁵⁵ In contrast, *Madame Edwarda* dictates the names “fente” (crack) and “guenilles,” words that intensify the female genitalia as alien to masculine identity. From this perspective, *Histoire de l’œil* remains within a more comforting sexual economy in which female sexual difference is of little significance.⁵⁶ From a certain, perhaps too charitable, perspective, Bataille’s failure to make note of the clitoris is actually a testament to his willingness to consider the feminine as utterly different, as a locus of alterity, rather than an object to be inscribed into an essentially masculine sexual economy.⁵⁷

Bataille is often said to impart a morbid account of the erotic. For example, Susan Sontag has it that Bataille discloses the topic of pornography as death rather than sex.⁵⁸ This conclusion is so prevalent that it is necessary to pay close attention to this sentence: “And so Edwarda’s rags looked at me, hairy and pink, just as full of life as some repugnant octopus” (translation modified).⁵⁹ Unlike James Joyce, who writes of death as “the grey sunken cunt of the world,” Bataille writes of intense, frightening life.⁶⁰ Readers who see Bataille’s women as signs for nothingness, lack, or death, then, can only be confounded by this passage.⁶¹ Madame Edwarda, the eroticized feminine, does not reveal the terrifying emptiness of the grave; rather, her crack reveals an abundance of ongoing and alien vitality. After the description of Edwarda’s genitals, the narrator asks for an explanation of what has just transpired: “‘Why,’ I stammered in a subdued tone, ‘why are you doing that?’ ‘You can see for yourself,’ she said, ‘I’m GOD.’”⁶² The narrator loses control over his ability to communicate through ordinary language; he experiences an awe or respect. Edwarda answers that she is demonstrating herself as God. At this point, the separation earlier indicated between the pleasure of the narrator’s orgasm at Edwarda’s hand, and the subsequent guilt, dread, and awareness of God, vanishes. Edwarda is herself revealed as the cause, not of pleasure, but of the apprehension of the divine. It is necessary to pay close attention to this scene, because it is often said of narratives of transgression that they rely on their interdiction; the law is revealed by its violation.

Of this experience, Bataille does not write at all of an ephemeral fleshly enjoyment that is followed by spiritual torment. Rather, the (masculine) spiritual, “GOD,” not a goddess, is forcefully described as emanating from the (feminine) flesh, Edwarda. The essence of pleasure is revealed to be not at all pleasurable. More importantly, the carnal *is not indicated as the site of death*. This is, then, not the penitent Christian narrative in which sexual pleasure only discloses mortality and finitude. Instead, the apparent object of desire reveals itself as excessively alive, and itself the origin of the interdiction against its enjoyment. From the perspective of Edwarda as God, that is, the guarantor of the law and the origin of ethical demands, it becomes possible that virile life, which disregards the demands of everyday law, is itself brought into existence by a relationship to alterity, and not through autonomy. “‘I’m going crazy → ‘Oh, no you don’t, you’ve got to see, look ...’ Her harsh, scraping voice mellowed, she became almost childlike in order to say, with a lassitude, with the infinite smile of abandon: ‘Oh, listen, fellow! The fun I’ve had ...’”⁶³

In this passage, both the narrator and Edwarda speak, and their words are directly juxtaposed to one another. The narrator states that he is losing his sanity, and Edwarda, who has declared herself divine, demands that he continue in his observation. At this point, her voice is described as childlike. This suggests two things. First, because Edwarda has just named herself as an incarnation of God, this childlike quality recalls images of the Christ-child. Second, it recalls the psychological claim that the true aim of female desire is to produce a child.⁶⁴ At this point, Edwarda speaks as herself a child, as already the aim of her own desire. This is to say that, unlike in the Freudian schema according to which woman is essentially lacking and constantly wishing for the phallus, or for a child who stands in for this phallus, Edwarda speaks as herself a child; she is herself in a state of desire for herself. Edwarda, untroubled, asks the narrator to observe and listen to her communication of her enjoyment, which is “infinite,” absent from the world, and indicates “abandon.”

So the difference between Schreber and Bataille is quite great. Schreber’s statement that “the sun is a whore” is at the antipodes of Madame Edwarda’s declaration that she is God, because it is the feminine alterity of night that is the God-whore, not the masculine solarly of Schreber’s imagination. It is the aim of Schreber’s entire

megalomaniacal fantasy to eliminate alterity by the means of union with totality, where Bataille aims for precisely the reverse. Schreber's psychosis began with an initial experience of the world's twilight, which he subsequently filled in with his delusions.⁶⁵ Bataille's thought, in contrast, emerges from a continual approach towards this twilight, this disruption of selfhood by an obscure other, rather than its denial by means of hallucination.

FROM IPSEITY TO POETRY

Lacan insists that Schreber's relationship to the world and to language is not that of a poet. He defines poetry as "the creation of a subject adopting a new order of symbolic relations to the world."⁶⁶ Bataille's notion of poetry does not coincide with this, but what Lacan and Bataille have in common is that they inherit a Kojévian view of language in which a certain use of language has the capacity to negate.⁶⁷ The psychotic, as incapable of a true negation (being himself identical in a sense to everything), cannot construct a subjective use of language. It is in Lacan's view essential to poetry to be able to construct metaphors, while psychotics, children, and animals rely on metonymy.⁶⁸ This indicates that Bataille's inner experience has little in common with psychosis, because Lacan indicates that it is surrealist poetry that best exemplifies the preeminence of metaphor over metonymy in artistic creation. It is metaphor that relies on awareness of death, for Lacan, as naming does for Kojève.⁶⁹ However, Lacan is a much more orthodox Kojévian than Bataille, in that he ascribes the privilege of this type of creative language to a subject and decisively separates this subject from the world of animals. He says explicitly that animals do not understand metaphors and hence can never be poetic, while Bataille writes that true poetry approaches the immediacy of "the impenetrable howling of a dog."⁷⁰ These citations suggest that Bataille's consideration of poetry and indeed existence is something that departs from Lacan's consideration of subjectivity, to such a degree that Lacan at one point believed that Bataille's thought occupied a space contiguous to the pre-subjective world of the psychoses.

It is necessary to recall Bataille's difficult meditation on the notion of ipseity in *Inner Experience*, particularly because Lacan gambled on uniting its insights with *Madame Edwarda* and with Schreber's memoirs. At the close of part III, Bataille begins to discuss ipseity, which etymologically indicates selfhood and identity (from Latin, *ipse*, self). Bataille begins by noting that human ipseity is irreducibly complex and constantly dynamic; he compares it to a knife of which one first replaces the handle, then the blade.⁷¹ In other words, self-sameness is continually interrupted by successive difference.⁷² He explicitly links this condition to man's existence in the world through language.⁷³ It is then the unusual status of language as a system of differences that leads to human status as essentially non-self-identical. Bataille proceeds from this to question the status of the erotic relationship: "Knowledge which the male neighbor has of his female neighbor is no less removed from an encounter of strangers than is life from death."⁷⁴ This passage indicates that the erotic encounter is both the same as and different from the meeting of strangers, just as life is essentially different from but relies on death. This is to say that the erotic encounter is on one hand intimate and hence a meeting of neighbors and not of strangers, but insofar as it is erotic, necessarily includes a glimmer of the strange and the alienated even at the moment of the utmost familiarity. This insight is magnified in the section "Communication," in which Bataille writes, "We can discover only *in others* [*en autrui*] how it is that the light exuberance of things has us at its disposal."⁷⁵ Following from this reading, it is my suggestion, first, contra Lacan, that Bataille has little in common with Schreber, because Schreber's consideration of otherness is a hollow one that relies on an identification of himself with a sun that sheds light on everything and cannot contemplate darkness; his language is an eternal linking of self with other.

Conversely, Bataille's understanding of language insists on the reliance of life on death, knowledge on non-knowledge, identity on difference, and not through a monistic uniting of these opposites but rather an awareness of the gap between them and an openness to the outside. Second, Bataille's poetry and experience are also distinct from Lacan's subject who adopts symbolic relations to the world around him, because the Lacanian subject effectively understands metaphor in order to comprehend his finitude, a model which is all too Kojévian in its belief that the subject can master language and thereby establish autonomy from determination from without. Bataille has continually insisted on the irreducibility of alterity, one that is inherent in language and

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that underlies the differences and communications between humans and animals, and men and women. It is Lacan and Schreber both who have found ways to ward off the possibility of a twilight of the world that would admit difference, Schreber through his delusions and Lacan through his subject; Bataille is distinct from each of them in his refusal to close his eyes to night.⁷⁶

LACAN'S SUBJECT

To examine Lacan's account of the overcoming of psychosis, we should strive to understand the emergence of subjectivity. Lacan induces communication between psychopathology and philosophy, indicating a comparison between the psychotic point of view, on the one hand, and the development of subjectivity, which he associates with Kant, on the other. I have already discussed Lacan's association between Bataille and psychosis; it is now necessary to read the links between Lacan's reading of Kant and his debt to Bataille. Lacan's ethics grapple with the possibility of transgressing the law at the price of death, and he believes he can find the best instance of this type of transgression in Kant's work.

Lacan asserts that ethics is no less than the origin of psychoanalysis.⁷⁷ To demonstrate this, Lacan embarks on a two-pronged criticism of the notion of happiness. The first type Lacan regards with dismissive contempt, this being "the American way," which he associates with ego psychology.⁷⁸ Lacan perceives utilitarianism behind American psychoanalysis, to which he refers as the "service of goods," with "goods" holding the double meaning of both consequentialist desirable outcomes and commodities. The second mode of "the pursuit of happiness" he considers a more worthy adversary, and that is the transgressive pursuit of desires repressed by society. Lacan calls this the "naturalist liberation of desire," and associates it with the eighteenth century libertine project.⁷⁹ This is an attempt to discover an unproblematic enjoyment, in this case, an elimination of superego interdictions and the neuroses they produce in favor of an untrammelled right to desire. Lacan considers this goal to be equally chimerous and unreachable. Against both a liberal, linear notion of progress and a revolutionary one, Lacan insists that man is not more liberated than before, and that he could not become so regardless of any future political developments or insurrections.⁸⁰ For Lacan, however, psychoanalysis offers its own deontological ethics of desire that takes a certain inspiration from this libertine project while also taking its distance from it. One instructive comparison is with Bataille.

Bataille argues that the notion of excess, sin, or transgression has a necessary and integral relationship to the law and the order of things. If we were to schematize and to treat Bataille as occupying a discernible philosophical position distinct from the express language of his texts, we might find in his work two related insights. The first concerns a necessary excess or waste product produced by any system, "the accursed share" that must be spent or expended. A non-productive expenditure is required to eliminate this sacred waste, which accounts for what Bataille considers to be an identical attitude toward the taboo objects of shit, God, and cadavers.⁸¹ This excremental, excessive point, produced by any inorganic or organic system, which Bataille considered the blind spot of the dialectic, bears comparison to Lacan's *petit objet a*, the obscure object of desire which is un-symbolizable, irrecoverable, troubling, and unreachable.⁸

However, there is a shift in Bataille's work, attested to by his provocative equation of "God" with shit, in which Bataille begins to consider this waste product to be primary. This symptom or waste becomes the basis of the system, if not its origin. The paradigmatic example for Bataille is the crucifixion of Christ, the *felix culpa*: The ultimate sin of the torturing to death of God himself is the greatest violation and the bedrock on which the entire religion of love and forgiveness rests.⁸³ Lacan compares this crime to the murder of the monstrous Father, on which Freud speculates in *Totem and Taboo*.⁸⁴ Bataille himself aims to adhere to the consequences of the death of the father, rather than attempting to reincarnate him. In Žižek's view, Bataille's work falls into enrapturement with the moment of excess and crime, what Alain Badiou called a "passion for the Real": the obsession with chance, subjective annihilation, death, violation, and the unspeakable.⁸⁵

Bataille's insight, that the norm relies on its exception, is close to Žižek's characteristic move: that is, the claim that apparent prohibitions and societal interdictions conceal an obscene underbelly, disavowed transgressions, and cynical distance which appears illegal but is in fact coded into the very law itself. However, Žižek risks a third move subsequent to Bataille's. Bataille suggests, first, that the law generates its transgression, that work produces festivals, the most liberal societies build prisons, and biological organisms excrete waste matter. Second, that this transgression is primary to the law or essential to it; that religions of love and kindness generate their authority from sacrifice, that capitalist economies depend on leisure and military industries, and that socialist economies depend on black markets. Žižek takes this one step further by declaring that the violation of the law is not primary or originary to the law, but is *identical* to the law in some radical sense.

Žižek characterizes Bataille's transgression as relying on its system or its limit as pre-modern, a failure to fully think the consequences of Kant, which tell us that "*absolute excess is that of the Law itself.*"⁸⁶ The Law is for Žižek illegal; it "intervenes in the 'homogeneous' stability of our pleasure-oriented life as the shattering force of the absolute destabilizing 'heterogeneity.'"⁸⁷ This claim has two possible valences: First, a literal adherence to the law would be its own fulfillment and transgression. Second, Žižek also speaks of the interruption of a higher Law or desire that would shatter and violate the ordinary laws and goals of everyday life. Žižek locates this move in Lacan, declaring that Lacan wavers between Bataille's regression and Žižek's subsequent innovation, progressing in chapter IV of *Seminar VII* from the former to the latter.⁸⁸ Žižek emphasizes that Lacan only fully accepts his own fusion with Kant in the very late and unpublished *Seminar XXIII*, when he concedes that there is "no substantial Thing—*jouissance* beyond the Symbolic," but that *jouissance* is "of/in the lack of itself, a *jouissance* that arises when its movement repeatedly misses its goal, a pleasure that is generated by the repeated failure itself."⁸⁹ We must note that this reading of Lacan is forceful, relying on an emphasis on very late Lacanian formulations and a simultaneous critique of many of his earlier claims.⁹⁰ Žižek emphasizes that *jouissance* is not found in transgression as such but is rather a name for the attempt to obey the law while at the same time trying (and failing) to achieve some enjoyment beyond it. *Jouissance* in this Žižekian reading is neither the product of fanatical adherence to the laws undergirding the symbolic order nor the transgressive refusal of it, but the space created by the vacillation between both these (ultimately futile) efforts. While noting this conclusion on Žižek's part, we should return to the claims made by Lacan about Kant in *Seminar VII*, the point of his apparent sympathy with Bataille, so that we might strive to articulate alternative ethical consequences.

SADE AND DESIRE

Lacan argues that the desire for happiness has always been an element of human existence, depreciating the originality of Saint-Just's claim that happiness had become a political factor for the first time with the destruction of the monarchy. Contrariwise, Lacan says that happiness "has always been a political factor and will bring back the scepter and the censor that make do with it very well."⁹¹ In other words, the desire for happiness had already existed and been consequent in the time of the monarchy, and had been able to thrive on its limitation by church and crown. Lacan argues that it is the novelty of the revolution to aim for "the freedom to desire," and that it is Sade who understands this.⁹²

Lacan paraphrases Sade's maxim as "the right to enjoy any other person whatsoever as the instrument of our pleasure."⁹³ The question for Lacan is whether this maxim passes Kant's test of universality. If our repugnance towards such a possible maxim is only an expression of fear or disgust on the level of affect, this should be of no consequence to Kant's true deontological ethics—consequences and emotional and sensual considerations are simply irrelevant. The only question is whether the Sadeian desire for the common property of bodies can be rationally willed to be universal. It is one of Sade's contributions to the understanding of desire that his libertinage is so unpleasant. Lacan asks, "in order to reach *das Ding* [the object of desire] absolutely, to open the flood gates of desire, what does Sade show us on the horizon?"⁹⁴ The answer is pain, "The other's pain as well as the pain of the subject himself, for on occasion they are simply one and the same thing."⁹⁵ Kant's ethical subject undergoes only one pathological emotion, the pain of humiliation, when he chooses, as he must, to obey the law. The law is then sadistic, a counterpart to "de Sade's notion of pain (torturing and humiliating the other,

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being tortured and humiliated by him) as the privileged way of access to sexual *jouissance*,” the form of sensation which can far exceed mere pleasure in its duration.⁹⁶

The relentless pursuit of desire by the Sadian libertine mirrors the intractable ethical subject, who cannot be dissuaded by physical sensation or emotional disinclination. Sade’s technical goal is, among other things, a radically desublimated sexual enjoyment.⁹⁷ As Žižek clarifies it, we find in Sade a rigorous instrumentalizing of the sexual, not a raw burst of animal lust.⁹⁸ To this end, Sade offers an endorsement of the relationship with partial objects; as Lacan paraphrases it, “Lend me the part of your body that will give me a moment of satisfaction and, if you care to, use for your own pleasure that part of my body which appeals to you.”⁹⁹ This can be read as isomorphous with Kant’s definition of marriage as “the binding together of two persons of different sexes for the life-long reciprocal possession of their sexual attributes;” Sade merely eliminates the requirements of sexual difference and permanence.¹⁰⁰

As Žižek argues, Lacan recognizes that Sade lays bare the sadism of the superego. Rather than a neutral enforcer of societal norms, the superego is in fact a displacement of id-level aggression, tormenting the ego in the name of legitimacy and right.¹⁰¹ This is, however, not the true innovation of Lacan’s reading of Sade or of Kant. According to Žižek, Lacan is actually concerned with “the ultimate consequences and disavowed premisses of the Kantian ethical revolution.”¹⁰² For (Žižek’s) Lacan, what is so fascinating is not that the apparently universal and disinterested ethical law is actually polluted by personal pathological desires at every level. What is more interesting is that this tainting with personal wants is necessary as a barrier against the self-destroying and negating force of duty, which is far more “sadistic” than any Sadeian perversion—duty and desire become equivalent for Žižek’s Lacan.¹⁰³

BATAILLE AND LACAN, KANT AND HEGEL

Bataille and Lacan are often considered as readers of Hegel; Derrida’s “From Restricted to General Economy: A Hegelianism without Reserve” marks the beginning of a deconstructive engagement with Hegel, while Žižek has strived to articulate Lacan as the re-activator of an authentic Hegel as against subsequent misreadings.¹⁰⁴ In Derrida’s reading, Bataille radicalizes Hegel’s negative to a degree that it can no longer be defined as the moment of a system, even as meaning organizes itself around it.¹⁰⁵ Bataille’s sovereignty, unlike Hegelian mastery, is an absolute difference that never establishes hierarchy, cannot be found in its essence because its essence is a pure lack, a movement towards the universal that destroys the particular without achieving a corresponding idea. In contrast, Lacan’s mirror stage traces the possibility of the foundation of subjectivity as mediated by negativity in his famous écrit “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” in a manner that owes a great deal to the Hegelian account of subjectivity.¹⁰⁶ Bataillean “sovereignty,” however, is not merely self-destructive; he writes of “a link with this obscure *other*” as paramount.¹⁰⁷ I would like to suggest that the alternative consideration of otherness suggested by Bataille, which escapes from the precedence of subjectivity re-established by Lacan, can best be exemplified not through the traditional Hegelian master-slave model, which depends on masculine combat, but through a scenario present in the work of Immanuel Kant, dealing with the relation to femininity.

Kant’s example is that a sensualist is given the option of making love to the woman he desires, but at the price of immediate execution.¹⁰⁸ Kant argues that no one would make such a bargain, no desire could possibly be worth life; everyone can control his or her passions in extreme situations. Contrary to this, it is possible to imagine an ethical subject who might undergo execution rather than violate the moral adherence to truth and the commandment not to bear false witness against a neighbor. Therefore, while the moral law is immortal, the passions are fleeting and weak. The desire for self-preservation even at the loss of the sexual object is not ethical, because it remains tied to future empirical consequences, but it demonstrates the ability of a human subject to transcend his sensuous nature.¹⁰⁹

However, Lacan takes the risk of arguing for the possibility of at least one libertine so perverse he would in fact trade his life for such a desire.¹¹⁰ Desire possesses a capacity of sublimation, the practice of raising an object “to the dignity of the Thing.”¹¹¹ The Thing, *das Ding*, is for Lacan an object related to the traumatic Real; we desire it without regard for ordinary consequences. Should the desired woman attain the quality of the Thing, she would be worth death. Lacan takes a position directly opposing Kant’s; the sensualist’s fear of death is what is tied to the pleasure principle, his wish to live longer rather than to fornicate. A Don Juan who would willingly be dragged to hell would be the true example of an ethical subject. This hypothetical, suicidally lustful figure produces certain consequences: As Žižek puts it, if his passion suspends his egoistic interests, then it “is *strictu sensu* ethical.”¹¹² Desire and the law are formally equivalent, outside the horizon of the pleasure principle, non-sensual, overriding the fear of death.

Lacan argues for a strict delineation between *jouissance* and pleasure. Pleasure is a “diluted discharge of libidinal tension” mitigated by the reality principle.¹¹³ Any pleasure or enjoyment in the ordinary sense depends on the intervention of the ego’s domesticating abilities, reducing intensity, accommodating experience to external reality, holding back the self-obliterating force of *jouissance*—which is excessive, suicidal, and apparently irrational and impossible. It is in this sense that Lacan commented that “every drive is virtually a death drive.”¹¹⁴ Desire is made up of the elements of the demand that exceed needs; it has no final object and is insatiable. The drive, which includes the death drive as its constant latent tendency, demands total intensity and immediate connection to the Real, while simultaneously taking on the qualities Freud named the “nirvana principle”—the desire for rest, stasis, silence, and peace. The drive essentially demands everything as a tactic to get to nothing.¹¹⁵

In Adrian Johnston’s reading, raw *jouissance* simply could not be reached under any circumstances. To illustrate this thesis, Johnston also appeals to Kant’s example of the woman and the gallows, and suggests that first, following Lacan, that someone might choose to purchase the woman of his dreams at the price of his life, and this would be an elevation of an ordinary woman to the sublime and morbid heights of the Thing, but that the actual sex might be greatly disappointing—rather than a self-destroying burst of orgasmic fulfillment, the unfortunate libertine might find himself “crushed by a mixture of revulsion and horror,” confronted with “a mere pound of flesh not worth dying for in the end.”¹¹⁶ Johnston’s subject would effectively not be able to maintain the obsessive valuation of *das Ding*; upon looking too close, the woman would become an ordinary mammal and not the romantic desideratum of his libido. If the man is given the choice of either the gallows or the comely young woman, he has basically no real choice at all, because if he chooses the woman, he will lose the possibility of *jouissance* and his life as well.¹¹⁷ Social reality and repression turn out to be the necessary precondition for the apparent (but non-existent) possibility of *jouissance*, like hard, dry sand reflecting a mirage.¹¹⁸

In discussing Johnston’s argument, it is important to emphasize that *jouissance* is strictly asensual—so Johnston is not arguing merely that the sex promised to Kant’s ethical/lustful subject might turn out to be too brief or too ordinary or otherwise not to his taste. Johnston’s argument for the impossibility of *jouissance* is then not reliant on a claim for the inadequacy of lived sensation in comparison to fantasy. Instead, Johnston argues that the promised *jouissance* at the end of the drive is formally impossible. When Žižek associates Lacan with Bataille, he is thinking of Lacan’s claim that the desire to enjoy the woman even at the price of death is essentially ethical; this drive towards transgression seems to Žižek to be particularly Bataillean. Johnston’s account of *jouissance* as illusory and the death drive as inherently self-defeating serves the purpose of criticizing that which appears Bataillean in Lacan, and in this sense Johnston’s thesis is in line with Žižek’s desire to put Lacan on a more orthodox Kantian-Hegelian path. It is to Johnston’s credit that he draws out the consequences of Kant’s and scenario and Lacan’s acceptance of the wager, to the end that the promised enjoyment of the female would doubtless be found wanting and the courageous libertine would, from a certain perspective, find himself cheated. Therefore, a kind of transgressive heroism to which Lacan appears to subscribe is thwarted.¹¹⁹

However, a reading of the type I have suggested of *Madame Edwarda* indicates that if Lacan had meant to prescribe an ethics of sexual adventurism, this was never, whatever Žižek’s reading, something in line with Bataille. After all, it is essential to Bataille’s writing that eroticism is not a path to libertine enjoyment. While

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Lacan goes part of the way in dissociating desire from sexual pleasure, his account of sexual desire in *Seminar VII* still seems to indicate a drive towards possession and consumption of the female other. For example, Lacan suggests that the libertine might act “for the pleasure of cutting up the lady concerned in small pieces.”¹²⁰ His point is that desire is essentially destructive and not sensual, but this is exactly the problem. While Lacanian erotic transgression destroys the other in order to sublimate her, Bataille’s account of transgression, on the other hand, only brings an Other to light who cannot be destroyed. Edwarda as incarnation of God is the most salient example of this. From this perspective, the horrified realization on the part of Johnston’s libertine, who has been cheated and finds himself with an abject creature of bones, flesh, and blood, is a consequence Bataille has already understood and accepted. It is at this point that ethics are actually reached, because this is the only moment in the sequence Kant-Lacan-Johnston in which alterity appears.

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NOTES

1. *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, trans. Bruce Fink et. al., New York: W.W. Norton, 2006, 488.
2. Lacan, *Écrits*, 485.
3. *Ecrits 2*, nouvelle édition, Paris: Seuil, 1999, 61. Fink deletes the phrase about *Inner Experience's* centrality in his translation: Lacan, *Écrits*, 488.
4. Published as *Le Séminaire, livre III: Les psychoses*, texte établi par Jacques-Alain Miller, Paris: Seuil, 1981; trans. Russell Grigg as *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III: The Psychoses 1955-1956*, New York: Norton, 1993.
5. *Acéphale* was a secret society that practiced rituals intended to restore an experience of the sacred to the modern world. See Surya, Michel, *Georges Bataille: An Intellectual Biography*, trans. Krzysztof Fijalkowski and Michael Richardson, London: Verso, 2002, 252. See also Roudinesco, Elisabeth, *Jacques Lacan*, chapter 12, "Georges Bataille and Co.," trans. Barbara Bray, New York: Columbia University Press, 1997, 121-139.
6. Surya, *Georges Bataille*, 534.
7. Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, 125, 187.
8. See *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood, San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986, 9.
9. Žižek, Slavoj, *The Parallax View*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006, 94-95. Lacan brought the transcript of this seminar to his stepdaughter Laurence, Bataille's biological daughter, when she was held in the Prison de la Roquette for her activities on behalf of the Algerian Front de libération nationale. See Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, 187.
10. On this point I am in broad agreement with Jean Dragon's thesis in "The Work of Alterity: Bataille and Lacan," *Diacritics*, volume 26, number 2, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, 31-48.
11. See for example *Seminar VII*, 99, 303, 243, 313.
12. See Chiesa, Lorenzo, *Subjectivity and Otherness: A Philosophical Reading of Lacan*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007, 7.
13. Chiesa, *Subjectivity and Otherness*, chapter 4, 108.
14. This can of course also be linked to Bataille's discomfort with playing the role of husband and father, and his willingness to allow Lacan to occupy this position on his behalf.
15. See Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan*, chapter 7.
16. See Kojève, Alexandre, "The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel," collected in *Hegel and Contemporary Continental Philosophy*, edited by Dennis King Keenan, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004, 37-39.
17. Roudinesco writes of "The constant though implicit presence of Bataille in Lacan's evolving work and the total absence of Lacan's writings in the work of Bataille, together with the long, subterranean friendship between the two men themselves." *Jacques Lacan*, 136.
18. See Fink, Bruce, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995; Copjec, Joan, *Imagine There's No Woman: Ethics and Sublimation*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002; Zupancic, Alenka, *Ethics of the Real: Kant, Lacan*, London: Verso, 2000; Chiesa, Lorenzo, *Subjectivity and Otherness*; Johnston, Adrian, *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity*, Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2008.
19. Dylan Evans points out that "Lacan's interest in psychosis predates his interest in psychoanalysis;" his doctoral research on "Aimée," a psychotic woman, was the impetus for his initial readings of Freud. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, New York: Routledge, 1996, 154.
20. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913): The Case of Schreber, Papers on Technique, and Other Works*, trans. James Strachey, London: Hogarth Press, 1971, "Psycho-analytic Notes Upon an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides) (1911)," 10. Cited subsequently as *SE*.
21. *SE XII*, 14.
22. *SE XII*, 14.
23. *SE XII*, 16.
24. *SE XII*, 32.
25. *SE XII*, 43.
26. *SE XII*, 53.
27. *SE XVIII*, 123.
28. See *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy: Volume II: The History of Eroticism and Volume III: Sovereignty*, New York: Zone, 1993, 367.
29. *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. and trans. Allan Stoekl, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985.
30. For an account of the development of psychoanalytic approaches to sexual difference, see Verhaeghe, Paul, *Does the Woman Exist?: From Freud's Hysteric to Lacan's Feminine*, trans. Marc du Ry, New York: Other Press, 1999. In this study, I am bracketing Lacan's famous speculations on female *jouissance* in *Seminar XX: Encore 1972-1973: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Bruce Fink, New York: W.W. Norton, 1998, though much of Lacan's reading here might be more relevant to *Madame Edwanda* than his explicit reference with regard to the psychoses.

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31. Bataille, *Visions*, 9.
32. Bataille's father went blind before his death. See Surya, *Georges Bataille*, 8-9.
33. Bataille, *Visions*, 9.
34. Bataille, *Visions*, 9.
35. Bataille, *Visions*, 9.
36. Derrida writes of a classical ambivalence with regard to the metaphor of the sun, according to which it functions as both a master signifier and its lack simultaneously, in "White Mythology," *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 243, 251.
37. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 78.
38. "The psychotic can only apprehend the Other in the relation with the signifier, he lingers over a mere shell, an envelope, a shadow, the form of speech." Lacan, *Seminar III* 254.
39. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 26, 293.
40. See especially the discussion of the crucifixion in the second part of *On Nietzsche*, trans. Bruce Boone, St. Paul: Paragon House, 1994, 17-19.
41. "He is tainted by an imaginary degradation of otherness, and as a result he is, like Schreber, stricken with a sort of feminization." Lacan, *Seminar III*, 101.
42. Schreber's fantasy is in some ways the inverse of Sade's in that he dreams of a pregnant man, while Sade aims to interrupt the possibility of procreation. Nonetheless, they are united in their desire to refuse sexual difference, and in their positing of an essential and eternal virginity, according to Pierre Klossowski's reading in "Outline of Sade's System," *Sade My Neighbor*, trans. Alphonso Lingis, Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1991, 72.
43. It is important to distinguish this concern with sexual difference from a normalized heterosexism, such as that which Philippe Sollers seems to endorse in "The Roof: Essay in Systematic Reading," *Bataille: A Critical Reader*, ed. Fred Botting and Scott Wilson, Oxford: Blackwell, 88-89. Derrida's reading of Jean Genet in *Glas*, trans. John P. Leavey, Jr., and Richard Rand, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986, critiques the association of "narcissistic" desire with homosexuality.
44. Blanchot, Maurice, *The Infinite Conversation*, trans. Susan Hanson, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, 202.
45. Allan Stoekl reads the narrative as essentially turning on a ritual substitution of the elements of the Catholic mass, with the goal of establishing an altered form of Hegelian recognition, in "Recognition in *Madame Edwarda*," *Bataille: Writing the Sacred*, ed. Carolyn Bailey Gill, London: Routledge, 1995, 78.
46. *Œuvres complètes*, tome III, Paris: Gallimard, 1974, 9; cited subsequently as OC III. Translation modified. *My Mother, Madame Edwarda, The Dead Man*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse, London: Marion Boyars, 1995, 137.
47. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 149.
48. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 149.
49. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 149.
50. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 149.
51. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 150. French text taken from OC III, 20-21.
52. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 152.
53. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language: Unabridged*, ed. Philip Babcock Gove, Springfield: G & C Merriam, 1969, 2528.
54. Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, 9.
55. The English translation, *The Story of the Eye*, conceals this by applying the word "cunt," which would intensify sexual difference where the actual narrative diminishes it.
56. It shares this quality with Sade's fiction, which similarly focuses on the anus and presents female characters with enlarged clitorises.
57. The clitoris is of course often seen as phallus substitute, however inaccurate this characterization might be. See Freud, Sigmund, "Female Sexuality (1931)," *SE XXI*, 228.
58. "The Pornographic Imagination," included in Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, 106.
59. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda* 50; French taken from OC III, 20-21.
60. *Ulysses*, London: Penguin, 1992, 73. The contrast with Joyce is significant, because of Lacan's reading of this author in *Le séminaire livre XXIII. Le sinthome, 1975-1976*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, 164-168, hypothesized by Chiesa and Žizek as the true Lacanian ethics. See *Subjectivity and Otherness*, 183-192.
61. See Cathy MacGregor, "The Eye of the Storm—Female Representation in Bataille's *Madame Edwarda* and *Histoire de l'œil*," *The Beast at Heaven's Gate: Georges Bataille and the Art of Transgression*, ed. Andrew Hussey, New York: Rodopi, 2006, 107. Luce Irigaray indicates for men, a woman's "sexual organ represents the horror of nothing to see." *This Sex Which Is Not One*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, 26.
62. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 150.
63. Bataille, *Madame Edwarda*, 150.

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64. See Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Penguin Books, 91; Freud, "The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex," *SE* 178-179.
 65. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 61.
 66. Lacan, *Seminar III*, 78.
 67. Kojève, "Idea of Death," 39-40, and *Inner Experience*, trans. Leslie Anne Boldt, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988, 135.
 68. Lacan, *Seminar III* 218-219, 228.
 69. Lacan, *Seminar III* 275, Kojève, "Idea of Death," 38-39.
 70. Lacan, *Seminar III* 218-219; Bataille, Georges, "From Existentialism to the Primacy of Economy," trans. Jill Robbins, in Robbins, Jill, *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999, 167.
 71. *Œuvres complètes*, tome V, Paris: Gallimard, 1973, 98, cited subsequently as OC V; translated in Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 83.
 72. "It is to this irreducible difference—which you are—that you must relate the sense of each object." Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 94.
 73. Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 83.
 74. Bataille, *Inner Experience*, 84.
 75. Bataille, *Inner Experience* 97, French taken from OC V, 114.
 76. Freud acknowledges proximity between psychosis and psychoanalysis at the conclusion of his Schreber study; *SE* XII, 79.
 77. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Dennis Porter, New York: W.W. Norton, 1992, 38.
 78. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 219.
 79. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 3.
 80. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 4, 209.
 81. Bataille, *Visions*, 94.
 82. Jacques-Alain Miller admits that "something Georges Bataille contributed in 'Heterology' is at work" in *petit objet a* in "Microscopia: An Introduction to the Reading of 'Television,'" in Lacan, Jacques, *Television: A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, ed. Joan Copjec, New York: W. W. Norton, 1990, xxxi.
 83. Bataille, *On Nietzsche*, 17.
 84. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 6.
 85. Žizek, *Parallax View*, 94. See *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, 56. Badiou mentions Bataille's cruelty specifically, 115.
 86. Žizek, *Parallax View*, 95.
 87. Žizek, *Parallax View*, 95.
 88. For this reason, Žizek argues that Bataille misunderstands the nature of sacrifice in modernity (the modern subject sacrifices itself, rendering transgression irrelevant), in *The Indivisible Remainder*, London: Verso, 1996, 125. See Matthew Sharpe's reading in *Slavoj Žizek: A Little Piece of the Real*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, 139. Žizek's self-sacrificial subject occludes the dimension of alterity maintained and examined by Bataille.
 89. Žizek, *Parallax View*, 96.
 90. Žizek is drawing on a criticism of a tragic and transcendent Lacan made by Bruno Bosteels and Lorenzo Chiesa, and articulating a criticism of his own early work, which constructed Lacan this way. For this reason, Žizek's attempt to extricate Bataille from Lacan is a necessary aspect of his own self-criticism; Bataille is made out to be a nihilist so that he can be identified with a straw-man Lacan, as against the apparently more ethical Lacan delineated by Žizek and Chiesa. See Chiesa, Lorenzo, "Tragic Transgression and Symbolic Re-inscription: Lacan with Lars von Trier," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, New York: Routledge, volume II, number 2, August 2006, 49-61.
 91. *Écrits*, 663.
 92. *Écrits*, 663.
 93. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 79.
 94. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 80.
 95. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 80.
 96. Žizek, Slavoj, "Kant with (or against) Sade," *The Žizek Reader*, ed. Elizabeth Wright and Edmond Wright, Oxford: Blackwell, 1999, 291.
 97. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 199.
 98. Žizek, "Kant with (or against) Sade," 287.
 99. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 202.
 100. *Metaphysical Elements of Justice: Part I of The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. John Ladd, Indianapolis, Hackett, 1999, 88.
 101. Žizek, "Kant with (or against) Sade," 288.

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102. Žižek, “Kant with (or against) Sade,” 288.
103. Žižek, “Kant with (or against) Sade,” 288.
104. Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978, 251-277; Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Center of Political Ontology*, New York: Verso, 1999, chapter 2, 70-124.
105. “From Restricted to General Economy,” 259.
106. *Écrits*, 75-81.
107. *Inner Experience*, 61.
108. *Critique of Practical Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002, 44, read by Lacan in *Seminar VII*, 108, 189.
109. Johnston, Adrian, *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive*, Evanston: Northwestern UP, 2005, 234-235.
110. The association between erotic desire and the disclosure of death was already made by Freud; see “The Theme of the Three Caskets,” *SE XII*, 300.
111. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 112.
112. Žižek, “Kant with (or against) Sade,” 289.
113. Johnston, *Time Driven*, 236.
114. *Écrits*, 719.
115. See Johnston, *Time Driven*, 237.
116. Johnston, *Time Driven*, 239.
117. Johnston, *Time Driven*, 241.
118. Johnston, *Time Driven*, 243.
119. In Chiesa’s reading, Lacan learns to avoid this ethics of transgression by *Seminar XVII (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XVII: The Other Side of Psychosis)*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. Russell Grigg, New York: W. W. Norton, 2007), instead “asking us to *compromise* our desire precisely in order to keep on desiring.” Chiesa, Lorenzo, “Lacan with Artaud: *j’ouïs-sens, jouïs-sens, jouïs-sans*,” *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, ed. Slavoj Žižek, London: Verso, 2006, 346.
120. Lacan, *Seminar VII*, 109.