

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:

RADICAL INTERLOCUTORS, ENTER
STAGE LEFT: HERBERT MARCUSE, PETER
WEISS, REVOLUTIONARY DIALOGUE IN
THEORY AND PRACTICE

John Francis Monday, Master of Arts THPF,
2022

Thesis Directed By:

Professor James Harding THPF

This thesis explores the parallels between philosopher Herbert Marcuse's efforts in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) to wed the ideas of Marx and Freud on the one hand, and the debate between Marquis de Sade and Jean-Paul Marat that playwright Peter Weiss stages, on the other, in his play *Marat/Sade* (1963). Marcuse's innovations bled into the world of Weiss who, despite his own assertions to the contrary, I will argue, wrote a play that owes a great debt to the debates of his time as well as to critical theory. What is at stake in the fictional dialogues set forth by Marcuse and Weiss, as I will contend in this thesis, are basic questions about the role of fictional debate in revolutionary praxis. What work is done by polarizing or marrying two schools of thought? What is the role of the author synthesizing or bifurcating a dialectic in an era of social upheaval? These questions frame my individual consideration of Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* and equally my consideration of Weiss's *Marat / Sade*. But the larger goal of setting the work of Marcuse in dialogue with that of Weiss is to consider the role of art in theoretical

thinking and vice versa. Utilizing two prominent figureheads of the Left cultural moment of the 60s, this thesis argues that confrontation itself is a productive endeavor and that the two contexts dialectically bleed into one another. The worth of this project is thus to capture a specific scene of theoretical and artistic thought in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which are interconnected.

RADICAL INTERLOCUTORS, ENTER STAGE LEFT: HERBERT MARCUSE, PETER
WEISS, REVOLUTIONARY DIALOGUE IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

John Monday

Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
2022

Advisory Committee:

Dr. James Harding

Dr. Caitlin Marshall

Professor Patrik Widrig

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	ii
Introduction: “Who Wins?”: Debate and Dialectics in Peter Weiss and Herbert Marcuse.....	1
Unpacking the Forum at St. Marks: Debating the Debate in <i>Marat / Sade</i>	1
Left of Center Dialectics: Marcuse at the Fillmore East.....	8
Dialectics In Action: Herbert Marcuse’s <i>Eros and Civilization</i> and Peter Weiss’s <i>Marat/Sade</i>	13
Weiss and Marcuse: Lives Of Missed Connections.....	16
An Alienated World: The Dialectic of Marat and de Sade.....	20
Lack and Surplus: The Dialectic of Marx and Freud.....	28
Marat/de Sade and Marx/Freud: Together and Radically Opposed.....	35
Marcuse and Weiss: A Dialogue.....	47
The Dialectics Of Everyday Life: Conclusion.....	49

Introduction: “Who Wins?”: Debate and Dialectics in Peter Weiss and Herbert Marcuse

This thesis explores the parallels between philosopher Herbert Marcuse’s efforts in *Eros and Civilization* (1955) to wed the ideas of Marx and Freud on the one hand, and the debate between Marquis de Sade and Jean-Paul Marat that playwright Peter Weiss stages, on the other, in his play *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade* (1963).¹ Marcuse’s innovations bled into the world of Weiss who, despite his own assertions to the contrary, I will argue, wrote a play that owes a great debt to the debates of his time as well as to critical theory. What is at stake in the fictional dialogues set forth by Marcuse and Weiss, as I will contend in this thesis, are basic questions about the role of fictional debate in revolutionary praxis. What work is done by polarizing or marrying two schools of thought? What is the role of the author synthesizing or bifurcating a dialectic in an era of social upheaval? These questions frame my individual consideration of Marcuse’s *Eros and Civilization* and equally my consideration of Weiss’s *Marat / Sade*. But the larger goal of setting the work of Marcuse in dialogue with that of Weiss is to consider the role of art in theoretical thinking and vice versa. Utilizing two prominent figureheads of the Left cultural moment of the 60s, this thesis argues that confrontation itself is a productive endeavor and that the two contexts dialectically bleed into one another. The worth of this project is thus to capture a specific scene of theoretical and artistic thought in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which are interconnected. Indeed, that scene was often played out in public forums. So, by way of introduction, I want to consider the following two events.

Unpacking the Forum at St. Marks: Debating the Debate in *Marat / Sade*

¹ Hereafter, *Marat / Sade*.

The lights went up on St. Marks Playhouse at 133 Second Avenue, New York City at Midnight on January 28th, 1966, to an audience that was greeted not with actors putting on a drama, but a group of people discussing one. The men and women on stage were set as a forum to discuss the Peter Brook directed Royal Shakespeare Production of Peter Weiss's *Marat / Sade*. While a forum model may not be theatre per se, it demonstrates the dialectic practice of drama - discussing in theoretical and social terminology that which is presented in a dramatic text. The notion of a dialectic forum pervades both the script and performance of *Marat/Sade*. Weiss's play was provocative, placing the madness of the aftermath of the French Revolution next to the diagnosed madness of the asylum and doing so in ways that seemed to resonate with contemporary politics in the mid-1960s. In fact, Weiss's play was so provocative that a forum seemed warranted. To this end, some of the western dramatic world's more prominent cultural critics gathered on the stage of St. Marks on that late January evening in 1966.

The forum was set to discuss "the relevancy of the *Marat/Sade* production, achieved through its fusion of Artaudian and Brechtian techniques, to the revolutionary currents of our time."² Critics often cite the theories of Artaud and Brecht as key sources in the aesthetics of 60s theatre. Both schools of thought are flagged in the analysis of the performance of *Marat / Sade*, as the play's first production took on the vanguard of what was possible on the stage at the time. Indeed, Richard Schechner cited Artaud and Brecht in the preface to the published version of the forum at St. Mark's, which appeared in the summer issue of the *TDR* in 1966. Schechner found fecund material in the debate between Marat and de Sade as he himself worked out the questions of revolution and theatre in the 1960s. The discussion of the Brechtian and Artaudian aesthetics would roll into questions of motivation, antagonism, and victory.

² Peter Brook, Leslie Fiedler, Geraldine Lust, Norman Podhoretz, Ian Richardson, Gordon Rogoff, and Richard Schechner, "Marat/Sade Forum," *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 4 (1966): 214.

Weiss's staging of a fictional dialogue between the revolutionary firebrand Jean-Paul Marat and the Marquis de Sade provided ample ammunition for the discussants on stage. However tremendous the French revolution was, the accompanying terrors marked it as an event stained with bloodshed. In the play, Marat sees the bloodshed as necessary, de Sade sees it as an aberrant abjection, and these differing views are central to the fictional debate that Weiss stages between the two of them. This debate is framed as a play within the play that, following Weiss's conceit, takes place in 1808 in the asylum at Charenton. Within this metatheatrical framing, the audience is given to believe that all the actors are actually inmates who are interned at Charenton because of mental illness.

The Marquis de Sade pens the debate between himself and a diegetic characterization of his now foe in Jean-Paul Marat who, in an obvious allusion to Jacques-Louis David's 1793 painting *The Death of Jean-Paul Marat*, remains in a bathtub throughout the play, waxing feverishly about the revolution while seeking relief in the water from an acute form of dermatitis. The de Sade of Weiss, on the other hand, saw the revolution as misguided, as a display of pure unabashed violence mediated by misplaced ideals. The following exchange exemplifies the distance between the two characters with respect to the revolution.

SADE:
 I know
 That you'd give up your fame and all the love of the
 people
 For a few days of health
 You lie in your bathtub
 As if you were in the pink water of the womb
 You swim all huddled up
 Alone with your ideas about the world
 Which no longer fit with the world outside
 You wanted to meddle with reality
 Now reality has you cornered
 I have stopped meddling with it
 My life is imagination

The Revolution
No longer interests me³

Marat responds in kind:

MARAT:
Wrong Sade wrong
No restless ideas can break down the walls
I never believed the pen alone
Could destroy the existing order
However hard we try to bring in the new
It comes into being only
In the midst of clumsy action
...
And ahead of them the great springtime of mankind
The budding of trade and the blossoming of industry
And one enormous financial upsurge
And while we are further than ever
From our goal in the eyes of the others
[points across the auditorium]
The revolution's already been won⁴

In this exchange, it is clear that the two could not be further apart on the ramifications of the revolution and its possibilities.

Marat's radical republicanism against the bourgeoisie – which includes the fictional audience attending the performance at Charenton in 1808 – stands against de Sade's pessimism about the possibilities of revolution. They presented two sides of reaction against revolutionary cacophony. De Sade wants human flourishing via imagination, Marat wants to harness the randomness and the violence to disrupt the common order of the day, even against the Napoleonic ruling regime he sees from his bathtub in the play within the play. Pointing across the auditorium produces a meta-theatrical moment, for Marat here is both talking to the fictional audience of 1808 and the one of the 1960s. The revolution being won comes across as ironic, a

³ Peter Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, in *The German Library*, edited by Robert Cohen, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2000), 63

⁴ Peter Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, in *The German Library*, edited by Robert Cohen, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2000), 64

distillation of the failure of the revolution to foreclose the Napoleonic regime, and in the 1960s, the left's failures to reign in the excesses of the Soviet Union and capitalist degradation. In the confines of the political economy, the forces of trade and production comprise the machine of oppression. But the "revolution's already been won" in the obviousness of the asymmetry between ideals and the reality on the ground. In their contradictory presence, the audience is aware of the fact that the world of promise is no longer. The fires of revolution need to be rekindled.

As in the preceding quotes from the play indicate, Norman Podhoretz, political conservative and editor at *Commentary*, within the forum at St. Mark's Playhouse classified the debate as one of political commitments. Podhoretz saw two sides of a revolutionary coin claiming "what struck me most was that the *Marat/Sade* managed to invest an enormous amount of force and power in the expression of two sets of attitudes which are already very familiar to us: the confrontation between the classical, radical political position identified with Marat and the nihilistic view of political action represented by Sade."⁵ Podhoretz saw the contemporary within the confines of the play set in the past. Within the early 60s, these two archetypes of left politics were well known to the discussants on stage. Marat and de Sade according to Podhoretz here, foreclose a split in the all-encompassing "left" between those seeking to build a coalition of violence in Marat and those looking to nihilistically forge a new way of life in de Sade. Their positions are inherently incommensurable and without reconciliation, "force and power" without synthesis. Literary critic Leslie Fiedler would take up this split when he claims, "but I feel that if I want to stay alive in this world I must come to understand that position [the left broadly construed] and open in my own head a dialogue with everything I have traditionally called

⁵ Brook, "Marat/Sade Forum," 217.

unreason and madness.”⁶ What this play forces one to consider when watching, is how two schools of thought, two schools of “unreason and madness” forged the Western civilization of the 20th century and even the 21st. The successes of the revolution, in excising religious domination of civil society and effectively killing monarchy, instituted the promises of democracy. The two towering figures of Marat and de Sade, cornerstones of the French Revolution which would herald a new age of democracy but also despotism, battle in the arena of ideas for the way in which political life would be structured and questioned in the next two centuries. But these two do not argue in a vacuum. It is only in the fictionalized setting that their ideas can come to life, that their confrontation can be waged and that comes from the pen of the prolific Peter Weiss.

Peter Brook, whose notorious directing style merged classical timelines with cutting edge aesthetics, directed the triumphantly dialogic play *Marat/Sade* that came to define a nexus of 1960s theatre and claimed of the play that Weiss was staging his own internal battle. He said the following of Weiss and his motivations behind writing based on his personal life:

Surely what's interesting is that there are two completely distinct Peter Weisses. There is a man who at a moment in his life was so wracked by the absolute impossibility of making sense of his own contradictions that he lived through an immense transformation, with everything Sade means. He emerged from his sadistic period to face a world which appalled him; so he swung into politics. Here, every argument he gave even momentary belief to dissolved *{sic}*, and he came back to the Sade-like view that it is all different forms of subjective limitation—there's no way out. Weiss couldn't resolve the contradiction, and in that state of mind he wrote a play in which everything expressed is just like taking his head and opening it and giving it to you on a plate.⁷

In essence, Brook posits that the production's Marat and de Sade was a personal dialogue constructed within the confines of the mind of Weiss: in other words, “just like taking his head and opening it and giving it to you on a plate.” This vision of Weiss's play set forth by Brook,

⁶ Brook, “Marat/Sade Forum,” 219.

⁷ Brook, “Marat/Sade Forum,” 222.

however, begs the question, which was then taken up by the forum's participants: who "inside" Weiss's head wins? Who in the internal battle between Jean-Paul Marat and the Marquis de Sade comes out on top when debating the merits of revolution? This question caused Podhoretz to claim that "if anyone wins the debate, it's Marat." Implicitly reminding Podhoretz that *Marat / Sade* staged a play within a play, Fiedler fired back: "Sade has to win because he's written Marat's lines."⁸ Their antagonism is ultimately inconclusive, and the debate is left unresolved. The question of victory and bifurcation may have dominated the *Marat/Sade* forum and animated the various productions, but from another perspective the question was really a digression, focusing on a pseudo-horserace between Marat and de Sade rather than on the larger matters raised by the debate that Weiss staged between Marat and de Sade.

Everyone loves a good horserace, but the question "Who wins?" obscures the dialectical relationship between the two characters of Marat and de Sade. Victory, in drama and history, relegates some actors to the background and others to the foreground, taking away from the entire stage image. Of course, because de Sade supposedly pens the play within the play, Fiedler has a certain point. But to say "Sade has to win" does a disservice to what was said earlier by Brook, namely that the logic of the production is a push-pull dynamic, which according to his description resembles the outward faux appearance of a dialectic. While never mentioned during the course of the forum, Weiss's dialectic is ever present within the confines of the play's structure. Dialectics can be seen crudely from the well-known tripartite Hegelian system of "thesis to antithesis to synthesis." If one were to apply this logic to *Marat/Sade* there is an easy division. De Sade is the aristocratic thesis to Marat's underclass antithesis, leading to the synthesis of bourgeois revolutionary upheaval and de Sade in a mental institution cozying up

⁸ Brook, "Marat/Sade Forum", 224

with the leadership of the new regime. But dialectics lie centrally within the confines of gaps or antagonisms. It is inevitable that every position one holds is itself at some level contradictory.

Individuals can never be too sure of the ground they stand on because of the inherent instability of contingency and contradiction. Theorist Todd McGowan argues contrary to the traditional tripartite dialectic that “every position ultimately undermines itself by exposing its own internal division.”⁹ This logic of internal division undergirding every position, historical or intellectual or otherwise, leads philosopher and thinker of the Hegelian tradition Slavoj Žižek to claim that the truth of dialectics relies on an ideological folly. The condition of a “properly Hegelian notion of ideology” is then “the misapprehension of the condition of possibility (of what is an inherent constituent of your position) as the condition of impossibility (as an obstacle which prevents your full realization)—the ideological subject is unable to grasp how his entire identity hinges on what he perceives as the disturbing obstacle.”¹⁰ Within the structure of *Marat/Sade*, de Sade’s ideological war and by extension Weiss’s is one that cannot be resolved or proven victorious, for the battle lies inherently in themselves. Brook’s argument of Weiss’s own internal, unresolved struggle rings true. For in the complications of drama and narrative history, there are resemblances that bleed into one another, images and actors which seem the same but are also simultaneously alien. This brings us to a second event, one which bears striking similarities with the *Marat/Sade* forum but is also radically removed from it. That event took place two years after the forum on *Marat / Sade*.

Left of Center Dialectics: Marcuse at the Fillmore East

⁹ Todd McGowan, *Emancipation After Hegel*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 12.

¹⁰ Slavoj Žižek, *Less than nothing: Hegel and the shadow of dialectical materialism*.(London: Verso Books, 2012), 200.

Another man who recognized the dialectical limitations of his thought similarly to Weiss was the political philosopher Herbert Marcuse, and two years after the *Marat/Sade* forum on East 6th street, the silver haired philosopher was two blocks away in the Fillmore East on St. Marks Place where he gave a lecture that addressed the question of why people seek servitude when liberation is possible. The occasion of Marcuse's lecture on the 4th of December 1968 was the twentieth anniversary of *The Guardian*. The lecture was entitled "On The New Left," and in it Marcuse rejected the title which had been given to him by the New York Times as "the ideological leader of the New Left."¹¹ Much like Weiss's earlier implicit dialectical polemic in *Marat/Sade*, Marcuse explicitly renounces any frame in which he would be caught in an ideological hoisting of his own petard. Marcuse explains to his audience that, "I never claimed to be the ideological leader of the left and I don't think the left needs an ideological leader. And there is one thing the left does not need, and that's another father image, another daddy. And I certainly don't want to be one."¹² Marcuse here rejected what he perceived to be the reigning ideologies of his day, from the socialist movement in the Soviet Union which he described in light of the invasion of Czechoslovakia as a "crime"¹³ to the capitalist world in the West.

Marcuse's critique extends into conceiving leaderless and local movements to be the future of the left and what he aims for in what he labels libertarian socialism contra repression. He argued in his lecture, "now the strength of the New Left may well reside in precisely these small contesting and competing groups, active at many points at the same time, a kind of political guerilla force in peace or so-called peace, but and this is, I think, the most important point, small groups, concentrated on the level of local activities, thereby foreshadowing what

¹¹ Missimo Teodori, *The New Left: A Documentary History*, (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969), 431.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Teodori, *The New Left*, 432.

may be in all likelihood be the basic organization of libertarian socialism.”¹⁴ Marcuse sees the need for the left to revamp itself against the easy reconciliation or unity of the old paradigm of party organization. He says to a bevy of laughter in the concert hall, “I want to add one thing here that may almost appear as heretic—no primitive unification strategy. The left is split! The Left has always been split! Only the right, which has no ideas to fight for, is united!”¹⁵ Herein lies Marcuse’s inheritance to the logic of the dialectic when fomenting a plan for a leaderless new left and by extension what can be seen in the dialogue between the fictional Jean-Paul Marat and Marquis de Sade. He sees strength in unresolved dialectical opposition and contradiction. Against Podhoretz and Fiedler two years prior, Marcuse signals that the very tension of opposing ideas or positions are strengths. In short, the power of the left is its inability to foment clear and decisive unity. Only in antagonistic relationality can left politics prevail.

What is significant in these two scenes is the prominence of the dialectic in the thought of Weiss and Marcuse. Both figures concocted fictional conversations, representations of schools of thought in antagonistic relationality. In that antagonism, both found fruitful results, namely the ways to think of radically reforming society and changing it for the better. Weiss’s play led others to question his motivations on staging the debate, but the debate was the motivation from the very beginning. Marcuse set out to define his political goals, goals dedicated to build a burgeoning left-wing movement set at the local level, contesting and questioning the very process of building a new world. In both events, both men highlighted the split inherent in theatre and in philosophy, a split that is multi-faceted. This split can manifest between old/new, reactionary/progressive, impossible/possible, enslaved/free, etc., The splits do not produce easy answers and it is in their very irresolvable contradictions that the truth can be found.

¹⁴ Teodori, *The New Left*, 434.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

In his lecture, Marcuse recognized the fundamental correspondence between dialectical thinking against the reigning ideology of his day. In perhaps his most famous work, *One-Dimensional Man*, he emphasizes that “philosophy originates in dialectic; its universe of discourse responds to the facts of an antagonistic reality.”¹⁶ Marcuse goes on to say that this fundamental feature of philosophy produces a life beyond the technological system of domination he describes in books such as *Eros and Civilization*, which links the oeuvres of Marx and Freud. Above all, Marcuse recognized a utopian potential in philosophical thinking and therefore dialectical thinking against both scientific driven capitalism and repression writ large. He writes: “To be sure this is still the dictum of the philosopher; it is he who analyzes the human situation. He subjects experience to his critical judgment, and this contains a value judgment—namely, that freedom from toil is preferable to toil, and an intelligent life is preferable to a stupid life.”¹⁷ Marcuse sees some experience — “essential and contingent nature”¹⁸—as true or false, a dialectical split in the universe of ideas.

Marcuse highlights the historical nature of this contention, claiming the essence of man as either ruled or unruled. Unchanging, however, is a transcendental truth of essential nature. This essential nature is that which is constitutive of the social fabric, an unquestionable situation of domination and the dominated. But this truth is in and of itself located dialectically in history. Writing against a static dichotomy he writes, “dialectical logic undoes the abstractions of formal logic and of transcendental philosophy, but it also denies the concreteness of immediate experience...it attains its truth if it has freed itself from the deceptive objectivity which conceals the factors behind the facts—that is, if it understands its world as a *historical* universe...logical

¹⁶ Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2013), 130.

¹⁷ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 130-131.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

truth becomes historical truth.¹⁹ Marcuse links this historical truth to the “essential” truths of nature, namely that in the judgment of values, there is the slave and there is the free person. The answer to the paradoxes of this truth are conflictual. He locates this in the origins of Western philosophy, in Greek thought. He writes, “already the Greek conception contains the historical element—the essence of man is different in the slave and in the free citizen, in the Greek and the in the Barbarian.”²⁰ Despite the contingency of history, the essential remains the same, the value judgment still pertains to a possibility for a liberated existence. The entire picture, not framed by winners and losers, is instead a blurred chimera where the same and the different exist simultaneously, and not at all, forming a dialectic.

Marcuse saw the dialectic as constitutive. His thought in the 20th century might present an exercise in highlighting what was on stage with *Marat/Sade*. The truth of “Who wins?” between the forces of “true” or “false” essences is a question for the philosopher who countenances history as the primary dialectical mover of people and things and the artist who poses an aesthetic dimension toward the dilemmas. Weiss employs the two separate modes of thought in Marat and de Sade, while Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* marries the two distinct modes of thought of Marxism and psychoanalysis. I want to suggest that Marxism and psychoanalysis, as will be discussed later in this thesis, are on two opposite ends of a wide spectrum. In short, Marxism represents a call towards revolution while Psychoanalysis forecloses that possibility in favor of the mantle of a more genuine relationship between mind and body. In many ways, these two discourses cannot exist together, but nevertheless it is the work of Marcuse and those who like him took to the task of formulating a Freudo-Marxism. By broadening the frame further beyond the dialectics of Marat/de Sade and Marx/Freud, I argue

¹⁹ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 145

²⁰ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 131.

that there is a parallel resemblance between the thought of philosopher Herbert Marcuse and the playwriting of Peter Weiss and by extension broader consciousness or thought with the stage.

This goes without mentioning the resonances between the lives of the two men, who both came from a Jewish heritage, escaped the Nazis, held critiques of the Soviet Union as leftist thinkers, and both vehemently opposed the Vietnam War. But their two oeuvres, represented in this thesis by Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* and Weiss's *Marat/Sade*, both set a dialogue and more importantly a dialectic between respective and opposing camps. It is not a question of "Who wins?" but rather what the confrontation emblemizes structurally and within a broader socio-historical frame.

Dialectics In Action: Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* and Peter Weiss's

Marat/Sade

This thesis proposes to set theory and practice in dialogue – or to be more precise philosophy and theatre – by exploring the multiple levels at which Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* and Peter Weiss's *Marat / Sade* speak to one another across disciplinary boundaries of philosophy and theatre. Moreover, they speak to one another in ways that provide valuable insight into revolutionary sentiment and discourse in Europe in the 1960s as they relate to movements on the street and in the academy. The rationale for setting these prominent intellectuals in dialogue comes from an identifiable parallel in the structures of what are arguably two of their most prominent respective works. On the one hand, Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* stages a dialogue between the discourses of Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism, while Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade*, on the other hand, literally stages a debate between a philosophy of hedonistic sensuality (de Sade) and a philosophy of revolutionary enlightenment (Marat). The

constructed debates in these two very different works ultimately speak to the conceptual similarities in the thoughts of Herbert Marcuse and Peter Weiss.

In the sections that follow, the thesis examines each work individually and considers the internal dialogue that each author constructs: Marcuse's constructed dialogue between Freud and Marx, and Weiss's constructed dialogue between de Sade and Marat. And this, in turn, will be followed by a consideration of what it means to construct these dialogues under the respective umbrellas of philosophy (Marcuse) and theatre (Weiss). Of particular concern will be the fact that the focal point for Marcuse and Weiss is revolutionary action, and so a primary question that the thesis will be asking is whether philosophy, the study of objects of inquiry from the point of view of the logical and illogical, or theatre, the study of objects of inquiry from the point of view of the dramatic and aesthetic, is better suited as a catalyst for that action in the present.

What if we wade back into the waters of the question of the individual, their constitution as a potential force for action and change, and the theoretical matrices through which these questions are taken up by Weiss and Marcuse, two thinkers who developed lasting questions of the stage and philosophy? This is in fact a call to return and consider how to maybe ameliorate the crisis in the twenty-first century. It is a call to return to the primal scene of revolution, where the matrix of the political economy could have changed but didn't. Weiss and Marcuse were emblematic of a world caught up in an unresolved dialectic not seen as such. De Sade, as a pseudo-Freud, rails throughout the play and the 1967 film of Brook's famous English language production of it, against a primal societal repression. Marat, who in Weiss's depiction, is a proto-Marxist figure, calls for constant revolutionary action against the class oppression of the French aristocracy and bourgeoisie. While it is not a perfect one to one, Marat and de Sade's debate highlights the real-world conversations of the continental philosophical intelligentsia of the

1960s and 1970s. The supposed marriage between Marx and Freud is played out on the stage for all to see in Brook's production of *Marat/Sade* in all of its destructive and revolutionary potentialities in a fiery explosion.

Over the question of power in the 21st century, the forces contrary to what Marcuse would perhaps label a "true" essence of valuation, have lost to the forces of the false. According to the logic of commodities, "the products indoctrinate and manipulate; they promote a false consciousness which is immune against its falsehood."²¹ Marcuse poses dialectical thinking as a way out of the jam of capitalist society. Weiss enacts his own contradictory thinking in *Marat/Sade* to put the dialectic into practice. Our goal is to parse the winless situation and to pose the structural determinants in contradistinction and simultaneity with agency of our age in thought and practice for an adequate praxis owing to the past. This requires the dialogue and the dialectic for the question of "Who wins?" The objective of *Marat/Sade* is not to represent history on stage as a singular discourse, but to record and embody the practice of a structured intervention that took place on a global stage with Marx and Freud.

In formulating my argument showcasing the resonances between Weiss in *Marat/Sade* and Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization*, I shall proceed following a number of steps. First, I will highlight the (non) relationship between the historical Weiss and Marcuse. Next, I will point out what the two men share in their indebtedness to the dialectic. Then I will discuss the relationship between Marat and De Sade, both dramatically and historically. From there I will turn to Marx and Freud as progenitors of two competing but resonant discourses in Marxism and psychoanalysis. Finally, I will share the latent relationship between Marat/De Sade and Marx/Freud. In all of this I hope to showcase a functional relationship between Weiss and

²¹ Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, 14.

Marcuse as thinkers and practitioners of revolutionary politics. Weiss and Marcuse both performatively enact conversations between two figures, and in their performative reconstructions and representations an image of their projects becomes apparent.

Weiss and Marcuse: Lives Of Missed Connections

Like Marat and de Sade and like Marx and Freud, Herbert Marcuse and Peter Weiss never shared an actual dialogue, and it was perhaps due to Weiss's own reticence to be seen not as a philosopher without praxis. In *Understanding Peter Weiss* by biographer Robert Cohen, Cohen notes that Weiss generally rejected some leftist projects in the West including the Frankfurt school and the leftwing uprising of May 1968 in France:

Peter Weiss was, in a number of ways, a forerunner of the 1968 student movement: in his turn toward Marxism, in his preoccupation with the fascist German past, in his radical critique of capitalism, and in his support of liberation movements of the Third World. But, unlike Marcuse or Adorno, Weiss was no father figure of the student movement. (The Frankfurt School, by the way, had no noticeable influence on Weiss's work). Rather, he was its father and its pupil at the same time. He repeatedly debated with leftist students, especially with the budding writers among them, as an equal among equals. Communication, however, proved to be difficult. There was too much that separated the older writer living in permanent exile in Sweden from the young German left. In the company of the brothers Peter and Michael Schneider, Hans-Christoph Buch, or Hermann Peter Piwitt, Peter Weiss thought he sensed condescension. For his part, he noted ironically that these revolutionaries lived on their parents' money. After a fruitless attempt to collaborate with a student group's theater project, there was the disheartened conclusion, 'I am constantly reminded that I come from someplace completely different'. A notation shortly before the completion of work on *Trotsky in Exile* states that the student movement was 'the best thing' that happened in the year 1968, but Weiss also notes that it was no more than a bourgeois revolution. The ambivalence toward the young radicals was not to be overcome.²²

Here, Weiss prominently takes a skeptical attitude towards the students who took to the streets to, in their minds, take on the capitalist machinery in the West. By extension, there is then a rejection of the broader "heroes" of the New Left like Marcuse and others from the Frankfurt School. Weiss's attention oftentimes turned instead toward the burgeoning and arguably more

²² Robert Cohen, *Understanding Peter Weiss*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1993), 130.

efficacious, in his mind, left-wing movements in the “third world.” Cohen points this out when he writes that, “Weiss visited Cuba, 16 July – 20 August 1967. Weiss was overwhelmed by the contrast between revolutionary Cuba and those Central American ‘banana republics’ he had studied while working on *Song of the Lusitanian Bogey*. He discussed *Marat/Sade* with Fidel Castro, but a planned meeting with Che Guevara (1928 – 67) did not take place, as the physician and revolutionary was in Bolivia. Later that summer in Sweden, Weiss's thoughts continued to revolve around the Third World, which, he maintained, should be called the first world, as it was where the forces of change and the future could be found.”²³ Whether or not he would see himself and Marcuse as coming from “someplace completely ” different is up for debate, but speculatively Weiss’s experience of the left and his hopes for it were not exactly the same as Marcuse’s.

Marcuse, for his part, felt a connection to Weiss’s work. According to Gerhard Richter, the German novelist Reinhard Lettau, who was Marcuse’s friend and colleague at UCSD in the 1970s, claimed Marcuse’s favorite living writers of his lifetime were Beckett and Peter Weiss.²⁴ Marcuse, before the end of his life, planned to write extensively on Weiss and his work. In his introduction for his 2004 book on Marcuse on art in *Art and Liberation*, Douglas Kellner notes that Marcuse had planned to analyze Weiss’s novel series *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. Kellner writes that, “while he was taken by Peter Weiss’s stunning novel series *The Aesthetics of Resistance*, mentioning it in his last book and planning a study of this brilliant text, which in an utterly unique form dealt with the fate of the leftwing opposition to Hitler, fictionalizing key historical characters and inventing a trio of German oppositional youth, he never had a chance to

²³ Cohen, *Understanding Peter Weiss*, 118-119.

²⁴ Gerhard Richter, "Can Hope Be Disappointed?: Contextualizing a Blochian Question," *symploke* 14, no. 1 (2006): 42.

write it up or at least nothing on it has turned up in his archives or private collection.”²⁵ Marcuse never had the chance, or never took to the task, to write extensively on the work he refers to throughout his theoretical writings. Kellner continues, “nor did he ever do a detailed study of Beckett, Brecht, or the other writers mentioned repeatedly in his aesthetic writings of the 1960s and 1970s.”²⁶ Marcuse took to writing more on the development of a leftwing emancipatory consciousness centered on the possibility of revolution contrary to the imperial hegemony of the Soviet Union and the United States. Weiss’s work speaks for itself, as a dialectic that Marcuse would highlight as important work.

Marcuse spoke of Weiss sparsely, but in the scant writings there are signs that Marcuse viewed Weiss extremely positively. Marcuse, in his extant writings, however, saw Weiss as something akin to a hero of a bygone age. Weiss, to Marcuse, in his aesthetic production countered the prevailing forces of art while also countenancing the horrors of history. Writing in *The Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics* (1979), Marcuse takes to task the hodgepodge approach to art which according to him mistakenly undertook the role of presenting art as discontinuous with the oppressive reality of capital in the 70s. He saw this as a mistake in artistic production. In an ardent defense of the modernist aesthetic, Marcuse sees art which emphasizes “disintegration” of the “whole” as an instantiation of the rule of the whole. For if in mimesis, the only goal of “non” or “anti-art” is to tear down any semblance of sense in favor of the discontinuous, its aesthetic falls flat against the brick wall of totality. Defining itself against the whole means that the whole or the “philosophical One” returns in full form as an oppressive bulwark. If artists dedicated to “non” or “anti” art define themselves antagonistically,

²⁵ Douglas Kellner, *Art and Liberation: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 4*, (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2007), 67.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

without precepts for engagement without relationality, then the oppressive hegemony is once again the victor. The modernist aesthetic is a mimesis which creates a reality exterior to the rules of the game of the capitalist totality. Foregrounding Weiss as an impressive standout, Marcuse writes, “and in the intellectual culture of our society, it is the aesthetic form which by virtue of its otherness, can stand up against this integration. Significantly, Peter Weiss’s recent book has the title *Asthetik des Widerstands* (The Aesthetics of Resistance).”²⁷ Weiss titling his novel with the key word “aesthetics” meant to Marcuse that Weiss saw an important alteriority to the role of aesthetics. Against fascism, against capitalist imperialism, there stands art as an actual bulwark not of fetishizing destruction but a utopic vision of resistance and of the future.

Aesthetics in the vein of Weiss’s novel and assumedly Weiss’s wider oeuvre, contrary to the status of negation of “non-art” or “anti-art” at the time of *The Aesthetic Dimension*, exists as an expression of the stance of art as counter hegemonic. Marcuse notes this in another section on Weiss in his essay “Lyric Poetry After Auschwitz” where he writes, “the question whether after Auschwitz, poetry is still possible can perhaps be answered: yes, if it re-presents, in uncompromising estrangement, the horror that was—and still is. Can the same be said about prose? Prose is much more committed to reality than poetry consequently estrangement is much harder to achieve—estrangement which still is communicable, ‘makes sense.’ It has been achieved: Kafka, Beckett, Peter Weiss (in *Asthetik des Winterstands*.)”²⁸ Alienation in the Brechtian sense, is what Marcuse sees as the hallmark of a proper aesthetic. Marcuse holds Weiss in high regard, for the expression of his art goes against the horror of modern life with the vigor of estrangement which “makes sense.” There is an internal logic, not merely working for

²⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, (Stuttgart: Macmillan, 1979),50.

²⁸ Marcuse, *The Aesthetic Dimension*, 211.

the purposes of destruction. Weiss's work, according to Marcuse, countenances horror while not reproducing it.

An Alienated World: The Dialectic of Marat and de Sade

Jean-Paul Marat and the Marquis de Sade are representatives of two schools of thought. For Weiss, the writing of the play was an exercise in putting those two schools of thought against one another. That debate exemplified the nature of the dialectic, namely of two positions being seen as the same but also simultaneously as radically different. On its face, this contention is easy to muster. Weiss saw Jean-Paul Marat as a revolutionary in its purest form, dedicated to the bringing about of a new world by any means necessary. De Sade was more of a pragmatist, seeing the horrors of revolution as contrary to his notions of human flourishing. Both men in Weiss's representation are part of the revolution, but their goals for after the fall of the king and the instatement of a republic could not be further apart. In reality, the revolution would kill Marat and make de Sade end up at the asylum of Charenton. From there, from their two forms of death, Weiss picks up the thread of two men who could not be further apart but ostensibly sharing the same goals in a dialectic.

Marat and de Sade differ on their thoughts on the merits of revolution through Weiss's writing. De Sade sees himself as the end all be all of the possibilities of revolution, his own individualism a benchmark for the downfalls and triumphs of the revolution. He says to Marat during the course of the play:

SADE:
I turn my back on all of the sacrifices
That have been made for any cause
I believe only in myself.²⁹

²⁹ Peter Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 69.

Marat, in a rejoinder, proclaims to de Sade:

MARAT:

I believe only in the cause you betray³⁰

In this exchange, Marat and de Sade's commitments are clear. Marat wants only the downfall of the state that oppresses. De Sade wants only the freedom and possibility of personal fulfillment. If the revolution is deadly, Marat sees this as the only possible way forward. For de Sade, there is an inherent hypocrisy in people claiming universal harmony for all while producing conflagration in practice. If only people were to focus on themselves, according to Weiss's de Sade, utopia may result. This is the stark difference between Weiss's Marat and de Sade. Marat is dedicated toward violent collective action. De Sade is obligated toward a self-improvement beyond the confines of the collective which imprisons and bludgeons. Weiss takes up the dialectic between the two representations and makes an artistic product toward resolving the opposed Marat and de Sade. In his aesthetic production via the dialectic, Weiss estranges the positions bringing about a greater understanding of the revolution and its possibilities.

The question of "good art" which countervails against the horror of Nazism and Fascism goes back to the originality of the Frankfurt School in answering the question of what a Marxist aesthetic politic might look like. While Marcuse does not take up this question as vigorously as his contemporary Theodor Adorno, his philosophical inquiry points directly to Weiss as a representative of a proper Marxist artistic endeavor. The Brechtian concept of alienation or *Verfremdung* provides the import for Weiss's novel, whose prose Marcuse holds up as an exemplification of a modernism against the hodgepodge of non- or anti-art. Recalling the "Realism/Modernism" debate in his afterword of the collection of essays in *Aesthetics and Politics*, Fredric Jameson classifies Brechtian alienation as part and parcel of the modernist

³⁰ Peter Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 69.

tradition that Weiss takes up. Defining *Verfremdung* in clear terms, Jameson writes: “The practice of estrangement—staging phenomenon in such a way that what had seemed natural and immutable in them is now tangibly revealed to be historical, and thus the object of revolutionary change—has long seemed to provide an outlet from the dead end of agitational didacticism in which so much of the political past remains confined.”³¹

In *Marat/Sade*, Weiss expresses this categorization of an aesthetic of alienation that would be on display in his novel *The Aesthetics of Resistance*. The alienation effect in *Marat/Sade* highlights contradiction not merely as a force for destruction, but as an Othered structure. *Marat/Sade* is excessive, not merely for the sake of being excessive, but in form and content to theorize revolutionary change. The sheer length of the title, *The Persecution and Assassination of Jean-Paul Marat as Performed by the Inmates of the Asylum of Charenton Under the Direction of the Marquis de Sade*, is an experiment of excessiveness. But this excessiveness holds a specificity to it. Above all, the goal in this excess is to hold and maintain a coherent political ground. If one is taken aback by the sheer breadth of the title, so too is one placed squarely in the crossfire of the debate that would take place—a part of the historical matrix on display. Marcuse never commented on *Marat/Sade*, but it is a short leap to speculate that Marcuse would see the same alienation effect at work in Weiss’s novel as he would in *Marat/Sade* years earlier.

The resonances between Marcuse and Weiss go beyond mere correspondence or respect for each other’s works. In their stagings of fictional conversations in *Eros and Civilization* for Marcuse and Weiss’s *Marat/Sade*, a broader truth of the age and the question of art and philosophy’s role is revealed. To stage a fictional conversation then between Marcuse and Weiss

³¹ Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukacs, *Aesthetic And Politics*, (London: Verso, 2020), 206.

from their own concocted conversations is to present what is already implicit in Marcuse's invocation theoretically of Weiss's use of alienation. This expresses an understanding of the role of their dialectics in emancipatory politics. Weiss's constructed fictional conversation between Jean-Paul Marat and the Marquis de Sade in a mental asylum and Marcuse's philosophical pairing of Marx and Freud highlight what I argue is tantamount to an unconscious dialogue between Weiss and Marcuse. Their unspoken conversation delineates a broader structure which reveals the political dynamic beyond their pages, an estrangement that is worth revisiting.

Beyond the formality of content, what is at work in the form of their respective pairings is the importance of dialectical thinking. But it is a particular kind of dialectical thinking that in *Marat/Sade* and *Eros and Civilization* moves the dialectic beyond the common crudeness of "thesis to antithesis to synthesis." The notion of the dialectic in its own respect also goes beyond the traditional *Marxism* attributed to Marx's confidant and partner Engels and taken up by the USSR in dialectical materialism. This is highlighted by Jameson in his book *Valences of the Dialectic* (2009), when Jameson quotes Engels's use of the concept and further staging of dialectics in dialectical materialism as:

The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa;
The law of the interpenetration of opposites;
The law of the negation of the negation.³²

This version of dialectics does not correspond to a dialectic of dialectics itself. There is another level to the dialectic, a form of thinking which produces a doubled face to separate forces.

Dialectics require dialectical thinking in and of itself.

In contrast to the portrait of Engels's crude dialectics, the dialectic at work in Marcuse and Weiss is also a dialectic in form. If one is to consider the dialectic "of something", there

³² Fredric Jameson, *Valences of the Dialectic*, (London:Verso, 2009), 13.

must be two operations at work simultaneously. First, is the very impasse of incommensurability. Jameson notes that, “now we may begin to hazard the guess that something like the dialectic will always begin to appear when thinking approaches the dilemma of incommensurability, in whatever form and that the dialectic henceforth seems to be the shift of thinking on to a new and unaccustomed plane in an effort to deal with the fact of distinct and autonomous realities that seem to offer no contact with each other.”³³ Jameson continues by claiming that the analytic approach of the dialectic also reconciles two actions in tandem, the very sameness of antagonistic forces, and their irreconcilability .

But this particular opposition (and others like it) is clearly not to be ‘solved’ by a mere identification of the unity of such opposites: indeed, it is probably not to be solved at all., but rather approached in a different way, which remains dialectical but which illustrates another face of the dialectic altogether from the one just described. Indeed these two versions of the dialectic (of ‘a dialectic of’...) may well be considered as the two extremes of binary possibility. On the one hand the identification of the opposites with each other, and on the other their greatest possible dissociation from each other while remaining within some minimal relationship which makes it possible to speak of both together as participating in an opposition in the first place.³⁴

In other words, the two levels of the dialectic correspond to shifting the plane of existence between two antagonistic forces as somehow connected and their complete opposition as separate entities. When we begin to speak of the “dialectic of Marat and de Sade” in *Marat/Sade* or “the dialectic of Marx and Freud” in *Eros and Civilization*, we are necessarily dealing with these two levels of the concept in form and content, showcasing a dilemma between the individual and the collective.

The dialectic of *Marat/Sade* is an invocation of the two levels of the dialectic, first in form and then in content. The very existence of the play in its form highlights

³³ Jameson, *Valences*, 24.

³⁴ Jameson, *Valences*, 24-25.

incommensurability while maintaining the sense that Marcuse was after in the aesthetic dimension of life. Biographer Robert Cohen classifies the play as such:

Nevertheless, *Marat/Sade* is not a precursor of postmodern arbitrariness. It has an objective tendency that can be brought out through rational discourse. Still, it is useful to keep in mind the multilayered structure of the play: statements about *Marat/Sade* should always contain a measure of doubt.³⁵

Cohen claims that the play stands contrary to the postmodern aesthetic because it can be talked about rationally, with an inherent logic stained with doubt. There is an indecipherability embedded in *Marat/Sade* which provides the form to the central debate's contents. Take the temporal as the preeminent exemplification of the play's contradictions. The play was written in 1963, takes place in 1808, but is portraying events from 1792. All three temporal landscapes exist in tandem and simultaneity, producing a cacophony. For an audience, presumably watching the actors portray characters portraying characters, there is a measure of confusion. Where are we exactly? The answer is not so clear because the very function of the play produces contradiction or estrangement in the lapses of time one must keep in mind. The reality is, characters are portraying the "mad" putting on a play which happened a decade plus ago, and from the point of view of the "modern" audience, 200 years ago. The form of the play as a temporal and historical dissonance instantiates contradiction as key.

The play's content is of course the debate between Marat and de Sade. From the point of view of the incommensurable as being shifted to a separate plane through which Marat and de Sade are connected, the very similarity of the two men as one and the same, and their complete separation as forces, the dialectic works as an exemplary heuristic. At two levels they, both the fictional, in Weiss's speculative staged adaptation, and the historical operate as a dialectic. For

³⁵ Cohen, *Understanding Peter Weiss*, 65.

Marat/Sade, Marat and de Sade as incommensurable characters function only through the lens of the pathology of mental illness.

The two characters, despite Marat being “played” by an inmate, are locked away. Their antagonistic positions, of unabated sensuality and aristocratic upbringing in de Sade and revolutionary republicanism in Marat, provide a contradiction only available to be waged within the confines of the asylum. Indeed, at the very beginning of the play Coulmier’s invocation of de Sade as an inmate provides the key with which to view the vanishing mediator of the dialectic at work. Coulmier addresses the audience at the very beginning of the play by exclaiming:

COULMIER:

I agree with our author Monsieur de Sade
that his play set in our modern bath house won’t be marred
by all these instruments for mental and physical hygiene
Quite on the contrary they set the scene
For in Monsieur de Sade’s play he has tried
to show how Jean-Paul Marat died
and how he waited in his bath before
Charlotte Corday came knocking at
his door³⁶

Pathologized and placed within the asylum, the dialectic of Marat and de Sade functions in their existence on the plane of illness as revolutionary upheaval and rejection of the status quo comes to view only at Charenton. The two men are thus also the “same” insofar as their positions make them end up in the same place, yet they maintain their difference as disassociated even on the same field of existence. “All these instruments for mental and physical hygiene” imprison Marat and de Sade closeting them in a veil of sameness, but Marat’s death written by de Sade highlights their differences as de Sade would survive in his nihilism. This unresolved synthesis becomes possible only within being imprisoned behind the walls of freedom.

³⁶ Peter Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 44.

Theodor Adorno's view of dialectics as a "negative dialectic" corresponds to a synthesis that is never resolved. This was Adorno's contention in his book *Negative Dialectics*, but there is greater clarity to this concept when he writes: "As long as the world is as it is, all pictures of reconciliation, peace, and quiet resemble the picture of death."³⁷ Negative dialectics contrasts the crude and ultimately positivistic view of change and structure and clarifies the positions of Marat and de Sade. While they exist together, they exist in bifurcated amber, fossilized on two ends of a rock. The spatial plane which brings the two characters together is a chimera, an anesthetized figure of social death in the asylum. Whatever Weiss's intentionality was for bringing this debate to the madhouse, it foregrounds the power of the dialectic. The asylum offers a place of calm debate which bears no threat of annihilation but instead the sober retelling of events through discourse. This enables a death of the power of the antagonism present in the dialectic. The endless white walls cling to the characters like the dust of a catacomb, endless and impenetrable, forever removed from the possibility of reconciliation.

Historically and in reality, the revolution places Marat and de Sade together despite their contradictions. Their similarities as intellectuals and as adherents to the revolution does not negate the incommensurability of their contexts. De Sade is an aristocrat, Marat a staunch republican. But the revolution brings them together as identities contrary to the king. Indeed, as de Sade writes in his real-life eulogy for Marat and fellow revolutionary Le Peltier,

Those famous men whom we mourn are breathing again; our patriotism is resurrecting them; I glimpse them in our midst...I hear them announce the dawn of those serene and tranquil days, more superb than ancient Rome ever was, when [Paris] will become...the bane of despots, the temple of the arts, the motherland of all free men.³⁸

³⁷ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2003), 381.

³⁸ Francine du Plessix Gray, *At Home With The Marquis de Sade*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 337.

The revolution shows that the adage that “the enemy of the enemy is my friend” shines true, for de Sade saw in revolutionary republicanism the very forces that would provide for his and all liberation against the tyranny of the monarchy and the church. From the same eulogy, de Sade writes,

For truly republican hearts, the most urgent duty is the gratitude that is due to great men. From the flowering of this sacred act are born all the virtues necessary to the upholding and the glory of the state. . . .Marat! Le Peltier! . . .those who celebrate you now, and the voices of future centuries, will only add to the homages offered you today. . . .sublime martyrs of liberty, already enshrined in the temple of Memory, it is there that, always revered by humans, you will fly above them, like the benevolent stars that light their way. . .³⁹

Yet, the bloodlust of Marat and eventually Robespierre proved to be too much for de Sade in the revolutionary terrors. He wrote to his friend Gaudfridy who escaped the guillotine, “my national detention, *the guillotines under my eyes*, did me a hundred times more harm than all the imaginable bastilles ever did.”⁴⁰ The synthesis of de Sade and Marat was taken up by Weiss in the invocation of an irresolvable contradiction, of a de Sade dedicated to the simultaneous sanctity and morbidity of the human body and Marat the same for the body politic. The dialectical link between the two figures focused on interconnected conceptions of the body parallels the corporeal formulations of Marx and Freud. Marx of course focused on the body politic, Freud the psychic lives of his patients.

Lack and Surplus: The Dialectic of Marx and Freud

Unlike de Sade and Marat who were contemporaries, Freud and Marx could not have engaged in a dialogue even if somehow, beyond the literal constraints of time, they had desired to do so. Separated in intellectual maturity by nearly a century, the two could never have connected on much of anything in actual communication. But Freud did not evade Marx’s

³⁹ Gray, *At Home*, 336-337.

⁴⁰ Gray, *At Home*, 347.

influence on the world. In fact, Marxism and psychoanalysis were fruitful collaborators but with some extreme hesitation on Freud's part. Historian Alexander Etkind writes on Freud and the Bolshevik Revolution: "Sometime after the end of World War I, Freud told (Ernest) Jones that a Bolshevik had paid him a visit and had half converted him to communism. Jones was amazed. Freud explained: The Bolsheviks believed that their victory would be followed by several years of suffering and chaos, which eventually would be replaced by general prosperity. Freud quipped that he believed the first half of this prognosis."⁴¹

Freud's relationship to the Bolshevik revolution and communism, despite his general reported receptiveness, was overall skeptical. Freud's negative commentary on Marx's influence is clear in *Civilization and its Discontents*. Freud writes:

What an overwhelming obstacle to civilization aggression must be if the defense against it can cause as much misery as aggression itself! Natural ethics, as it is called, has nothing to offer here beyond the narcissistic satisfaction of thinking oneself better than others. The variety of ethics that links itself with religion brings in at this point its promises of a better future life. I should imagine that as long as virtue is not rewarded in this life ethics will preach in vain. I too think it unquestionable that an actual change in men's attitude to property would be of more help in this direction than any ethical commands; but among the Socialists this proposal is obscured by new idealistic expectations disregarding human nature, which detract from its value in actual practice.⁴²

Freud sees "human nature" as somewhat depraved, lacking the ability to conform or progress toward a socialist utopia. Ethics broadly construed ignores Freudian positioning of human aggression as primary to the foundations of existence. Despite Freud's protestations against the socialist impulse which he sees as misguided, attempts to draw the Freudian tradition to the Marxist one have been ever present as the linkage to repression and aggression as constitutive parallels to the primary antagonisms of class relations.

⁴¹ Alexander Etkind and Maria Rubins, *Eros of the impossible: The history of psychoanalysis in Russia*, (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2019), 225-226.

⁴² Sigmund Freud, *Civilization And Its Discontents*, trans. James Strachey (Online), 51.

Among the 20th century's strongest proponents of Freudo-Marxism was Marcuse. He writes in *Eros and Civilization*, revitalizing Freudian thought in a Marxian vein that "civilization begins when the primary objective—namely, integral satisfaction of needs—is effectively renounced."⁴³ In his history of the Frankfurt School, Stuart Jeffries characterizes Marcuse's Freudo-Marxist maneuver as a radical revision of Freud's thought: "effectively Marcuse was historicizing Freud from a Marxist perspective." Jeffries argues, "suggesting that the instincts that Freud hypostatized could change with the social system."⁴⁴ Freud's reticence to make clear connections between his own discourse and Marxist thought was effectively changed by Marcuse, and subsequent scholars have echoed his efforts.

The common conceptions of Marx and Freud are distinct but can be linked. From Freud's point of view, Marx and Freud are incommensurable. However, the two thinkers do share a common ground in the general critique of repression and the possibility of liberation. Beyond their resonances in form and content, it is Herbert Marcuse, in the middle part of the 20th century, who perhaps most clearly and firstly sees the common ground between the thought of Marx and Freud as the blueprint for liberation. He writes in *Eros and Civilization* that Freud and Marx can be married insofar as they share a similar critique—simply, the world is not exactly as it seems, and it is an antagonism which fuels this obfuscation.

The notion of a non-repressive civilization will be discussed not as an abstract and utopian speculation. We believe that the discussion is justified on two concrete and realistic grounds: first, Freud's theoretical conception itself seems to refute his consistent denial of the historical possibility of a non-repressive civilization, and, second, the very achievements of repressive civilization seem to create the preconditions for the gradual abolition of repression. To elucidate these grounds, we shall try to interpret Freud's theoretical conception in terms of its own socio-historical content.⁴⁵

⁴³ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and civilization: A philosophical inquiry into Freud*, (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2012), 28.

⁴⁴ Stuart Jeffries, *Grand hotel abyss: The lives of the Frankfurt School*, (London: Verso Books, 2017), 283.

⁴⁵ Marcuse, *Eros and civilization: A philosophical inquiry into Freud*, 5.

In the dialectic of Marx and Freud, their contradictions prove to be intractable, but Marcuse's reckoning with their respective thoughts and his ability to merge them highlights their similarity and possible synthesis while retaining the centrality of their antagonism. For Marcuse, the ability to properly historicize Freud gives the possibility of a Marxism bolstered by the psychoanalytic framework. The politics of Freud and Marx are inherently theatrical and dialogic, playing exactly into the relations of Marat and de Sade in the formulation of their respective and shared camps of revolution.

Marcuse locates the connection between Marx and Freud in the Freudian notion of repression as well as in the Freudian reality principle. Marcuse introduces the two terms: (1) "Surplus Repression," clearly indebted to the Marxian notion of "Surplus Value," and (2) "Performance principle." He defines the two terms as follows: "(a) *Surplus-repression*: the restrictions necessitated by social domination. This is distinguished from (basic) *repression*: the 'modifications of the instincts necessary for the perpetuation of the human race in civilization. (b) *Performance principle*: the prevailing historical form of the *reality principle*."⁴⁶ Marcuse locates a stagnation on the side of revolutionary change through the repression endemic to capitalist society. There is a psychic hold through the structures beyond the control of the proletariat and/or the subject of the unconscious due to a necessary repression to labor. It is the role of revolutionary and Marxist thought to overturn the dam placed on human flourishing. Thus, Marcuse notes in the closing of *Eros and Civilization*, contra what he deems to be Neo-Freudian revisionism, that "the revisionists do not insist, as Freud did, on the enduring truth value of the instinctual needs which must be 'broken' so that the human being can function in

⁴⁶ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 47.

interpersonal relations.”⁴⁷ For Marcuse, Freud and Marx represent the interconnected attempt to rid humanity of capitalist oppression. It is his theorizing which will breed a concerted endeavor to properly think and overcome that reality through analytic terms which countenance the horrors of modern life.

Nowhere is the link between Marx and Freud in their dialectic more critical than on the movement of history. This is highlighted unconsciously by Marcuse in *Eros and Civilization* when discussing Freud’s notions of temporality. For Freud, civilization and society are founded upon an original crime. The clan of brothers take it upon themselves to murder the primal father in order to gain access to the women he hoards. Marcuse writes firstly that the primal father is founded upon his very own mythos, “the father establishes domination in his own interest, but in doing so he is justified by his age, by his biological function, and (most of all) by his success: he creates that order without which the group would immediately dissolve. In this role, the primal father foreshadows the subsequent domineering father-images under which civilization progressed.”⁴⁸ It would be simple to claim that this figure of the father has been sublimated to the role of God for future generations, but Freud and by extension Marcuse recognize an absence at the heart of morality. He writes on that morality, “but the effectiveness of the superimposed organization of the horde must have been very precarious and consequently the hatred against patriarchal suppression very strong. In Freud’s construction, this hatred culminates in the rebellion of the exiled sons, the collective killing and devouring of the father, and the establishment of the brother clan, which in turn deifies the assassinated father and introduces those taboos and restraints which, according to Freud, generate social morality.”⁴⁹ This, Freud’s

⁴⁷ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 237.

⁴⁸ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 56.

⁴⁹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 57.

founding myth of civilization, of course has no real bearing in recorded history. Nowhere is there a smoking gun of a singular man ruling everyone else by hoarding the pleasures of women (despite the obvious parallels with feudal kings.) This history according to Freud is ludicrous factually speaking, but within the function of the founding myth lies a truth in the unfolding of time from a political valence.

Freud's myth highlights, according to him, the very foundations of repression and guilt in his modern world. Marcuse, for his part, sees this as a truth for politics and as a theory for civilization. He writes, "we have seen that Freud's theory is focused on the recurrent cycle 'domination-rebellion-domination.' But the second domination is not simply a repetition of the first one; the cyclical movement is *progress* in domination. From the primal father via the brother clan to the system of institutional authority characteristic of mature civilization, domination becomes increasingly impersonal, objective, universal. It also becomes increasingly rational, effective, productive."⁵⁰ Marcuse sees in this theoretical system the bearings for the world in the 20th century. Political economy and human relations become hierarchically arranged around the movement from "domination-rebellion-domination."

But the closer the real possibility of liberating the individual from the constraints once justified by scarcity and immaturity, the greater the need for maintaining and streamlining these constraints lest the established order of domination dissolve. Civilization has to defend itself against the specter of a world which could be free. If society cannot use its growing productivity for reducing repression (because such usage would upset the hierarchy of the *status quo*), productivity must be turned *against* the individuals; it becomes itself an instrument of universal control.⁵¹

The ugly face of 20th century civilization reveals Freud's system. Marcuse writes in line with the ramifications of this model that, "the masters no longer perform an individual function. The sadistic principals, the capitalist exploiters, have been transformed into salaried members of a

⁵⁰ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 81.

⁵¹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 85.

bureaucracy, whom their subjects meet as members of another bureaucracy.”⁵² Marcuse sees in Freud’s system the markers of his lived experience as a theorist when he also writes, “concentration camps, mass exterminations, world wars, and atom bombs are no ‘relapse into barbarism,’ but the unrepressed implementation of the achievements of modern science, technology and domination.”⁵³ Freud’s system perfectly maps onto the world Marcuse is looking to critique and change through a conception of history based in domination.

The resonances of Freud’s, shall we say, dialectical movement of domination-rebellion-domination, bears striking resemblance to Marx’s formulation in the *18th Brumaire* on the patterns of history. Marx famously writes in the very beginning of the essay, ever the literary invoker, “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce.”⁵⁴ Marcuse’s championing of Freud’s system for his own classification of his modern-day forms of oppression parallels this formulation by Marx. The adage “First as tragedy, then as farce” marks the second coming or better yet the return of the repressed in domination. Marx adds a somewhat aesthetic dimension to this quality of history, marking the point at which domination repeats not simply in a negative valence, but in a darkly humorous convergence. Marx’s drama of the global stage is one that results in the catharsis of the same forces at the present revealing themselves at the end of the narrative.

Marx and Freud, in historical form via their respective contexts and in content ala their notions of lack/surplus, history, and repression share an affinity thus affirming a dialectical matrix. Their irreconcilability as thinkers and historical figures confirms this. Marcuse’s staging

⁵² Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 89.

⁵³ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 4

⁵⁴ Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Wildside Press LLC, 2008.

of their dialogue and convergence within *Eros and Civilization* clearly parallels the fictional conversation between Marat and de Sade through the invocation of a dialectic and in the ideological resonances between Marx/Marat and Freud/de Sade. Weiss and Marcuse share a common kinship, in their ability to stage a fictional dialogue between two archetypes, namely a lacking subject and a surplus or excessive subject. Marx, Freud, Marat, and de Sade occupy every position simultaneously with a link between the parallel comparison of Marx and Marat and the similar duo of Freud and de Sade.

Marat/de Sade and Marx/Freud: Together and Radically Opposed

Between Marat/Marx and de Sade/Freud, there are similarities related to their very historical existences within shared formatted temporalities. Weiss's Marat and de Sade and Marcuse's Marx and Freud all represent figures under revolutionary times. Weiss's Marat and de Sade of course occupy the French Revolution, albeit in different eras insofar as de Sade sees the embers of the revolutionary fervor. Marx and Freud occupy two different time periods, but their resonance is not so far apart from Marat and de Sade especially in the context of Marcuse's historical narrativization. Marx's time is of course the 19th century, but the questions and contradictions during Marx's revolutionary time (1848 and the Paris Commune of 1871) still echoed into Freud's era. While Freud would of course be alive for the Russian Revolution, in many ways that revolution was a product of the questions of the 19th century, namely central issues of industrial capitalism. The apocryphal story of Lenin dancing in the snow to celebrate *his* revolution lasting longer than the Paris Commune, highlights the revolutionary issues still present in Freud's time. In short, Marat/de Sade and Marx/Freud both straddle revolutionary fervor, the two former characters existing and abetting the upheaval while the latter two characters dealing with its aftermaths. The configuration of domination-rebellion-domination

remains in fantastic fashion now implicating the lives of some of the most famous figures of the revolutionary moments of the past 300 years.

The figures' differences fall along the lines of the respective comparisons of Marat/Marx and de Sade/Freud. The cinematic adaptation of *Marat/Sade* directed by Peter Brook premiered in 1967. This text teems with the lifeblood of the debates that were swirling at Weiss's time between the Freudian and Marxist impulses. De Sade, as a pseudo-Freud and as the mastermind of the play within the play, exercises critical license and his own lines to argue against the anarchy of the French revolution which he sees as a direct result of his real-life Marat's influence. Echoes of Freud's pessimism toward the socialist impulse to rid humanity of private property come forth in de Sade's position against this type of class war and Marat's tactics. In one of the many conflictual moments during the course of the play, de Sade provokes,

SADE:
 Do you think there could be progress
 if each could be only a small link
 in a long chain
 Do you still think it's possible
 To unite mankind
 When already you see how the few
 Who did join together in the name of harmony
 Are now turning on each other
 And would like to kill each other
 Over trifles⁵⁵

Fundamentally, de Sade falls within the Freudian matrix as someone who sees human aggression, separation, and drives as the constitutive fabric of society. This aggression cannot be overcome, and it seems de Sade thinks that the revolution was merely a way to let out the collective libidinal energies of the masses. De Sade's position is far from the Marxian paradigm which sees human flourishing necessarily following revolutionary upheaval.

⁵⁵ Peter Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, in *The German Library*, edited by Robert Cohen, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2000), 72.

Marat, played by an inmate at Charenton, is no mere stooge for de Sade's diatribes. He is given an agency and a critical voice to stand against de Sade. Although it is de Sade's words within the logic of the production, Marat holds his own while lying in his bathtub. Critiques of "revisionism" and proper proletariat revolutions ring through Marat's spoken words. Take for instance, the response to the above rejoinder from de Sade who claims that the revolution is a farce. Marat emphatically claims:

MARAT:

[Raising himself] But they aren't trifles
 They are matters of principle
 It's usual in a revolution for the half-hearted the fellow-travelers
 To be dropped
 Everything must be torn down burned to the
 Ground
 However dreadful this may seem to those
 Who in their bloated contentment
 Wrap themselves in moral pieties
 Listen
 Can you hear through the walls
 How they plot and whisper
 See
 How they lurk everywhere
 Waiting for their moment⁵⁶

In Weiss's representation of him, Marat is something akin to a Marxist firebrand before such a thing could even exist. Indeed, Weiss's invocation of Marxist rhetoric was noticed by many who saw the original run of the production. Critic and novelist Leslie Fiedler took extensive note of Marat's left politics when discussing the play at the forum dedicated to the original run of the show. He says on the play:

Now let me be clear about what I like in the Weiss play, and what I don't. I don't approve of Marat's politics, a defense of terror which makes my skin curl. Marat stands for the Final Solution: you must identify the enemy and kill enough of them, which means more and more and more and more. There comes out of that side of the Weiss play—just as there comes out of the Road Vultures—a Left-flavored Nazism which really chills my

⁵⁶ Peter Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, in *The German Library*, edited by Robert Cohen, (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2000), 72.

blood. In the play the bourgeoisie is substituted for the Jews, but anyhow the Jews were substituted for the bourgeoisie by the Nazis.⁵⁷

Fiedler certainly is not a politically progressive thinker and gives little in the way of leniency for the character of Marat and his circumstances. His analysis, however, reveals the Marxist identification of Marat. “Left-flavored Nazism” is a phrase which harkens to I would argue a Marxism as influenced by Communist China. This Marxism from a Western perspective would also include a Marxism indebted to the USSR in 1967. While there exists no smoking gun of Weiss claiming that “de Sade is inspired by Freud” and/or “Marat was influenced by Marx” the paradigm produces timely convergences in the debate as to whether these thinkers could ever cleanly coincide.

Despite the difference between the lineages, Freudo-Marxism as contradictory discourses to dominant power structures married schools of thought for expansive analysis and resonate the differences between Weiss’s Marat and de Sade. This can be seen in one prolonged monologue by neither Marat or de Sade, but rather from a tertiary mental patient. *Marat/Sade* bears witness to an antagonism within this marriage. The monologue by a Patient of the asylum as outside Marx and Freud’s representatives in Marat and de Sade represents the uneasy connection. The Patient writhes, crawling toward de Sade in the filmed adaptation, saying that,

[A PATIENT, in pacing across the stage, comes face to face with COULMIER and addresses part of his speech directly to him.]

PATIENT:

A mad animal
 Man’s a mad animal
 I’m a thousand years old and in my time
 I’ve helped commit a million murders
 The earth is spread
 The earth is spread thick
 with squashed human guts
 We few survivors

⁵⁷ Peter Brook, Leslie Fiedler, Geraldine Lust, Norman Podhoretz, Ian Richardson, Gordon Rogoff, and Richard Schechner, “Marat/Sade Forum,” *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 4 (1966): 219.

We few survivors
 walk over a quaking bog of corpses
 always under our feet
 every step we take
 rotted bones ashes matted hair
 under our feet
 broken teeth skulls split open
 A mad animal
 I'm a mad animal
 [*SADÉ comes up to him and leads him gently to the back as he continues*]
 Prisons don't help
 Chains don't help
 I escape
 through all the walls
 through all the shit and the splintered bones
 You'll see it all one day
 I'm not through yet
 I have plans⁵⁸

Much like Freud, de Sade is here caring for the mad with his own brand of metaphysics and writing through the stage direction “[*SADÉ comes up to him and leads him gently to the back as he continues*].” In the filmed adaptation there is a hint of patriarchal caretaking. De Sade, while housed in the asylum, is clearly not mad but utilizing the language and movements of the mad. His time behind bars produces knowledge for these fellow inmates. De Sade’s philosophical inquiries seem to provide solace to the men and women with which he is imprisoned. “The Mad Animal” monologue seems unscripted or rather unexpected. De Sade helping the man out of the proverbial spotlight indicates that De Sade at some level, despite his use of these ill people for the purposes of a political show trial, cares for these people and for their beliefs. Freud’s intervention bears striking resemblance. While Freud certainly strove to fight for the mentally ill, his own brand of philosophy or ideology of psychoanalysis took hold such that books like *Civilization and its Discontents* come from an impulse to theorize, not so much assist in the clinic. Freud’s thinking took on a global direction, but it firmly came from a medical gaze, one in

⁵⁸ Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 62.

which care for the sick was the initial concern. De Sade follows that igniting impulse even if he wishes to put on a play to run in the face of those like Coulmier and those coming to see the show at the asylum.

The Patient's diatribe directed at Coulmier bears striking resemblance to another quote by Marx in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* who writes that, "men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living."⁵⁹ The "Mad Animal" monologue with its inclusion of lines such as "the earth is spread thick with human guts" and "I'm a mad animal" harkens to the Marxian dictum. The fact that Marat and de Sade bear witness to this seemingly random rant, houses their two critiques under one minor character.

But at the same time, de Sade bucks at this Marxian reading even if he wrote it, for his consoling of the patient betrays a certain patronizing attitude to this notion of history. De Sade, like Freud, rejects this caricature of class-based politics. De Sade says, iterated earlier in this thesis, contrary to Marat's revolutionary idealism:

SADE:
 I don't believe in idealists
 who charge down blind alleys
 I don't believe in any of the sacrifices
 that have been made for any cause
 I believe only in myself.⁶⁰

De Sade, relegating the revolutionaries as misguided, instantiates himself as the center of the political universe much as Freud in his psychoanalysis holds onto a self which can be healed through an investigation of the unconscious. Only "believing in oneself" insofar as it produces

⁵⁹ Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Wildside Press LLC, 2008.

⁶⁰ Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 69.

analysis in free association a la Freud or an exploration of the body via Weiss's de Sade can arouse liberation.

History for Weiss's de Sade and for Freud exists at the intersection of a fundamental aggression lying at the core of human existence. Both the fictional de Sade and the real Freud have reason to believe this. The fictional de Sade saw the ravaging of human bodies in the revolution, Freud the tremendous carnage of the first World War. Freud writes:

In circumstances that are favourable to it, when the mental counter-forces which ordinarily inhibit it are out of action, it also manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast to whom consideration towards his own kind is something alien. Anyone who calls mind the atrocities committed during the racial migrations, the invasions of the Huns, or by the people known as Mongols under Jenghiz Khan and Tamerlane, or at the capture of Jerusalem by the pious Crusaders, or even, indeed, the horrors of the recent World War — anyone who calls these things to mind will have to bow humbly before the truth of this view⁶¹

De Sade shares this pessimistic view of human existence and the impulse or drive to destruction when he monologues the following before the Patient's "Mad Animal" speech to Coulmier:

SADE
Before deciding what is wrong and what is right
first we must find out what we are
I
do not know myself
No sooner have I discovered something
than I begin to doubt it
and I have to destroy it again
What we do is just a shadow of what we want to do
and the only truths we can point to
are the ever-changing truths of our own experience⁶²

Freud's concerns are the same as de Sade's. Not knowing oneself is an expression and countenancing of the role of the unconscious. One is not at home in the house of their mind. "No sooner have I discovered something than I begin to doubt it" harkens to a superegoic injunction

⁶¹ Freud, *Civilization*, 31.

⁶² Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 62.

ravaging de Sade's consciousness. "The ever changing truths of our own experience" is an expression toward the hidden meanings behind life, toward language that deceives and is shadowlike.

SADE:

I do not know if I am hangman or victim
 for I imagine the most horrible tortures
 and as I describe them I suffer them myself
 There is nothing that I could not do and everything fills me with horror
 And I see that other people also
 suddenly change themselves into strangers
 and are driven to unpredictable acts⁶³

De Sade here links a fundamental human aggression in the deepest annals of the mind. Lurking beneath consciousness, the body is beleaguered with horror.

SADE:

A little while ago I saw my tailor
 a gentle cultured man who liked to talk philosophy
 I saw him foam at the mouth
 and raging and screaming attack with a cudgel
 a man from Switzerland
 a large man heavily armed
 and destroy him utterly
 and then I saw him
 tear open the breast of the defeated man
 saw him take out the still beating heart
 and swallow it⁶⁴

Here, at the end of de Sade's long monologue, is a tailor executing the primary foundation of Freud's originary civilization, cannibalistically devouring his brother. Without the father, without the king, the men of society are brought down to aimless violence. This long monologue resonates with Marcuse's vision of Freud.

⁶³ Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 62.

⁶⁴ Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 62.

De Sade sees the random violence of the revolution as counterproductive to the flourishing of human possibility. Human possibility instead comes from, according to de Sade, the ability for people to exist without fear of total dismemberment, in full unabashed authenticity.

The contradictions of the revolution, purportedly waged for the rights of every man while tearing apart the social fabric, are a step too far for Weiss's de Sade. The bureaucratic renderings of destruction lack a fundamental relationship to passion. De Sade argues that compared to the execution of Damiens who attempted to kill the French king, the cool calculated nature to the destruction of the revolution and the terrors are chaotic, one which ironically acts without a head leading the helm.

SADE:
 That
 Was a feast with which
 Today's feasts can't compete
 Even our inquisition gives us no pleasure
 Nowadays
 Although we've only just started
 There's no passion in our murders
 Now that they're all official
 We condemn to death without emotion
 And there's no individual personal death to be had
 Only an anonymous cheapened death
 Which we could dole out to entire nations
 Based on cold reason
 Until the time comes
 For all life
 To be extinguished⁶⁵

Much like Marcuse's Freud who could see the linkages between common bureaucratic violence and the psychic toll of the unconscious, de Sade wishes for, longs for, at least a society that bears authentic witness.

⁶⁵ Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 57-58.

I would venture so far as argue that there are echoes of Vladimir Lenin in Marat's assertive rebuke of de Sade's ineptitude and lack of commitment,

MARAT:

If I am extreme I am not extreme in the same way as
 You
 Against Nature's silence I posit action
 In the vast indifference I invent a meaning
 I don't watch unmoved I intervene
 And say that this and this are wrong
 And I strive to alter and improve them
 The important thing
 Is to pull yourself up by your own hair
 To turn yourself inside out
 And see the whole world with fresh eyes⁶⁶

The implication of pulling oneself by their own hair of course warrants a discussion of the other famous inclusion of human hair within the production history of *Marat/Sade*, the hair whipping scene of de Sade by Corday. Here, via the body, hair is situated for two ends of a spectrum for Marat and de Sade. Marat uses his own ability, his own capacity for possibility by doing the impossible, pulling oneself up and defying gravity. De Sade conversely uses hair merely for punishment, the body as an emblem of the capacity for pain and violence without real purpose besides pointless and self-serving flogging. In the realm of human hair, the separation between Marat and de Sade's politics is clear. Marat sees potential in human flourishing in a collective, de Sade pointless violence without redemption.

Compare Marat's position to Lenin's discussion of the lack of action by liberals in his midst. In his work "Two Utopias," Lenin writes:

The liberal bourgeoisie in general, and the liberal-bourgeois intelligentsia in particular, cannot but strive for liberty and legality, since without these the domination of the bourgeoisie is incomplete, is neither undivided nor guaranteed. But the bourgeoisie is *more* afraid of the movement of the masses than of reaction. Hence the striking, incredible *weakness* of the liberals in politics, their absolute impotence. Hence the endless series of equivocations, falsehoods, hypocrisies and cowardly evasions in the

⁶⁶ Weiss, *Marat/Sade*, 58.

entire policy of the liberals, who *have to* play at democracy to win the support of the masses but at the same time are deeply anti-democratic, deeply hostile to the movement of the masses, to their initiative, their way of ‘storming heaven’, as Marx once described one of the mass movements in Europe in the last century.⁶⁷

Lenin here sees liberals as the ultimate enemy toward progress, as a wayward limp appendage to the body politic. Marat, in an echo by Weiss of Marxist-Leninism, believes that the kind of inaction embraced by liberals like de Sade betrays a tremendous cowardice. De Sade, if he were to have it his way, would never dare to dream the impossible dream of the revolution. Marat, like Marx and like Lenin, recognized that he was among the vanguard of radical change and was willing to take the risks necessary to wage the unthinkable. Even if these risks toward supposed democracy and utopic ideals led to untold thousands of deaths, the war is to be waged for the greater good. Herein lies Marat’s indebtedness to Marx. In his unflinching dedication to what he believes to be the tenets of revolution, Weiss’s Marat wagers revolutionary violence against de Sade’s inert philosophizing.

De Sade remains unpersuaded. He seems to parallel a vulgar definition of the unconscious in his monologue standing by his position of “I do not know myself” and counter wages this fundamental perhaps universal unknowability against the aggression present in the terrors and excesses in Marat’s revolution. The indecipherable is a more useful heuristic than unabated action, that action being directed toward supposed ends of revolutionary “justice” and violence. Relying on ambiguity for de Sade is the better tract. Indeed, it is clear that Weiss’s de Sade and Freud share a lack of belief in the capacity of human beings to govern themselves justly. Society is composed of bifurcated monads linked to an aggressive instinct to power. Cooler heads rarely prevail, and it is those who like de Sade’s tailor who cut out the hearts of

⁶⁷ Vladimir Lenin, *Lenin Collected Works*, trans. Stephen Apresyan (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975), Online. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1912/oct/00.htm>.

their fellow man in 1789, 1917, and 1967. De Sade/Freud stand in opposition to Marat/Marx's radical violence. Weiss's de Sade sounds a lot the like Freud, especially in passages from

Civilization and its Discontents:

The existence of this inclination to aggression, which we can detect in ourselves and justly assume to be present in others, is the factor which disturbs our relations with our neighbour and which forces civilization into such a high expenditure of energy. In consequence of this primary mutual hostility of human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration. The interest of work in common would not hold it together; instinctual passions are stronger than reasonable interests.⁶⁸

After the revolution, all that remains are those looking back and trying to analyze and critique.

“Poetry after Auschwitz” becomes backward looking, toward the face of the estranged looking to pick up the pieces.

With the establishment that Weiss's Marat and de Sade resemble the popular representational understandings of Marx and Freud respectively, at least shadows of the two figures and their respective projects, the question remains of Marcuse's relationship to Marat and de Sade. Arguably, Marcuse's Freud takes center stage in *Eros and Civilization* in lieu of the role of Marx. But Marx is never too far behind Marcuse's reckoning with a technological society hell bent on repression. True human flourishing, as perhaps both Weiss's Marat and de Sade would agree, comes from a liberated energy unabated from domination. Marcuse links this to his two key notions of “surplus repression” and “performance principal.” Given that both Marat and de Sade are interned, the two of them are at the behest of powers outside their control, inhibiting their potentials and the potentials of the masses. Marcuse's project was to formulate a theory of psychoanalysis compatible with Marx's critique of the commodity form, a critique which highlights the hidden life behind the very objects which subjects hold dear. Marcuse would

⁶⁸ Freud, *Civilization*, 112.

perhaps see in *Marat/Sade* the same reckoning he was dealing with in his writings. But the respective endings of the projects point to an alternative viewpoint.

Marcuse and Weiss: A Dialogue

The fact that Weiss's *Marat* and de Sade resemble Marcuse's *Marx* and Freud is not the end of the story. To put the two in conversation with one another provides a beneficial overview of both Weiss and Marcuse. Their use of fictional dialogue and, by extension, the invocation of the dialectic harkens to an incommensurability and a sameness to Weiss and Marcuse. As stated earlier, the fact that the two chose arguments radically removed from another, one explosive (*Marat* for Weiss and *Marx* for Marcuse) and the other a stopgap (*De Sade* a sensually obsessed aristocrat and Freud a bourgeois scientist), makes antagonism the root of their discourses.

But on the other hand, the two camps could not be more different. Their difference lies in their "solutions" to their dilemmas. For Weiss, the meeting of *Marat* and de Sade ends only in mad violence, as situated by the end of the play with the inmates rioting and the audience members trying to get in at the end of the cinematic version of the play. It is a poignant image, seemingly suggesting that if one were merely looking at the bare facts of the play, it would seem that the bourgeois audience is trying to put a stop to the bloody revolution once again. There has just been a two-act play dealing with the aftermath of so much bloodshed, the end of the play highlights that the audience in their upper classed positions are trying to make sure that it doesn't happen again. These characters are behind bars, and for the unseen audience to be trying to find a way in, we too as spectator are on the side of the privileged class working our way to the giant jail cell to stop the raucous from getting out of hand. We are all akin Coulmier in his multiple injunctions to "Stop the play."

Marcuse's ending is much more serene. In a push to take sexuality beyond the commodity form, Marcuse envisions a possibility for eros against brute sexuality, harkening a new age of liberation. He writes, "these prospects seem to confirm the expectation that instinctual liberation can lead only to a society of sex maniacs—that is, to no society. However, the process just outlined involves not simply a release but a transformation of the libido: from sexuality constrained under genital supremacy to erotization of the entire personality."⁶⁹ The liberation of the libido into eros will fundamentally transform society, from dull brute servitude to blissful reckoning with the body. This is far from Weiss's image of sensuality which in *Marat/Sade* highlights itself as perverse in the form of Duperret, a lure and seduction to Marat in Corday, or in masochistic pleasure by de Sade. The site of the body for Weiss and Marcuse is a bifurcated conception of the future. Weiss seems to suggest in his play that the dialectic results only in destruction; Marcuse sees radical potential in the capacity for the body to synthesize the contradictions into a new form of existence.

The dialectic of Marx and Freud and the dialectic of Marat and de Sade bear striking resemblance and also unsolvable contradictions both inside themselves and contra to each other. Weiss and Marcuse implicitly realize this. However, bringing the four together under the respective names of Weiss and Marcuse produces a better understanding of the play and of theory writ large. Weiss and Marcuse stage fictional dialogues and in their discourses which unconsciously resonate with each other, the figure of the dialectic in aesthetics and philosophy appears in pure form. This dialectic then puts itself in conversation with the performance in lived reality. For if modern life is immensely fractured, the dialectics of Weiss and Marcuse harbors potentials for greater analysis. It is with this that I turn to two historical moments, the uprisings

⁶⁹ Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, 184.

of May 1968 and the summer of Love in 1969 as exemplifications of the dialectics of everyday life.

The Dialectics Of Everyday Life: Conclusion

When Coulmier's daughter in *Marat/Sade* exclaims "Long live the revolution!"⁷⁰, it could be played for laughs. She comes off as naive, ignorant of the stakes of the situation, hopelessly pigeonholed by a perspective that will forever be in her father's shadow. She can't know the stakes of the revolution or even the play that is happening right in front of her. Her position as an aristocrat forbids knowledge of what the revolution possibly meant or could mean from any perspective. Even further from her view is the revolution which took place in Haiti in the formative years of the French terrors. The enslaved appears as a ghost at the confines of the asylum, its inhabitants a poor reflection of the social death of chattel slavery.

As the students of '68 and the hippies of the late 60s called for revolution, years later prominent right wing and left wing ideologues have framed the time as a period of pure hedonistic rebellion. Conservative William F. Buckley in a 1998 conversation with Christopher Hitchens pejoratively claimed of the 60s uprisings and protests that, "in fact, what it was... was self-concern and an attempt to cast a noble perspective on what it is you were up to."⁷¹ Fellow reactionary traveler but nominal leftist Christopher Lasch wrote in the 1979 book *The Culture of Narcissism*, that the new Left's attempts at political efficacy were nothing but a stage show. He writes, "by deliberately provoking violent repression, it hoped to forestall the co-optation of dissent. The attempt to dramatize official repression, however, imprisoned the left in a politics of

⁷⁰ "Marat/Sade (1967) + subtitles," YouTube Video, 1:59:22, July 23, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6V2SIPL59A&ab_channel=FidelisScardanelli.

⁷¹ "Uncommon Knowledge classic: The Sixties with Hitchens and William F. Buckley," YouTube Video, 24:52, April 16, 2016, <https://www.hoover.org/research/uncommon-knowledge-classic-sixties-hitchens-and-william-f-buckley>.

theater, of dramatic gestures, of style without substance—a mirror image of the politics of unreality which it should have been the purpose of the left to unmask.”⁷² For conservatives and leftists alike, the 60s were a time of an impotent masquerade of radical politics against forces beyond their control and understanding.

The answer of what the 60s really *were* in the Western world and specifically the United States is more complicated than two thinkers can immediately come up with shooting from the hip. In his book *The Conquest of Cool*, cultural historian Thomas Frank notes there are clear images and stories that have been accepted by the doxa, and that these stories themselves should be made more complex. This shared belief is that the 60s fundamentally shattered a post-war consensus and designated two opposing forces. He writes, “conflicting though they may seem, the two stories of sixties culture agree on several basic points. Both assume quite naturally that the counterculture was what it said it was; that is a fundamental opponent of the capitalist order...they also agree that these changes constituted a radical break or rupture within existing American mores, that they were just as transgressive and as menacing and as revolutionary as countercultural participants believed them to be.”⁷³ Frank later in his book skews this image, proclaiming that the powers of capitalist America too changed during this period, bolstering an image of the counterculture to be sold right back to those who considered themselves to be a part of it.

Beyond the purview of the “revolutionary moment” of the 60s too is race and anti-Black racism. Just as Coulmier’s daughter is of course ignorant or uncaring toward the revolution which occurred in the French slave colony Haiti, so too are the cultural commentators of the 60s

⁷² Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*, (New York: WW Norton & Company, 2018), 82.

⁷³ Thomas Frank, *The Culture of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 6.

purposefully wary and deleterious of the Black movement of the 60s to stage a life outside of the confines of white patriarchy. One need only take as an example the notion of the “Black Woodstock” of Harlem of the late 60s. Largely confined to the background to the story of the 60s, “Black Woodstock ” has had a recent resurgence in scholarship and recognition. Cultural critic and academic Daphne Brooks writes in the New York Times on “Black Woodstock”: “For Black folks, the added power and energy of coming together in a place where one could not only see, hear and feel Blackness onstage but also participate in a marketplace of neighborhood business owners was its own form of sustainability.”⁷⁴ “Black Woodstock” of Harlem is not usually conceived of like the “Woodstock” of upstate New York, but its revolutionary potential existed in a space of Black joy usually relegated to shadows.

Whether or not Frank’s detailed business history of the 60s is sound or if Black cultural and political agitation can “redeem” the legacy of the 60s is beyond the purview of this conclusion. What is profound about this analysis, however, is that the 60s produced reaction from the left and right toward a moment of perceived rupture with the established order. The “revolution” never came, but it was being thought of, dreamed, and sought after by those who considered themselves to be countercultural. Herbert Marcuse and Peter Weiss were forebearers for what revolution could mean and what it could be. Marcuse wrote theoretically against repression and the antagonisms of Western capitalism while Weiss took to the stage to have bodies perhaps argue their way out of the stymied relationality of political ruthlessness and barbarism.

⁷⁴ Daphne A. Brooks, “At ‘Black Woodstock,’ an All-Star Lineup Delivered Joy and Renewal to 300,000,” *The New York Times*, August 15th, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/15/arts/music/black-woodstock-harlem-festival-1969.html>.

Something indeed happened in the 60s that had never happened before. People in mass organization took to fighting the status quo in stunning originality. The originality came from the new face of (post)modern oppression which still bears its ugly face to every spectator paying attention. Their attempts are restricted to a historical moment, but that historical moment echoes into today. All participants, Weiss, and Marcuse notwithstanding, utilized in some ways the analytic of the dialectic. The dialectic, or the institutionalization of analysis which bears two antagonistic forces in mind, opened the gap of existence in the age of post-industrial capitalism. The contradictions bred a productive analysis, one which was biting and called for change. In the relationship between Marcuse and Weiss, and, by extension, the parallel of Marx/Freud and Marat/de Sade, the coordinates of revolutionary praxis made themselves apparent on the map of world history.

The antagonisms of these debates are deeply entrenched, and the thinkers compared and contrasted hardly have a stable and coherent view of a future without oppression. But, in their striving, a utopian potential emerges. This need not be limited to the historical privilege of globally staged revolutions such as that of the 1700s, or the intellectual archives of Marx and Freud. As mentioned above, I see this parallel the lesser written about manifestations of “Black Woodstock” as a phenomenon, which prompts the application of Marat/Sade’s ubiquitous discussion of a revolutionary debate. In the performative of revolutionary dialogue there appears a space that is empty. This empty space, much like a stage holding potential for actors to take it up, privileges the voices of the downtrodden embodied in the language given to characters. What are the other empty spaces in social history that present a theatrical space for forum on the ability to present and interrogate a dialectic on the methods of revolution and its impetus towards reason? The catharsis of these confrontations has not yet arrived, but as the years flow so too do

the flows of change and progress. The hope is we just have enough attention as audience members to catch a stray line here or there which paves the way against incontestable antagonisms toward freedoms hitherto unknown.

Bibliography

- Adorno, Theodor, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, and Georg Lukacs, *Aesthetic And Politics*, London: Verso, 2020.
- Artaud, Antonin. *Theatre and its Double*. New York: Grove Press, 1958.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht On Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Edited and Translated by John Willet. London: Macmillan, 1964.
- Brook, Peter, Leslie Fiedler, Geraldine Lust, Norman Podhoretz, Ian Richardson, Gordon Rogoff, and Richard Schechner. "Marat/Sade Forum." *Tulane Drama Review* 10, no. 4 (1966): 214-238.
- Brooks, Daphne A. "At 'Black Woodstock,' an All-Star Lineup Delivered Joy and Renewal to 300,000." *The New York Times*. August 15, 2019.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/15/arts/music/black-woodstock-harlem-festival-1969.html>.
- Cohen, Robert. *Understanding Peter Weiss*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1993.
- Du Plessix Gray, Francine. *At Home With The Marquis de Sade*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998.
- Etkind, Alexander and Maria Rubins. *Eros of the Impossible: The history of psychoanalysis in Russia*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2019.
- Frank, Thomas. *The Culture of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Civilization And Its Discontents*, trans. James Stratchey (Online).
- Jameson, Fredric. *Valences of the Dialectic*. London: Verso, 2009.
- Jeffries, Stuart. *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School*. London: Verso Books, 2017.
- Kellner, Douglas. *Art and Liberation: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse, Volume 4*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2007.
- Kenny, Neil. "Changing the Languages of Theatre: A Comparison of Brecht and Artaud." *Journal of European Studies* 13, no. 51 (1983): 169-186.
- Lasch, Christopher. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: WW Norton & Company, 2018.

Lenin, Vladimir. *Lenin Collected Works*. Translated by Stephen Apresyan. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975. <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1912/oct/00.htm>.

“Marat/Sade (1967) + subtitles.” *YouTube* Video. 1:59:22. July 23, 2021. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k6V2SIPL59A&ab_channel=FidelisScardanelli.

Marcuse, Herbert. *Aesthetic Dimension: Toward a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*. Stuttgart: Macmillan, 1979.

Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and civilization: A Philosophical inquiry into Freud*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2012.

Marcuse, Herbert. “Love Mystified: A Critique of Norman O. Brown.” *Commentary*. February, 1967.

Marcuse, Herbert. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2013.

Marx, Karl. *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Wildside Press LLC, 2008.

McGowan, Todd. *Emancipation After Hegel*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.

Miller, Jacques-Alain. “Docile to Trans.” *Lacanian Review Online*, May 5th, 2021. https://www.thelacanianreviews.com/docile-to-trans/#_ftn5.

Richter, Gerhard. “Can Hope Be Disappointed?: Contextualizing a Blochian Question.” *Symploke* 14, no. 1 (2006): 42-54.

Teodori, Missimo. *The New Left: A Documentary History*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969.

“Uncommon Knowledge classic: The Sixties with Hitchens and William F. Buckley,” *YouTube* Video. 24:52. April 16, 2016. <https://www.hoover.org/research/uncommon-knowledge-classic-sixties-hitchens-and-william-f-buckley>.

Weiss, Peter. *Marat/Sade*, in *The German Library*, edited by Robert Cohen. New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 2000.

Žižek, Slavoj, *Less than nothing: Hegel and the shadow of Dialectical Materialism*. London: Verso Books, 2012.