

Lomas. (p. 190) Thinking about reporting precludes the possibility of accurate reporting. If reporting is about bringing something back again, then the loss of experience's essence might hint there was no original to bring back (which is not to undermine the reality of lived experience, but to defend language). Why do we report events? Is it because we are really interested in the events for their own sake, or is it because we never cease to be shocked that events actually take place? Are we always surprised that we are alive? 'What is thinking for?' asks Auden, if not to generate action. What are actions for, we add, unless to describe them? Newspapers, like analysis, are premised on language and desire.

The happy contradiction of Lomas's concluding essay is that he both claims psychoanalysis is not 'best thought of as literature' (p. 186) and that the analyst is a story-telling reporter. Are writers false selves, reporters true selves? The opposite seems to be equally plausible, if not more so. The saying goes that we must not believe what the papers say – is the same true of our therapists? Arnold Bennett wrote that 'journalists say a thing that they know isn't true, in the hope that if they keep on saying it long enough, it *will* be true' (Bennett 1918). Is the history of psychoanalysis a study of the hope that truth becomes of repetition? Psychoanalysis seems to be as much about its own repetitions as its clients'. Was Freud a journalist? If newspapers are about selling lies (and telling them), are they Schuyler-style lies: 'I have told it [the secret] to my shrink . . . Are secrets a way of telling lies?' (Schuyler, 1993, 362). Mike Leigh's film, *Secrets and Lies*, suggests something similar. When we share a secret with someone we are suppos-

edly at our most intimate with them. Are we lying to the people we have sex with?

Peter Lomas's metaphor is an astute, pithy, contradictory summary of a connection that has not been written about enough. This has been more of a metaphor review than a book review, although what do we remember when we remember a book, if not the secrets and lies they tell us (the sex scenes)? And the metaphor, in a way, sums up the book's whole message, and that message is well versed by the anti-theory expressionist himself: 'the future of psychoanalytic psychotherapy is in the hands of those who report it'.

Bennett A. *The Title*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1918.

Deleuze G, Guattari F. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: Continuum, 2003.

Schuyler J. *Collected Poems* New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1993.

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WHOSE HAND IS THE WHIP HAND?

The Sadomasochistic Perversion: The Entity and the Theories. By Franco de Masi. London: Karnac, 2003. 162pp. £16.99 pb.

Franco de Masi, Training Analyst of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society, has written a study of what he calls 'the' sadomasochistic perversion, in which he reviews at some length three paradigm theories of sadomasochism in the mainstream psychoanalytic tradition and undertakes to offer us his own understanding instead.

His first paradigm derives from Freud's drive theories of infantile sexuality, as

developed by such figures as Kernberg and Chassequet-Smirgel. In this, perversion appears as a defence against castration anxiety, involving a regression to pregenital aggression, which defence appears alongside the drives it seeks to avoid. Out of this compromise comes an inevitable split in the ego. The second paradigm includes the relational models that grow out of the work of Winnicott and Kohut. Here a disruption in object relating leads to the substitution by the growing self of its own gratification for the desired other, combined with a fantasy of subjugation to the other. The third paradigm stems from Klein, where a conflict between libido and mortido, or the life drive and the destructive drive, is held to determine the subject's development. In perversion, the patient becomes split between these two drives, and the destructive drive becomes relatively more powerful than the life drive. De Masi discusses each of these paradigms in depth, returning to them over the course of several chapters as he focuses on different presentations of sadomasochism.

Despite undertaking to offer his own model, each time he begins to explicate it he rapidly turns back to discussing one or other of the paradigms, so that one is left having to piece together his position from remarks made throughout the book. He regards the most salient aspect of sadomasochism as being the structuring of the perverted self as a narcissistic monad, in which there is absolute indifference to the experience of the other, in order that the omnipotent fantasies of the self can be indulged: the purpose of the masochistic strategy is 'to derive mental pleasure from the subject's own annihilation' while for the sadist 'Pleasure is reserved for one partner only; the other must suffer or be enslaved.

The object therefore exists as a function of the subject's own wish for domination, power and narcissistic triumph' (p. 91).

That sounds plausible enough on the surface and it certainly corresponds with most people's ideas about sadomasochism; the trouble is that hardly any practitioners of S&M would recognize themselves either in that or in any of the other models discussed by De Masi. And it is those practitioners that De Masi has in his sights: he is explicit that he is not discussing the motivation of the criminal mind, although he sees that as continuous with the 'perverted' mind.

He himself mentions, but does not recognize one source of this difficulty, when he writes 'since individuals with structured sexual perversions have no perception of suffering . . . they seldom request help or therapy' (p. 38). To make a fairly crude parallel: suppose a sports doctor wrote to the effect that all the patients seen were suffering from the negative effects of athletics, and it was accordingly plain that there was an athletic perversion; suppose too that s/he went on to add that the majority of participants in this structured athletic perversion do not present for treatment, because they have no perception of their suffering. Would we accept this as a valid argument, or would we say that the reason people don't present is because they are healthy and uninjured?

Another strand of De Masi's thinking is revealed when discussing changes of nomenclature he writes 'let me emphasize again that the term "perversion" is not only inappropriate but also derogatory and laden with moral prejudices' but on the same page then adds 'I prefer not to use the term [paraphilia] because . . . it is to my mind too anodyne and generic . . . I prefer to

speak of *perversion* . . . [T]he notion of sin is central to perversion . . . [T]he wish to transgress the moral order . . . constitutes the only possible form of sexual imagination' (p. 15 – italics in original). In short, De Masi has already made his mind up that sadomasochism is a perversion, and wants a theory that will fit his mental preconceptions.

Of course, he's not alone in that. Much the same idea is now firmly enshrined in British and European law. In 1987, the British police's Obscene Publications Squad made a number of dawn arrests of gay men involved in consensual S&M. The stimulus (*sic*) for this was the police coming into possession of a home-made video-tape of the men's S&M activities. The police were so shocked, evidently, that they thought they had discovered the makers of 'snuff movies'. After the arrests it was some months before the police conducted formal interviews, and then a further two years before any charges (actual bodily harm, and unlawful wounding) were brought.

Late in 1990 the case came to trial; 16 men were given prison sentences of up to four-and-a-half years. The case then went to Appeal, the House of Lords, and the European Court of Human Rights. Although the sentences were reduced, at each stage the convictions themselves were upheld. The remarks of the judges at the various stages are very revealing of their mental states.

In the House of Lords, giving the majority verdict, Lord Templeman said 'Counsel for the appellants argued that consent should provide a defence . . . because . . . every person has a right to deal with his own body as he chooses. I do not consider that this slogan provides a sufficient guide

to the policy decision which must now be taken.' Note that Templeman is very aware that his case involves questions of public policy, and that he describes an assertion of what many would consider to be a fundamental human right as a 'slogan'. After drawing a parallel with the prohibition on drugs he went on to say 'The violence of sado-masochistic encounters involves the indulgence of cruelty by sadists and the degradation of victims . . . I am not prepared to invent a defence of consent for sado-masochistic encounters which breed and glorify cruelty . . . Pleasure derived from the infliction of pain is an evil thing. Cruelty is uncivilised.' What is clear is that Templeman's views were based primarily on his distaste. The echo with De Masi's remarks about not using the term 'paraphilia' is plain enough.

In the European Court of Human Rights, the unanimous verdict notes that the activities 'included, inter alia, the recruitment of "new members"' before concluding that this was a point that 'the Court sees no reason to examine of its own motion'. The judgement goes on to say that it is not convinced that the case involved matters of private morality, and that the British government properly had regard to matters of public health. It then adds that it does not propose to consider whether there the British state was acting to protect morals. That the European Court's verdict contains glaring logical inconsistencies hardly needs emphasizing; but the reasons for its judgement are perhaps revealed in the speech of Judge Pettiti, in which he says 'The dangers of unrestrained permissiveness, which can lead to debauchery, were highlighted at the Stockholm World Conference. The protection of private life means the protection of a person's intimacy and dignity, not the

protection of his baseness or the promotion of criminal immoralism.’ (Laskey, Jaggard & Brown v. The United Kingdom, European Court of Human Rights, 109/1995/615/ 703–705).

If we look at what is going on here, we can discern two primitive forms of argument. The first could be characterized as ‘I don’t understand this behaviour *therefore* it is intrinsically incomprehensible *therefore* no-one could rationally want to do this *therefore* anyone who does this is sick or evil *therefore* people who do this must be punished severely.’ Take out the intermediate steps, and one is left with ‘I don’t understand this behaviour, therefore anyone who does it must be punished severely.’ The second runs something like ‘the idea of this behaviour makes me uneasy *therefore* it will make everyone uneasy *therefore* it ought not to exist *therefore* it must be banned.’ Despite both arguments being plainly ludicrous, they are in fact both at work, both in the law, in society, and in De Masi and mainstream psychotherapy. It hardly needs saying that it’s ironic, in that stopping someone else doing what they want for no other reason than your not understanding it is a fairly cruel thing to do.

The psychotherapy and the politics run parallel to each other, and both are fuelled by unexamined personal disgust.

All of the negative judgements on S&M outlined above are singularly short of facts; facts that can only be discovered by talking seriously to S&M practitioners. S&M is a highly mutual activity, in which top and bottom pay keen attention to each other throughout to ensure each other’s satisfaction. It’s a safe activity, where all is contracted in advance and with the use of the ‘safe word’ providing a guarantee that nothing can go further than the bottom

wants; in the event of reaching the ‘bottomless pit’ or ‘forever place’ where the bottom is in such ecstasy that they may lose part of their ability to judge how things are going, the top rapidly assumes responsibility for bringing things to a safe conclusion. It isn’t cruel: injuries are very carefully gauged, so that they’re not lasting: the point is precisely *not* to inflict harm, but rather to explore the sensation of hurt. It is consensual and it is done by people who are totally sane. Even if one finds that difficult to empathize with, there simply is no justification for moving from incomprehension to vilification. It really is a place where the personal is the political.

As final points, it may be worth saying that a good starting point for a psychodynamic understanding of S&M could be the nature of pleasure, and how the boundary between it and pain is essentially blurred; it might also be useful to explore the possibility that libido and mortido, far from being distinct entities, are simply identical – as great swathes of literature indicate.

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WRESTLING WITH FOG

Cultures Under Siege: Collective Violence and Trauma. Edited by Antonius C G M Robben and Marcelo M Suarez-Orozco. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. 285pp. £16.95/\$23.00 pb., £45/\$60.00 hb.

This collection has two main intentions: to explore the individual and collective traumatic effects of social violence, and to use