

**The Sadist, the Soldier and the Female Body:  
A Contemporary Analysis of the Canadian Armed Forces**

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Studies have shown that a system of violence exists within the confines of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) (Harrison, 2002; Department of National Defence Canada Operational Research Division ORD “Report 9602, Military Family Violence and Violence Against Women: Causes and Incidence” Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 1996, p 14.; Military Police Criminal Intelligence Program: Public Inquiry “2008 Statistical Overview of Sex Offences Reported to Military Police” [inclusive of 2004-2008], April 15, 2009). Practices such as hazing, as well as physical and sexual abuse, are noted forms of violence within the institution of the CAF. These violent practices are especially problematic in that they have an asymmetric affect on female members of the Canadian military. Indoctrinated in the discourse of the CAF is a structure of patriarchy, misogyny, and contempt for the female body. This discourse irrationally legitimizes an abundance of violence that is imposed on female members of the CAF.

This paper will seek to explain the violence that takes place within the organization through a close reading of de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*. The essay will posit that the forms and structures of sadism that were developed in de Sade’s work have been constructed and maintained by the CAF in order to impose an asymmetric and gendered social order within the institution. Borrowing from the works of Gilles Deleuze, Georges Bataille, Slavoj Žižek, Walter Benjamin, and Alain Badiou, this essay will seek to provide a holistic look at the complexity of violence that takes place within Canada’s military. Through the utilization of the aforementioned authors, this paper will propose that sadist forms of violence are the most prevalent in the objectification of female members of the Canadian Forces. In the course of its examination of the discursive, symbolic, and legal structures that exist within the CAF, this essay hopes to expose and deconstruct the CAF’s sadist project of violence and put into question the so called “truths” that allow cycles of violence to persist within the institution.

### **An Abundance of Sadism within the Canadian Armed Forces**

The Sadism of de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom* is of particular interest to the case of targeted violence on female bodies within the Canadian military for two very important and fundamental reasons. First, de Sade’s account of sadism affects the physical body in specific ways. Using the insight of Georges Bataille, this paper will show that de Sade’s understanding of violence as a visceral expression of power, through the utilization of violent sexual acts and the violent use of excrement, has correlating and definite consequences for the objects and subjects of sadism. Secondly, and in many ways more importantly, de Sade explicitly employs sadism in *120 Days of Sodom* as the basis of the structural foundation within the novel that is imposed in order to produce an affective and meaningful ordering of people within the conceived community of his book. For readers who are not familiar with de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*, it is important to note the hierarchical nature of the society that is articulated within the novel. The following paragraphs will offer a brief account of the members of the community and the significance of the constructed social order that is fashioned within the walls of the small French chateau in which they are housed. This explanation hopes to illuminate possible structural correlations between de Sade’s imagined violent social order in his *120 Days of Sodom* and the imposed social order of the CAF.

Conceptually, it may be easier to understand the social order of the chateau as representing an exaggerated microcosm of French society as de Sade understood it while he wrote the book. Keeping this in mind, there exists within the chateau a strict and formal hierarchy which empowers very few inhabitants while it concurrently disadvantages the rest. In all there are 46 people that enter the chateau at the beginning of the 120 days. There are four masters: all accomplished middle aged male aristocrats. The masters dictate any action that takes place within the Chateau. There are also elders, kitchen staff, storytellers, fuckers (younger men who carry out the most arduous violent sexual actions), little boys, wives, and little girls. Their particular order within the community is synonymous to their ordering in the preceding sentence. During the 120 days, horrific violent sex acts take place that maim all inhabitants within the chateau (with the exception of the masters) and kill all but 12 inhabitants. The brutal deaths

and the violent acts perpetrated on the objects of sadism<sup>1</sup> are meticulously calculated and documented by the masters. These events are also explicitly narrated by the story tellers within the chateau. Violent sex acts are drawn up by the masters and promulgated for everyone in the chateau using a regimented schedule. For example, “On the 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Duc shall embugger Rosette” (Wainhouse and Seaver, 1966, p. 304).

The documentation and scheduling of events may be thought of as a structural and discursive tool that legitimizes the authority of the masters. Moreover, the way in which violent sexual acts are scheduled by the masters between common and routine acts such as breakfast and lunch both normalizes and removes the shock and surprise of sadistic events for inhabitants. Consequently, due to the codification of violent sexual activity by the masters, violence becomes a normal, legitimized, and expected component of the social structure that is developed within the chateau. It is interesting to note that the only inhabitants to survive the 120 days are the masters, who controlled and developed the community within the chateau through their imposed laws and power; the story tellers, who narrate the events in explicit detail making the events temporally transcendent; and some members of the kitchen staff, who were necessary in producing goods for consumption that produce the waste utilized in forwarding the agenda of the masters. Thus, the violence that takes place within the chateau is gendered as the atrocities that take place succeed in maiming and eventually killing all of the wives, young boys, and young girls. The remainder of this paper will analyse and apply the sadism developed in de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom* to the case of sexual assault and harassment within the CAF while borrowing from political, sociologic, legal, and structural theory to further develop the concepts that were conceptualized by de Sade over two centuries ago.

While sadistic forms of violence affect both male and female officers, much of the sexual forms of violence in the CAF specifically target the female body. The violence that is prevalent within the confines of the CAF is characteristically sadistic. Most violent acts involve sexual molestation, physical abuse, and the use of excrement and other bodily substances to inflict pain onto the objects of sadist brutality. Bataille writes “that the sadism of de Sade appears positively ‘as an irruption of excremental forces (the excessive violation of modesty . . . the violent excretion of the sexual object coinciding with a powerful or tortured ejaculation, the libidinal interest in cadavers, vomiting, defecation . . .)’” (Bataille, 1930, pp. 148-149). Simultaneously, the sadism of Sade’s work appears negatively as “a narrow enslavement of everything that is opposed to this irruption (Ibid.)” While excrement and sex become the driving force of sadistic pleasure for de Sade, it seems that the function of excrement and its linkage to libidinal satisfaction is also a form of violence and sexual fulfilment that is prevalent within the CAF. The following examples will illustrate a parallel to the sadism that is prescribed for the reader in *The 120 Days of Sodom* and its exercise in the CAF.

General hazing practices often involve, in accordance with de Sade’s writing, the consumption of human excrement and other bodily substances. One of the noted scandals in Canadian military history occurred in January 1995, when a videotape was discovered of “an Airborne hazing ritual which documented drunken troops forced by their comrades to eat feces, vomit and urine-soaked bread, as well as [the partaking in] simulated sex acts” (O’Hara et al., May 25, 1998). Hazing practices in the Canadian army are not well documented. However, their presence seems to continuously reappear through testimony and material that is brought to light through the Canadian press (Urquhart, 1998).

This article will draw primarily from a report authored by Jane O’Hara et al in the May 1998 issue of *Maclean’s Magazine*. The report chronicles several cases of sexual abuse and harassment perpetrated on female soldiers in the CAF. However, other noteworthy studies and testimonies about cases of sexual

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<sup>1</sup> The objects of sadism include everyone with the exception of the masters. However, women and children are especially targeted as objects of sexual desire and violent subjugation.

assault and harassment have surfaced both before and after the *Maclean's* exposition. In November 1992, a formal inquiry was issued by the Department of National Defence's Air Command regarding sexual assault and harassment within the Canadian Forces; this was "the first major inquiry into sex harassment in Canadian military history" (Scott. *The Gazette*. Montreal: Nov 28, 1992 A.1.FRO). The inquiry undertaken by the Air Command Unit argued that the Canadian military required new and additional methods for handling the growing amount of sexual harassment cases in the CAF (Ibid.). Moreover, an advisory board headed by an Ottawa based barrister, Shirley Greenberg, offered a report to Associate Defence Minister Mary Collins of the Queen's Privy Council that detailed many of the problems that women had faced within the Canadian Forces from 1990 to 1992. The report often referenced issues of sexual harassment and assault in the CAF (Ibid.).

In the same year, news articles from both Montreal's *The Gazette* and Vancouver's *The Province* forwarded additional attention to the case of sexual assault within the CAF through the examination of several instances of rape and harassment that had come to light that year and years prior. Sarah Scott of *The Gazette* reported in November 1992 that the "National Defence headquarters is now dealing with 17 cases. The Canadian Human Rights Commission has handled 26 sex-harassment complaints against the armed forces since 1989" (Ibid.).

In 1998 the Canadian press from coast to coast covered and examined the *Maclean's* report. There was a seeming concerted outrage and a general climate of distrust in the Armed Forces that permeated through Canada's media outlets.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, arguments had also been made in favour of the CAF. A few media sources interviewed some female officers from the CAF who had come forward to tell the Canadian public that although cases of assault existed within the CAF that they were nevertheless often exaggerated. However, the overall attitude among the Canadian press in 1998 was one of disgust and indignation. Moreover, the evidence attributing to the proposed system of violence against women within the CAF relayed to the public through the *Maclean's* report and other corresponding reports became more difficult to ignore.

Since 1998 there have been further reports of the ill treatment of women within the Canadian Armed Forces as well as reviews on the treatment of women in military environments on an international comparative level.<sup>3</sup> More general studies of the abjection of women within military communities have developed the notion of 'militarized masculinities' that explain the 'culture' of violence particularly targeted towards female bodies within institutions such as the CAF (Whitworth, 2004, p. 167). Public inquiries into the raw statistics representing the number of sexual assault cases perpetrated by members of Canadian Forces have been made as recently as July 24, 2009. For example, from 2004 to 2008 there were 141 persons charged for sex offences by military police as well as 127 persons charged by civilian police within the Canadian Forces jurisdiction (Military Police Criminal Intelligence Program: Public Inquiry "2008 Statistical Overview of Sex Offences Reported to Military Police" [inclusive of 2004-2008], April 15, 2009, p. 8). The year 2007 saw the highest number of persons charged with sex offences at 63 in total (Ibid.).

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<sup>2</sup> See for example: Susan Martinuk, "Time for the boys on public payroll to grow up;" [Final Edition]. *The Province*, Vancouver, B.C.: Sep 23, 1998. pg. A.34; "Judge reveals name of accused soldier: The case of Private Grant Winkler of the Princess Patricia's Light Infantry is among the latest in a series of charges of sexual assault and harassment involving members of the Canadian military." ; [Final Edition] *The Vancouver Sun*, Vancouver, B.C.: Jun 8, 1998. pg. A.8; Gisele McKnight, "A culture of savagery," *Telegraph Journal. New Brunswick Telegraph Journal*, Saint John, N.B.: May 27, 1998.; "At least 27 women victims of sexual assault in military," *Ottawa Citizen. New Brunswick Telegraph Journal*, Saint John, N.B.: May 19, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Marcia Kovitz, "The enemy within: Female soldiers in the Canadian forces," *Canadian Woman Studies* 19.4 (2000): 36+. *Expanded Academic ASAP*. Web. 16 Dec. 2009.  
<[http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/gtx/start.do?prodId=EAIM&userGroupName=yorku\\_main](http://find.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/gtx/start.do?prodId=EAIM&userGroupName=yorku_main)>.

Moreover, in the year 2007 alone there were 132 cases of confirmed sexual assault, yet most of these cases were handled internally within the CAF and the perpetrators of these crimes were not formally convicted (National Defense and the Canadian Forces, *Canadian Forces National Investigation Service Annual Report*, 2007). Thus, the rate of persons charged with sex offences has dramatically increased since the *Maclean's* report in 1998. The continued reoccurrence of rape and sexual assault in the CAF is not a product of happenstance. Rather, the persistence of sadist forms of violence may be the result of a larger objective that fallaciously rationalizes and advocates the subjugation, objectification, and abuse of women in Canada's military service.

While the utilization of bodily waste as part of the CAF's sadist ethic is not well documented, *Maclean's Magazine* has exposed the use of sadist forms of violence in the following examples. In 1998 *Maclean's* interviewed a series of female officers about their treatment in the CAF. One officer stated that during her military training: "One [commanding officer] urinated in our gas masks," she says, "and then made the women put them on. Another took a can of cigarette butts, threw them on the ground and made us pick them up with our teeth (O'Hara et al, May 25 1998)." The use of bodily waste to cause harm against another person is part and parcel with de Sade's formulation of sadism. The aforementioned testimony confirms that this sadistic trait has been utilized within the CAF. Although hazing practices are common among both male and female recruits these practices are not well documented, however; instances of physical abuse and sexual assault have been documented through sources such as the *Maclean's Magazine* series as well as through formal public inquiries. These sex crimes are the primary forms of sadist violence that are directed specifically toward female officers in the CAF.

Chris Madsen argues that there is a prevalence of physical and sexual abuse inflicted on female bodies in the CAF. Madsen contends that sexual violence has been a prominent problem in the CAF since the adoption of recruitment policies that enabled women to work as officers in Canada's military.

Madsen notes however that the actual number of rape and sexually related incidents are much higher than the number documented, and that in most cases "women were generally left to deal with situations themselves or told to report alleged misbehaviours to superior officers. . . [and] Commanding officers usually chose to ignore the problem altogether or settled the matter quietly within the unit (Ibid.)." In response to the investigation of physical and sexual abuse within the CAF, the Canadian government appointed Andre Marin, "formerly director of the Special Investigations Unit in Ontario's Ministry of the Attorney General, as the first ombudsman for the Canadian Forces (Ibid.)."

The principle duty of Andre Marin as the ombudsman for the CAF was to ensure that victims of abuse would have an impartial and objective source where they could file complaints or grievances (Ibid, 152). Although the appointment of the ombudsman gave women the chance to expose the violence that they experienced as officers in the CAF, Madsen notes that: "entrenched attitudes towards women meant incidents of sexual harassment and abuse continued to arise. . . In the end, some women chose to leave the Canadian forces rather than endure continued inappropriate behaviour and abuse (Ibid, 153)." The repeated instances of physical and sexual abuse in the CAF do not arise out of mere coincidence. Rather the rape and assault of female officers within the CAF is part of a larger sadist project that aims to develop and maintain asymmetric power within the institution that is positively beneficial to male soldiers and recruits.

Deleuze, using the following quotation from *The 120 Days of Sodom*, postulates that the violence of the Sadist is ultimately successful if it is continuously repeated. Deleuze writes that the Sadistic antagonist "dreams of a universal, impersonal crime, or as Clairwil puts it, a crime "which is perpetually effective, even when I myself cease to be effective, so that there will not be a single moment of my life, even when

I am asleep, when I shall not be the cause of some disturbance” (Deleuze, 1991, p. 28).” Consequently, the Sadistic performance of rape is a crime that has perpetual consequences for the victim. Women in Canada’s military who are victims of rape are negatively affected by sadist violence as they must continuously relive the pain of these events through their memory.

To this end, Giorgio Agamben writes that the memory of the survivor has an important function in the perpetuation of violence. He states that “the survivor’s vocation is to remember” (Agamben, 1999, p. 26). However, as articulated by Deleuze, in accordance with the will of the sadist, the survivor must remember the event for the sole purpose of reopening the wounds caused by the initial act. Thus, the victim is perpetually subordinated to the sadist due to her or his metaphysical retelling of the event through memory. As a result, the *dream of undertaking a universal, and impersonal crime*, comes to fruition within the CAF as the acts of rape and abuse are perpetually effective in diminishing the subjectivity of female officers through their constant recollection of their trauma. Therefore, female bodies are violently subsumed to male bodies within the CAF through the act of rape, and physical abuse. Moreover, these forms of violence continue to affect the victim long after these events take place because they are etched into the minds of the victim through memory.

While it is the job of the victim to remember the violent acts that are imposed on their bodies, it is up to the sadist to remain apathetic to violence. Simone de Beauvoir contends that the roles of the torturer and the victim are very much defined in the writing of de Sade. Beauvoir writes that in regards to de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*, “the victims are frozen in their tearful abjection, and the torturers in their frenzies . . . Remorse and disgust are unknown to [the torturer]; at most they have occasional feelings of satiety. They kill with indifference; they are abstract incarnations of evil” (de Sade, Wainhouse, & Seaver, 1966, p. 37). If we apply Beauvoir’s understanding of punishment to the CAF, we can see that there is a profusion of apathy towards violence against women that is deeply entrenched within the discourse of the Canadian military. Male military officers are often taught to be indifferent to the violence imposed on female bodies by their fellow officers and superiors:

A former reserve member of the military police at regular Forces bases in Dundurn, Sask., and Vernon, B.C., told *Maclean’s* he was aware of more than two dozen cases of sexual assault, rape and sexual molestation from 1991 to 1994. All too often, he was told by superior officers to look the other way. “We stood around like idiots watching terrible things happen,” says George Lamont, who in 1994 quit the military in disgust (O’Hara et al., “More Rape in the Military”, June 1, 1998).

In concurrence with this indifference, Deleuze states that apathy is a central component of sadism (Deleuze, 1991, p. 134). According to Deleuze, the importance of apathy stems from the need for the sadist to negate the subjectivity of his or her victim. Deleuze writes that “sadism operates with the negative and pure negation (Ibid).” Thus, in the case of the military, in order for the sadist to complete his violent tasks he must ensure that he deconstructs completely the subjectivity of his victim the female soldier. The act of stripping the soldier’s subjectivity away renders her an object within the confines of the CAF.

While sadist subjects maintain their apathy towards the violence they project, Deleuze and Beauvoir have differing interpretations of the sadist’s ambivalence towards punishment. Gilles Deleuze contends that sadists are very concerned with the notion of punishment in retribution for the crimes they commit. In this regard, Deleuze postulates that sadism ends in a form of masochism because punishment is implicit in sadism (Deleuze, 1991, p. 39). Deleuze states that “Pleasure in humiliation never detracts from mastery of Sade’s heroes; debasement exalts them; emotions such as shame, remorse or the desire for punishment are quite unknown to them” (Deleuze, 1991, p. 39). In this case, a question around the meaning of punishment arises when confronting forms of sadistic violence. Deleuze seemingly contradicts himself in his explanation of the need for the punishment of the sadist in de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*. While Deleuze argues that *punishment is*

*unknown* to the sadist, debasement, according to Deleuze, is the pinnacle of sadism: it is the ultimate pleasure. Thus, the sadist does not fear punishment, and their dishonour and publicized moral failings within the community only delights the sadist.

Deleuze contends that the castigation of the sadist has a masochistic element as it becomes a form of self-punishment (Ibid.). Thus, as Deleuze stipulates, while the sadist has no desire for punishment, punishment is the sadist's ultimate validation. Furthermore, Deleuze argues that "the *masochism* of the sadistic hero makes its appearance at the outcome of his sadistic exercises; it is their climax, the crowning sanction of their glorious infamy" (Ibid.). Therefore, according to Deleuze reprieve for the sadist is synonymous to absolute failure: amnesty is the anticlimax of sadism itself. For the sadist, punishment only comes as a confirmation of the depth and scope of the deed done.

Although punishment is a central component of sadism for Deleuze, I am inclined to side with Beauvoir regarding the general apathy of the sadist towards punishment, at least within the confines of the CAF. Beauvoir contends that the perpetrators of sadism neither desire nor fear punishment (Wainhouse and Seaver, 1966, 37). Instead, she contends that the sadist simply could care less about the consequences of his or her actions aside from the libidinal satisfaction along with the accumulation of power that they gain as a result of sadist violence. Within the CAF, there seems to be a common lack of concern among male officers toward the possible ramifications and penalties that may ensue as a consequence of violent crimes acted out upon female recruits. The following statement is an example of male indifference to punishment in the CAF regarding the harassment and the common ill treatment of women:

I knew male military police who made a game out of seeing how many new recruits they could nail in bed. They'd talk about it right at the front counter. What if they got caught? They didn't care (O'Hara et al, May 25 1998).

Therefore, while apathy towards punishment is a characteristic of the perpetrators of sadism found in *120 Days of Sodom*, we are able to note from the previous statement that male members of the CAF are likewise apathetic to the consequences of sadist violence perpetrated against female members.

While there may be apathy regarding the punishment for violent acts imposed on female officers, this indifference may come from a systemic lack of interest in the welfare of females employed by the CAF, along with a resolute lack of reprimand for violence against female recruits within the institution. The CAF has been able to subsume female bodies through sadist violence. Sadist forms of violence are gendered as they typically target feminine bodies. Feminine bodies are bodies that are associated with femininity; they are not necessarily always female. Feminine bodies are therefore women's bodies, youth and children's bodies, queer bodies, and other bodies that are categorised within the Canadian military as part of the female side of the constructed male/female binary. Recalling de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*, little boys, wives, and little girls were the preferred targets of male sadist violence. Accordingly, the large majority of sadist violence within the Canadian Military is perpetrated on the *feminine* body. While most incidents of sexual assault reported by the Canadian Military between 2004-2008 were taken out on female bodies, 84 percent of the perpetrators charged with sex offenses during this period were male (Canadian Forces Provost Marshal, 2008 *Statistical Overview of Military Police Investigations Involving Sex Offences*, May 2009). Therefore, while gendered violence is the essential characteristic of sadism, gendered violence is also a pervasive characteristic of the Canadian military.

Violence against women is a universal component of the CAF that, according to O'Hara et al, runs top down, from the highest ranking officials to the lowest ranking recruits (O'Hara et al., "More Rape in the Military", June 1, 1998). Even the officials who are posted to receive complaints and grievances about abuse and sexual harassment seem to have a personal stake in the perpetuation of sadistic violence (Ibid.).

Krista Piche, an ordinary seaman was raped by a naval officer in 1994. Piche quickly became aware that the report which documented her rape was seen as an insignificant complaint and a trivial grievance in the eyes of her superiors. O'Hara et al state that:

After the assault, a female friend took her to the medical warrant officer - who first joked that Piche should keep her underwear in a plastic bag and advised her to make the report when she ended her six-month tour and returned south in February. He then convinced her not to report the incident higher up the chain of command, warning her about the perils of going before court martials with panels of generals (Ibid.).

From the evidence compiled by O'Hara et al, there is substantial support for the conclusion that within the CAF there is a systemic apathy towards cases of sexual assault. According to O'Hara et al, investigations into cases of assault and rape were often administered hastily (O'Hara et al, May 25 1998). Moreover, victims of rape and assault were habitually dismissed as problem officers, and they "not the perpetrators - were punished by senior officers who either looked the other way or actively tried to impede investigations" (Ibid.). De Sade's sadism stipulates that the sadist must negate the subjectivity of his or her victim. Furthermore, de Sade's Master's are apathetic to punishment. Moreover, the Master's of sadism in de Sade's *120 Days of Sodom* are male while their victims are women and children. Therefore, de Sade's sadism is gendered. It is indifferent to punishment, and it effectively strips away the subjectivity and indeed the power of the victim while it secures the power of the perpetrator. Therefore, sadistic violence is able to persist in part due to members' indifference to punishment and due to a concerted apathy towards violence against women within the institution.

Public inquiries in 2007 and 2009 both called for better education programs to deter sex crimes from occurring within the CAF (Canadian Forces Provost Marshal, 2008 *Statistical Overview of Military Police Investigations Involving Sex Offences*, May 2009; National Defense and the Canadian Forces, *Canadian Forces National Investigation Service Annual Report*, 2007). Authors such as O'Hara et al have argued that a more effective system of penalties is needed to deter sex offenses (O'Hara et al., May 25, 1998). Despite the possible argument that a strict system of penalties within the CAF may deter acts of violence within the institution, there are schools of thought which insist that post-hoc systems of punishment fail to dissuade violent acts. According to W. Gordon West and Ruth Morris, penal abolitionists contend that systems of punishment often dismiss fundamental systemic and structural problems that initially enable violent acts (West and Morris, 2000, p. 3). In light of these observations, perhaps it is reasonable to conclude that lenience or a general absence of punishment for the physical and sexual assault of women within the CAF may or may not have assisted in the perpetuation of the sadistic violence that is so often imposed on female officers. Moreover, while education programs on what qualifies as sexual assault have been implemented within the CAF, cases of sexual assault have nevertheless continued to increase. Therefore, as an alternative to harsher penalties and the implementation of more education programs, the CAF may benefit from a critical examination of its discursive, symbolic, material, and structural shortfalls that allow sadist systems of violence to persist.

### **Theorizing the Shame of the Object of Sadism: The Case of Guilt and the Female Soldier**

In describing shame as manifested through the victim, Giorgio Agamben writes that the line between the victor and the victim becomes muddled. Agamben states that in many cases the victim feels that she or he is responsible for the violence that they or others experience. The victim often feels guilt or shame because he or she sees characteristics in the sadist that resemble characteristics that are possible in her or himself. Agamben articulates this relationship in the following quotation:

Whoever experiences disgust has in some way recognized himself in the object of his loathing and fears being recognized in turn. The man who experiences disgust recognizes himself in an alterity that cannot be assumed—that is, he subjectifies himself in an absolute desubjectification (Agamben, 1999, p. 107).

Therefore, in applying this logic to the case of rape in the Canadian military, shame may manifest itself in the mind of the victim because the victim has in some way identified with the perpetrator. However, upon



the reflection of the statements of female members of the CAF that were either sexually assaulted or were witness to the sexual assault of other female members, it is clear that shame and guilt resulted from their inability to intervene in order to deter sex crimes.

For the following members of the CAF, feelings of shame and guilt came from the dismissal of the desire to defend their fellow female members from sexual assault. The subsequent excerpts are from statements by female officers regarding their witness to the physical and sexual abuse of fellow female soldiers in the CAF:

I saw another woman go through the same thing. It was a different guy, but he did the same thing: threw her over his shoulder and walked her into that area and the guys blocked the door. I hate when I get to this part of the story because I didn't do anything. I started to walk to that kitchen, looked at the two guys guarding the door and I just stopped. I didn't do anything (O'Hara et al., "Nobody Came to Help", May 25, 1998).

I walked into the back room of the hangar and there was a crew member forcing himself on a woman. She was fighting and I didn't really know what to do. The guy was really big. Are you going to try and stop him? He'll just beat you up. I walked away. I saw a lot of things like that in my time. Too much. And I heard a lot of things. There's just so much harassment and nobody does anything (Ibid.).

It is apparent that both of the female officers that were witness to the rape of their comrades felt against their better judgement that their hands were tied, and that they could not risk harming themselves in the attempt to rescue the victims of the assault. In understanding the in action of the bystander or witness, Stanley Cohen contends that:

Observers will not act if they do not know what to do, feel powerless and helpless themselves, don't see any reward, or fear punishment if they help.... Bystanders, like perpetrators, are gradually drawn into accepting as normal actions which are initially repugnant. They deny the significance of what they see by avoiding or minimizing information about victims' suffering (Cohen, 2001, 16).

Therefore, although both officers had feelings of guilt and shame due to their inaction, it can be argued that these officers were protecting themselves from sadist violence by "doing nothing" when they were confronted with the choice to either act or to refrain from action.

Another explanation for the dismissal of the call to act is the adherence to the Canadian military code of *esprit de corps* or military cohesiveness (Reiffenstein, 2007, p. 5). *Esprit de corps* translates in English as "the spirit of the body." However, the spirit that seems to be upheld in the CAF is particularly the spirit of the male body. In order to uphold the male body, it seems that there is an attempt to devalue and breakdown the female body. Conceptions of teamwork and unit cohesiveness systematically disadvantage the female body within the CAF (Zeigler & Gunderson, 2005, p. 85). Cpl. B. Urlacher was raped when she was a new recruit at the age of 19 in a Canadian Forces base in Borden, Ontario. Urlacher recounts that "In the military, we're trained to be team workers. It's not right to tell on your team workers. So you keep it a secret" (O'Hara et al, May 25 1998). Thus, because Urlacher was bound to the notion of *esprit de corps*, she remained silent about the abuse that she endured from her fellow officers.

In addition to the importance of teamwork, the CAF has developed what is known as a code of silence within its military community. The code of silence has constantly been a hindrance for the investigation of misconduct within the CAF's infantry battalions (O'Hara et al., "More Rape in the Military", June 1, 1998). According to O'Hara et al, "In these tightly knit units, the 'code of silence' prevails as the highest form of loyalty" (Ibid.). Therefore, recruits are trained to keep their mouths shut about the negative aspects of military life, including the physical and sexual assault of female soldiers in the CAF. However, regardless of the motivation for doing nothing, it is evident that by pursuing inaction, female and male

soldiers become complicit in the system of sadist violence that is able to endure within the confines of the CAF.

### **Fidelity to the Law of the Master-Signifier Pertinent to *Esprit de Corps***

The following section will attempt to explain how the discursive notion of *esprit de corps* is able to legitimize the physical assault and sexual violence that is imposed on female bodies within the CAF. In order to theorize about the importance of such a notion, the following section will discuss the writing of Slavoj Žižek on the consequences of the Master-Signifier; Allain Badiou on the fidelity to *truth*; and Walter Benjamin on the power of the discursive in law making and law preserving. The theories developed by these authors accurately describe the importance of discourse in the subjugation of women in the Canadian Military. They reveal how discourse makes the imposition of violence on female bodies within the CAF possible.

Žižek states that the development of a hierarchy among humans is due to the intervention of a Master-Signifier discourse. Žižek writes that the Master-Signifier constructs a “meaningful order onto the confused multiplicity of reality” (Žižek, 2008, p. 34). Žižek contends that the Master-Signifier relationship is grounded in the violent imposition of the Master discourse; which is predicated on false truths. Žižek argues that there is no rational basis for this relationship (Ibid.). Instead, the ordering of people happens because the Master becomes the unequivocal tyrant whose expression “It is so because I say it is so” (Ibid, 62) is deferred to and believed by others (Ibid.). Žižek’s description of the Master-Signifier may also have an important role in the sadist relationship between male and female officers of the CAF.

The most prominent discursive Master-Signifier in the CAF is the concept of *esprit de corps*. The ordering of people due to the Master-Signifier of *esprit de corps* ensures the elevation of males and the subjugation of women within the Canadian military. Colonel M.D. Capstick, contends that *esprit de corps* has historically been:

Entirely dependent on a strong regimental system that encouraged a ‘cradle to grave’ system of rewards, sanctions and supports within the bosom of the regimental ‘family’. Inherently patriarchal, the regimental system used a well-defined set of roles, responsibilities, privileges and sanctions to ensure the smooth operation of the family (Capstick, July 14, 2008).

As a result, men and women in the military are expected to abide by the principles of *esprit de corps* which dictate and irrationally legitimise the supremacy of male officers over female officers. In essence, a system of sadist violence is upheld through the Master-Signifier of *esprit de corps* which has particularly negative consequences for female soldiers and recruits.

Žižek contends that due to their negative consequences, “every Master-Signifier [that is] meant to impose some order on [society] must be deconstructed” and “dispersed” (Žižek, 2008, p. 35) Accordingly, Capstick urges the Canadian military to redefine the antiquated system of *esprit de corps* as the notion has harmful ramifications for Canadian soldiers. Capstick advises that the CAF should re-evaluate its adherence to *esprit de corps* because he is very aware of the dangers that come from blind deference to the concept within the CAF. He notes that “The regiment does not exist for its own sake, and it can become dysfunctional if regimental loyalty leads to “a confusion of loyalties, impede(s) integration of new personnel, or provide(s) a motive for covering up illegal or unethical behaviour” (Ibid.). Loyalty to the notion of *esprit de corps* ultimately ensures that targeted violence against female officers within the CAF is able to continue. Therefore, it is apparent that the adherence to the notion of *esprit de corps* within the CAF has created a fidelity to the Master-Signifier. Moreover, the Master who claims that *esprit de corps* is the rule has also created a fidelity to violence within the CAF.

Alain Badiou contends that once there is a fidelity to a *truth*, this truth cannot be questioned. Badiou writes that fidelity to an event or a truth denies the possibility of the critique of that truth. He states that the truth or the event:

Can be neither predicative nor judicial. There is no authority before which the result of truth procedure could be brought to trial. A truth never appertains to Critique. It is supported only by itself and is the correlate of a new type of subject, neither transcendental nor substantial, entirely defined as militant of the truth in question (Badiou, 2003, p. 109).

Therefore, the unquestionable *truth* in the Canadian military is the doctrine of *esprit de corps*. Moreover, the truth of *esprit de corps* constructs the correlating unequivocal subjectivity of the male body as well as a tangential objectivity of the female body. Although there is no material basis for this truth, *esprit de corps* is nevertheless vehemently defended within the institution of the CAF.

In applying Badiou's analysis to the CAF, the repetition of sadistic acts may be the militant assertion of the urge to defend the universal logic of *esprit de corps* within the institution. In accordance to the violent defence of this truth, a new truth appears which stipulates that sadistic forms of violence assist in maintaining the dominance of *esprit de corps*. Therefore, there is a prominence of sublimation within the Canadian military that persuades male officers to impose sadistic violence on female officers in order to prove their collective fidelity to the truth. Similarly, there is a sublimation of inaction on the part of female officers that reinforces the notion of *esprit de corps*. Consequently, what was once fidelity to the notion of *esprit de corps* is now also a fidelity to violence. Whatever meaning that *esprit de corps* once had for the CAF, has now become supplemented with the notion of violence. As a result, the Canadian Military is currently left with the fidelity to an abstract and perverse truth that asymmetrically disadvantages women in the Canadian Forces.

In addition to this, *esprit de corps* is also a form of law making within the Canadian military. Whereas cohesion to the spirit of the body is the principle rule within the confines of the CAF, violence is ultimately legitimated through the dissemination and maintenance of this rule. Walter Benjamin, in his essay "Critique of Violence," postulates that "all violence as a means is either lawmaking or law preserving. If it lays claim to neither of these predicates, it forfeits all validity" (Benjamin, 1939, p. 287). Therefore, as *esprit de corps* is indoctrinated into the laws of the CAF it serves as a means to subjugate women and maintain patriarchy (Capstick, July 14, 2008). *Esprit de corps* is both made as law and preserved as law within the CAF in order to lay claim to the validity of the sexual and physical abuse of female officers.

Benjamin further contends that "law making is power making" (Ibid, 295). Moreover, Benjamin speculates that law "at the moment of its instatement does not dismiss violence; rather at this very moment of law making, it specifically establishes as law not an end unalloyed by violence, but one necessarily and intimately bound to it, under the title of power" (Ibid.). Thus, in the case of the law of *esprit de corps*, the rule is conflated with violence so that violence against women, with the goal of securing the power of men, is the rule.

Through the application of the theories of Master-Signifier, fidelity to the truth, and the relationship between law and power, Žižek, Badiou, and Benjamin have described how the violent submission of female bodies to male bodies within the CAF comes to be legitimized. However, while the subjectivities of female soldiers and recruits are diminished through violence and the discursive legitimatization of that violence within the CAF, female officers are not always victims of sadism, sometimes they also employ sadist violence.

### **Female Officers as Peripheral Sadist Subjects**

While female officers are bound to the asymmetric sadist social order of the CAF within its institution, females of the CAF, although marginalized, do have the capability to assert sadist subjectivity through the infliction of sexual violence as well. However, “between January 2004 and December 2008, 84% (226) of [military personnel] charged [with sex offences] were male (Military Police Criminal Intelligence Program: Public Inquiry “2008 Statistical Overview of Sex Offences Reported to Military Police” [inclusive of 2004-2008], April 15, 2009, p. 8). Therefore, the large majority of sex offences brought to military and civilian trial are perpetrated by male members of the CAF (Ibid.). Moreover, as mentioned previously the actual numbers of sex offenses are most likely higher as these types of offences are either not reported or are generally settled within the unit where the offense took place (Ibid., 12). As a consequence, it could be argued that female soldiers are sometimes the perpetrators of sex offences, however, the actual numbers of incidents reported are very low in comparison to the male statistics. Therefore, it is possible that female soldiers may sometimes be paradoxically both sadistic subjects and the objects of sadism within the confines of the CAF. Thus, this article is not arguing that female soldiers are in every case exclusively victims of sex offenses. Rather, this article contends that the problem of sadist violence within the CAF is asymmetric and gendered.

### **A Call to Action: The Deconstruction of Violent Systems within the CAF**

This paper has sought to convey that there is a correlation between the violence that is imposed on female bodies within the CAF and sadistic expressions of violence that are present in Marquis de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*. This essay has argued that a system of sadism exists within the CAF. Sadism is used as a structural foundation for the asymmetric and gendered order of the CAF. Consequently, this paper has surmised that the use of sadism in the perpetual imposition of sexual violence on female bodies, as well as the adherence to the sadist structural referents portrayed in the *120 Days of Sodom*, has constructed and maintained an asymmetric balance of power within the CAF that upholds the male body while it degrades and makes trivial the female body.

Although female bodies are violently subsumed to male bodies within the Canadian Armed Forces, this paper has proposed that female members are not always exclusively victims of sex offences. However, this paper has contended that generally female bodies lack sadistic agency as they are more often the objects of male sadism. Thus, this paper has attempted to convey the possibility that female soldiers may in certain instances possess sadistic subjectivity; while, paradoxically, they are concurrently the targeted objects of sadist violence within the CAF.

This paper has also argued that discursive formations within the CAF have enabled the development of a structure of patriarchy, misogyny, and contempt for the female body. The discursive organization of the CAF irrationally legitimizes the abundance of violence that is imposed on female members of the Canadian Forces. Through the utilization of linguistic tools such as the Master-Signifier, a fidelity to the truth, and the relationship between law and power, Žižek, Badiou, and Benjamin have mapped out how the violent submission of female bodies to male bodies comes to be legitimized within the CAF.

Sadistic forms of violence are imposed both materially and structurally within the CAF. The constructed legal, symbolic, and discursive structures of the CAF that are founded on sadist principles must be put into question as they are ultimately responsible for the continued occurrence of rape and assault that disproportionately affects female members of the CAF. This essay has championed and firmly forwards the argument that the sadist structures of the CAF are meticulous and purposeful as they enforce the gendered ordering of people within its institution. Therefore, this paper takes Žižek’s postmodern call to action seriously (Žižek, 2008, p. 35). It is our duty as critical thinkers to expose asymmetric power systems as irrational discursive, symbolic, and materially constructed false truths. *The imposed order* of the CAF must be deconstructed if females are to be respected and treated fairly as valuable members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

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