EVERYDAY MASOCHISMS:
CHARLOTTE BRONTË, GEORGE MOORE, D.H. LAWRENCE, AND JEAN RHYS

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2012

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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This dissertation argues for the magnitude of a critical literary period in the development and exploration of theories about masochism. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth-century, discourses about sexuality become more publicly accessible. Circulating ideas by sexologists Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, and psychoanalysts like Sigmund Freud, encourage a public conversation about sex, desire, and identity. Both novelists and their readers find themselves in a groundbreaking space that fosters a rethinking of sexual selfhood. Instead of relegating masochism to institutions, brothels, and case studies, Charlotte Brontë, George Moore, D.H. Lawrence, and Jean Rhys provide representations of masochism that are far more ordinary, surfacing in various everyday experiences. I analyze the existence of different portrayals of masochistic relationships: courtships and partnerships in *Villette* (1860), unrequited lesbian desire and its reincarnation as religious zeal in *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), surprisingly dynamic marital partnerships in *The Rainbow* (1915), and an adulterous love triangle in *Quartet* (1928). I begin with a reading of the Biblical story of Samson and Delilah in conjunction with Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's foundational *Venus in Furs* in order to develop and contextualize a transhistorical masochistic lineage. Finally, this project looks ahead to Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), which notably returns to the enactment of more literal sadistic and masochistic fantasies, furthering emphasizing the unique literary approaches to masochism covered by the four main authors in this project.

Acknowledgments

I begin with a caveat: for the people that I mention on this small and meager page, language has not quite evolved to adequately convey my appreciation, admiration, and love.

During one magical semester, everything fell into place; for better or worse, I somehow began to see masochism everywhere I turned. With it came sexology, psychoanalysis, and gender theory. And, it was Richard Kaye who realized the potential of the theory that I began to develop. “This is your dissertation,” he said to me after reading the initial snippets of what I wrote on D.H. Lawrence. I am deeply indebted to his encouragement, support, and criticism. In fact, this most certainly would not have been my dissertation without him.

My first class at the CUNY Graduate Center was taught by Jane Marcus. That class, filled with engaged students, an abundant reading list, and a degree of predictable chaos, continues to inspire me to this day. Writing for Jane turned me into the scholar that I am today. Her love, inspiration, and brilliance have led me here.

I co-authored a paper during my first semester in graduate school about sadomasochistic language. Lynn Chancer’s book was a foundational part of that paper and, in some ways, initiated my love affair with theories of masochism. I am incredibly lucky to have been able to work with her on this project.

I have also had the privilege of working with, in one capacity or another, Carrie Hintz, Robert Reid-Pharr, Sarah Chinn, Mario DiGangi, Steve Kruger, and Eve Sedgwick. I owe much to you.

I am lucky to think of my time in graduate school as overwhelmingly filled with laughter. For this, I credit two incredible people: Joost Burgers, who has shared his work, his drinks, his wisdom, his time, his grips, and his humor with me; and Emily Sherwood, who has shared her skills, her sass, her advice, her craziness, her grub, and her kindness with me. Without Joost and Emily, grad school would simply have been school and my life would not be as rich.

There are days when I walk down a street in Manhattan and look up at the skyline, thinking about how amazing it is that I ended up here, taking note of the angle of the sun on any given building or the storybook breeze that blows by. Yet, my New York experience is filled with an insanely close circle of girlfriends. Amanda, Erin, Gabi, Hill, Tamar, you make every dinner a pretty little night. And from afar, I thank Justin and Katie, Teran, and Vicki, with so much affection.

For red pandas watched and meatballs eaten, for hands held and hugs doled out, for books shared and picklebacks ordered, for silver linings discovered and for adventures had, I turn to James.

My heart belongs to my family. From horribly timed computer failures to pre-exam anxiety, my mom and dad have talked me down from every irrational ledge with love, kindness, patience, and humor. My sister has been my friend, my coach, and my therapist for the past six years.

Diane, Steve, Gabi, James—you are my world.

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For teachers, friends, masochists, readers, loves.

(I know you, you are the deeply bowed,
I, the transpierced, am subject to you.
Where flames a word, would testify for us both?
You – all, all real. I – all delusion.)
- Paul Celan, “Ich Kenne Dich” / Trans. Pierre Joris

1. The Mythologies and Mythologizing of Masochism

As a term, "sadomasochism" appears in academic and popular work more as a hot catchphrase than as a substantial behavioral and relational mechanism that might illuminate some of the more challenging relationships that are represented in literature. When critically appropriated, there appears to be little interest on behalf of the scholar to break the term "sadomasochism" down into its respective parts: sadism and masochism, or, in their most basic forms, pleasure arising from inflicting pain on others and pleasure arising from the infliction of pain on oneself. Instead, these distinct elements are lumped together into one overarching term that, regardless of its apparent congruity, simply cannot account for the nuances in relational experiences between parties.

In the literary world, the word "sadomasochism" often draws one to Pauline Reage, or, rather, Anne Desclos, author of the infamous *Story of O* (1954). Reage's masochistic narrative has proven vital for critics interested in feminism, psychoanalysis, fantasy, sexuality and submission, though its importance for my purposes lies in the staunch and controversial readings it inspires. Jessica Benjamin, in *The Bonds of Love* (1988), begins her section on sadomasochism by declaring that, "*Story of O* confronts us boldly with the idea that people often submit not merely out of fear, but in complicity with their own deepest desires" (55). That O's deepest desires could include being shared interchangeably with a multitude of men, being branded, and being pierced confounds as many readers as it seduces. Indeed, the master-slave relationship made explicit between O and her many masters presents readers with the reality of a happy, severely masochistic woman—a representation not easily digested by many scholars, especially those who continuously rely on the misplaced interchangeability between the terms "masochist" and "victim."

While this dissertation does not analyze *Story of O* specifically, it is one of two useful starting points for considering the relationship between masochism and literature. O is the quintessential masochist: an eager, often active participant in her subjection, humiliation, and punishment. The more that she is presented to readers as victimized, the more she relishes the process of victimization, although the terms "victim" and "victimization" prove problematic in this dissertation. That is precisely why, more than fifty years after the novel's release, O continues to be the challenging protagonist of a very challenging text; most feminist scholars see O as "a victimized woman, too weak or brainwashed or hopeless to resist her degradation" (Benjamin 55). Yet, victimization is entirely beside the point. O, like the characters that this dissertation concerns itself with, finds masochism to be fundamentally fulfilling, and masochism to be fundamentally empowering. Each aspect of the mortification, domination, and abuse that O experiences, becomes a part of her intense sexual and personal identification as a masochist. O's satisfaction is wholly contingent upon the fulfillment of her masochistic tendencies, inside and outside of the bedroom. However, unlike O, the characters I will discuss do not choose O's extreme corporeal masochisms—physical torture, anonymous abuse, sexual branding; instead, their emotional and mental masochisms are located within everyday personal interactions and relationships. The simple ordinariness of these masochisms is the real focal point of this dissertation.

Yet, in order to understand the importance of everyday masochisms, and their literary manifestations, we must approach the way that masochism was brought into the sphere of public discourse. Accordingly, the second, and perhaps less expected starting point, is biblical in its origins. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* (1870) begins with a biblical epigraph from the Book of Judith. Indeed, the text is littered with references to a fallen Samson, a man

with whom Severin, the novel's masochistic protagonist, longingly identifies. A simple library catalogue search for "Samson" or "Samson and Delilah" yields two basic possible results: sources about Milton's literary interpretation *Samson Agonistes* or peculiar theatrical and operatic versions of the Biblical tale. The "art" associated with the latter adaptations often portrays a broken Samson lusting at the hands of a smoldering and seductive Delilah. Their interactions, then, are consistently depicted as passionate, sensual, intense, and, ultimately for Samson, destructive—the most explicit element of the tale's allure for Severin. As a result, audiences immediately face the "moral" of the story, or rather, the social construction of a moral that, for feminists everywhere, has long lasting, wholly misogynistic consequences: the once-mighty hero Samson destroyed by the selfishness of the deceitful and hyper-sexualized Delilah.

Prolific biblical scholar and intense feminist Mieke Bal begins her discussion of this shocking "love story" in *Lethal Love* (1987), by reasserting the influence of this type of contemporary cultural commentary surrounding it: "In our culture, the story of Samson and Delilah is the paradigmatic case of woman's wickedness" (38). Bal's interest in biblical tales is underscored by her interest in how they have been received, manipulated, and retold, and, of course, at whose hand; it is the fact that the Samson and Delilah tale *becomes* a lesson in womanly wiles and betrayal by critics, congregations, and readers alike that is the object of Bal's investigation. Consequently, her analysis of Samson is based upon a methodology of "criticizing the myth…attempting to replace the seemingly self-evident motivations with others" (*LL* 39). Bal locates some of these motivations in fairly traditional Biblical binaries: "the social versus the individual; relationship by blood versus relationship by law (marriage); masculine versus feminine" (*LL* 40). Such powerfully connotative oppositions exist beneath the surface of some of the most well-known tales in the Hebrew Bible: Isaac's misplaced blessing to his sons, Joseph's

troubled family situation, Ruth and Naomi's cooperative relationship, to name a few. However, in many cases, these stories have been appropriated in order to espouse a flat moralistic mythology: trickery yields trickery, brotherly love must surpass filial jealousy, loyalties to Israel are inevitably beneficial.

The myth of Delilah's feminine wickedness and Samson's masculine strength—the perpetual and perpetuated bottom-line of the story—is fundamentally problematic for Bal in its assumptions. Therefore, it must be unsettled, destabilized and finally reappropriated in less misogynistic and didactic terms. Early in her examination of the Biblical tale, Bal asks a series of telling questions: "1. Why does Samson not reproach Delilah for her betrayal? 2. Why does he accept Delilah's reproaches without giving his own view? 3. Why does he finally give her the crucial information, thus sealing his undoing, instead of acting to prevent it?" (40) These three questions illuminate problems associated with expression and intent; as readers, there are gaps that we fill in, bridges that we build, assumptions that we internalize—all of which allows us to proceed logically through the story. In this "case-study," though, Bal suggests that the reader is placed in a particularly problematic interpretive position:

> My hypothesis is, therefore, that there is an intimate relation between heroism as the expression and justification of patriarchy, and problems of representation of subjectivity. A shift in the concept of heroism from an instrumental view, in which the hero is sent by higher powers to represent their glory through pure physical acts, to a view wherein individualism and responsibility replace the lack of psychological concerns in the older view, *puts the modern reader in a conflict that cannot be solved but by blaming the woman*. (37 emphasis added)

Approaching the story from a bridge of psychoanalytical and feminist frameworks, Bal uses the "moral" that women whose loyalties have not been tested and proven are not to be trusted, precisely because she believes that said moral is remarkably distant from the actual content of the story. For Bal, such distance reveals the leaps in logic that we, as readers within a given Judeo-Christian context, are willing to take in order to establish a coherent interpretive lineage for a story that is significantly different from its dangerous and prescriptive mythology. These questions, and the spaces that they ultimately uncover, are often the sources of rather thorny interpretive arguments that mistakenly claim authority from the "stuff" of the text, and not from the imagination—albeit one that is conditioned by social, religious, and cultural values—of the reader. Although Bal's list of questions is integral to her quest for the origins of the Delilah-as-demon mythology, it also leads us to a set of inquiries that convincingly reveal the existence of a Samson-as-masochist mythology: one that defines Samson as *the* founding father of masochism.

Over the course of the entire tale, the absence of an expected fury on Samson's behalf, and his revelation of information that will undoubtedly cause his own immediate and eventual demise leave the reader with two distinct possibilities: that Delilah is a powerful demigod or demigoddess to whom Samson, as mortal, is automatically subject; *or*, the more plausible and critically ripe, that Samson willingly and pleasurably places himself into a position of submission, thereby establishing Delilah as a cruel but constructed dominatrix. It is Samson who holds power over and who elevates Delilah into the role of mistress. It is Samson who freely yields to Delilah, not Delilah who miraculously overpowers Samson. And, it is Samson who is fulfilled by the enactment of the physical, emotional, and mental abuse to which he perpetually exposes himself. Samson's final act of self-condemnation is precisely that: an act of *self*-condemnation. It is not Delilah who seals Samson's fate, but Samson himself. Although the questions that Bal asks

initially appear to suggest that Samson is wholly subject to Delilah, the tale involves the implicit recognition that Samson is in control of the knowledge that she possesses and the way that she uses said knowledge. In the stuff of the story, then, readers cans locate reminders that Samson uses his authority and his sense of control to bequeath that authority and control unto Delilah herself. This scenario *is* the unfolding of the quintessential masochistic complex; thus, Samson *is* the quintessential masochist.

While cultural commentary may interpret the figure of Samson as a model for the fallen hero, for Sacher-Masoch, Samson is the founding father of masochism. *Venus in Furs* relies on the powerfully connotative legacy of the story of Samson and Delilah in order to highlight the presence of a long historical masochistic trajectory. *Venus in Furs*'s Severin consistently finds himself face-to-face with imagery of Samson and Delilah, both in terms of his physical surroundings and in terms of his theoretical invocations. Engaged in the pursuit of a woman to play mistress to his fantasies of abuse and humiliation, Severin is enamored by the image of Samson entirely subject to the whim of his dominant woman. Moreover, Severin considers Samson's tragic downfall the perfect masochistic finale to an ideally torturous relationship. Vis-à-vis the characterization of Severin and the deliberate descriptions of the settings in the novel, we can see that the cultural legacy of Samson and Delilah extends away from misogyny into masochism. Sacher-Masoch's reliance upon such specific biblical imagery encourages a cross-textual reading of Samson and Severin, explicitly locating the biblical tale as the *real* origin of masochism.

Severin, introspective and well-educated, is constantly analyzing, reanalyzing, and overanalyzing his romantic and emotional desires. This perpetually interior process enables Severin to fully acknowledge his fantasies, their "historical" heritage, and the symptoms of such

fantasies. It is also a mechanism of isolation that, in many ways, keeps Severin from fully embracing any sense of sociality. Early in the novel while writing in his journal, Severin finds himself meditating on the true meaning of love:

> To love and be loved, what joy! And yet how this splendor pales in comparison with the blissful torment of worshipping a woman who treats one as a plaything, of being the slave of a beautiful tyrant who mercilessly tramples one underfoot. Even Samson, the hero, the giant, put himself into the hands of Delilah who had already betrayed him once, only to be betrayed yet again. And when he was captured and blinded by the Philistines, he kept his brave and loving eyes fixed upon the fair traitress until the very end. (155)

Severin builds upon a rather traditional, and general conception of love ("to love and be loved") by adding distinctly masochistic elements (worship, enslavement, tyranny, a severe delineation between male and female roles, and, of course, the resulting "bliss"). In spite of, or more likely, *because of* Severin's awareness of Samson's demise, romanticizing Samson and Delilah's relationship necessarily involves Severin's acknowledgement that pain yields pleasure, unquestionably the most well-publicized aspect of masochism. Severin's idealizing of the "blissful torment" of Samson's submission and abuse practically demands a rereading of the Samson and Delilah story in conjunction with Sacher-Masoch's theories of masochistic tendencies.

Severin falls "in love" with Wanda at first sight, one might say. As a vision of coldness and beauty, Wanda appeals to all of Severin's senses and sensibilities. Although Severin attempts to court Wanda in a fairly conventional way, their relationship necessarily evolves in order to incorporate many of Severin's masochistic fantasies. Convincing Wanda to act as

complete mistress of his body, mind, heart and soul, Severin places her in a wholly powerful, god-like position of authority over him. During a discussion about formalizing their relationship from man and woman to slave and mistress, Severin takes note of their rather poignant and telling surroundings: "The room was entirely furnished in red, the carpet, the curtains, the hangings and the canopy above the bed. A fine painting showing Samson and Delilah decorated the ceiling" (218). This room, Wanda's boudoir, is comprised of two major stylistic elements: the color red and the portrait on the ceiling. Associated with love, passion, pain, blood, life, sex, sensuality, and fire, red is a powerful symbol of the intensity of Wanda and Severin's relationship as it currently exists. The painting on the ceiling, then, represents the seemingly inevitable future of that relationship. Because of its cultural resonance and appropriation, the story of Samson and Delilah—and, as such, stories that follows in its legacy—has no surprise ending. The presence of the painting informs us that Severin and Wanda's relationship must end tragically and painfully as the direct result of Wanda's betrayal. And, of course, just as Delilah aligns herself with the Philistines, Wanda partners herself with the truly sadistic Greek in order to destroy Severin the masochist.[1]

Furthermore, as Wanda pressures Severin into signing a contract that will formally bind him to her as slave, Severin cannot help but contemplate the Biblical tale and its implications:

> "Let me sign first," said Wanda. "Your hand is shaking; are you so afraid of happiness?"
>
> She snatched away the contract and the pen. In my hesitation I gazed up for a moment...Delilah, an opulent creature with flaming red hair, reclines half-naked on a red ottoman, a sable cloak about her shoulders. She smiles and leans toward Samson, who has been bound and thrown at her feet by the Philistines. Her

> teasing, coquettish smile seems the very summit of cruelty; with half-closed eyes, she gazes at Samson, while he regards her longingly, crazed with love. Already his enemy has laid a knee on his chest and is about to blind him with the white-hot sword. (221)

Severin's apprehensions are appeased by what might otherwise be considered a tragic portrayal, but here, is simply a representation of Severin's sentiments about "true love." The contract to which Wanda refers is the legalistic manifestation of Severin's wishes: to be bound, inescapably, to his mistress, under every possible circumstance including death: "Mrs. Von Dunajew may not only chastise her slave for the slightest negligence or misdemeanor as and when she wishes, but she will also have the right to maltreat him according to her humor or even simply to amuse herself; she is also entitled to kill him if she so wishes; in short, he becomes her absolute property" (220). The inclusion of murder in this contract emphasizes the totality of Wanda and Severin's arrangement—a subject to which I will later return. Therefore, the parallel drawn between Severin and Wanda and Samson and Delilah is even more apt. While the image of Delilah that Severin invokes is not quite reliant upon the content of the Biblical tale—it is the Philistines who seek the binding and rendering powerless of Samson much more so than she—it still highlights the potent legacy of Samson's rapture with Delilah's destructive control.

Through this imagery, Wanda's and Delilah's personal and coupled trajectories are predicted. From within the bounds of a masochistic relationship step out two women without ties to their former submissives. While Severin's "ending" appears not nearly as final or tragic as Samson's ultimate murder-suicide of heaven-fueled strength, we can still see Wanda's betrayal and departure as the death of a certain identity of Severin's. As Severin finds himself at the whim

not of Wanda, but of her new and vicious Greek lover, he meditates once again on the position of Samson in relation to Delilah:

> "May I really whip him?" he asked.
>
> "Do with him as you please," replied Wanda.
>
> "Beast!" I cried, utterly revolted.
>
> The Greek eyed me fiercely, like a tiger; his muscles swelled as he drew back his arm and the whip whistled through the air. Like Marsyas I was bound hand and foot and condemned to be flayed by Apollo.[2]
>
> My eyes drifted about the room and came to rest on the ceiling where Samson lay at Delilah's feet, about to be blinded by the Philistines. The painting suddenly appeared as a symbol, the timeless image of the love, the passion, the lust of man for woman. "Each of use ends up like Samson," I thought. "We are always betrayed by the woman we love, whether she wears a sable cloak or a linen smock." (268)

Even at his most subjected and humiliated, Severin looks upon Samson not only as an ideal, but more importantly as a model for true heterosexual love and devotion: "the love, the passion, the lust of man for woman."[3] It is only fitting that at this dejected low, Severin's thoughts drift to images of love that are, for him, comforting—comforting in that they affirm the valor and nobility of *his own humiliated position*. The image of Samson, instead of evoking feelings of foolishness or regret, evokes a sense of passion and nobility, reminding Severin that his love for Wanda is truly of the highest caliber.

Ultimately, then, Samson is Severin's—and masochism's—mascot and founding father; he represents a series of ideals toward which Severin, both in life and in dreams, strives. Our

initial encounter with Samson *in this role* reveals his willingness to subject himself to the woman who has previously betrayed him not once as Severin notes, but an astounding three times. A testament to the submissive's voluntary involvement in masochistic relationships, Samson's constant return to Delilah and his final acquiescence to her destructive wishes frame all of Severin's interactions with and feelings for Wanda. Sacher-Masoch is fully aware that he is not creating something entirely innovative in terms of his masochistic ideas—as nineteenth-century sexologists might seem to suggest—but rather revealing a heritage of masochism with its origins in a story that has become a cultural cornerstone across the world. Accordingly, his reliance upon the symbolic power of Samson and Delilah suggests that the mythology created by the story itself is not necessarily one of misogyny but one of masochism. Thus, the revelation of this mythology restores Samson's culpability in his own destruction, further explaining Severin's worship of the fallen man and thus, establishing a transhistorical masochistic lineage.

Georges Bataille, in *Erotism: Death & Sensuality* (1957), defines his subject matter: "Eroticism, unlike simple sexual activity, is a psychological quest independent of the natural goal: reproduction and the desire for children" (11). Examining a series of taboos and transgressions, Bataille develops a spectrum that ranges from the individual—marriage and reproduction—to the collective—murder and war. Building predominantly off of the work of Marquis de Sade, the namesake of sadism, Bataille's analysis seems applicable to virtually all "sexual perversions," including, of course, masochism. Interested in the "connection between death and sexual excitement" (11), Bataille develops a philosophy about individuality and the role of sexually deviant behavior that enables us to read the differences between Severin's "rehabilitation" and Samson's tragic demise. Bataille writes: "We are discontinuous beings, individuals who perish in isolation in the midst of an incomprehensible adventure, but we yearn

for our continuity. We find the state of affairs that binds us to our random and ephemeral individuality hard to bear. Along with our tormenting desire that this evanescent thing should last, there stands our obsession with a primal continuity linking us with everything that is" (15).

The isolation that Bataille speaks of can manifest itself in many forms—man's isolation from nature, spirituality, history—but Bataille is interested in the personal isolation from self and from others: "The whole business of eroticism is to strike to the inmost core of the living being, so that the heart stands still…The whole business of eroticism is to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives" (17). Bataille identifies the transcendent power of eroticism as that which can disassociate man from his own private world and reassert him into other worlds, into the company of others. Hence, man can reject the position ascribed to him by some notion of traditional social order and reclaim his position in a larger scheme that extends beyond any such momentary order. For example, Severin's over-educated interiority marks him as a solitary, distinct figure and only upon Wanda's dismissal of such characteristics does Severin find himself free of feelings of isolation, embracing the position of subjection that formally unites him with Wanda. She can and does do with him as she pleases, and the two leave their separate existences to become a masochistic unit, seeking continuity in Bataille's terms.

Wanda and Severin follow a path toward continuity by establishing their own power dynamic. The overarching social order that has dictated the previous delineations in their roles must be rejected in order for man to establish for him and for others a place in a continuous matrix of life: "Eroticism always entails a breaking down of established patterns, the patterns, I repeat, of the regulated social order basic to our discontinuous mode of existence as defined and separate individuals" (18). Yet, Bataille only understands the rebuilding of social order within the realm of eroticism in large-scale situations like war. In this far more localized case, we can

approach masochism as the rejection of traditional formal social roles in favor of a specific rigid social hierarchy that displaces convention. In Sacher-Masoch's representation of masochism, for example, we see the powerless woman come to possess full dominion over her male suitors, an obvious inversion of traditional gender roles. Both Severin and Samson experience this revision of roles within a sexual and romantic relationship; they are, as Bataille suggests, engaged in eroticism of the physical and emotional kind:

> For the man in love, however, the fervour of love may be felt more violently than physical desire is. We ought never to forget that in spite of the bliss love promises its first effect is one of turmoil and distress. Passion fulfilled itself provokes such violent agitation that the happiness involved, before being a happiness to be enjoyed, is so great as to more like its opposite, suffering.[4] (19)

Despite the absence of the word "masochism," we can understand that Bataille is referring to what other historical sexologists have identified as the roots of masochism. For both Severin and Samson, Bataille's description of the "fervour" of love is particularly apt. Though linking the two figures is incredibly useful, their tales appear to end in completely different ways. Severin finds himself no longer the object of Wanda's affections, as Wanda has begun to worship a character significantly crueler than she could ever be. When Severin is turned over to Apollo, he sees that Wanda gets no pleasure from paying any attention to him but relishes in the cruelty with which Apollo treats Severin, as he is

> …lashed by Apollo's whip and mocked by the cruel laughter of my Venus. But Apollo whipped all poetry from me, as one blow followed the next, until finally, clenching my teeth in impotent rage, I cursed myself, my voluptuous imagination, and above all woman and love. I suddenly saw with alarming clarity how blind

> passion and lust have always led men, from the time of Holofernes and Agamemnon, into the net of woman's treachery, into poverty, slavery and death. It was though I were awakening from a long dream. (268–9)

Severin's impotence is, in one respect, absolutely the most important element in this scene because it highlights the sense of empowerment that he experiences in a position of submission prior to the appearance of Apollo. He is not, however, impotent because a stronger man humiliates him. Rather, his impotence lies in Wanda's rejection of him. Previously feeling completely attune to her desires, especially when they demanded his pain and debasement, Severin suddenly realizes that he no longer plays an integral role in Wanda's attainment of pleasure and satisfaction; therefore his notions of his own noble masculine prowess—that exist even in debasement—are destroyed.

In this scene, Severin identifies the poetic origins of his conception of love as painful and dutiful, as humiliating and cruel. Bataille, at the end of his introduction, refers to "one of the most violent of poets, Rimbaud" (24) in order to draw a distinct parallel between the life-altering power of poetry and the life-altering power of sexual perversion: "'Elle est retrouvée / Quoi ? L'eternité. / C'est la mer allée / Avec le soleil.' Poetry leads to the same place as all forms of eroticism – to the blending and fusion of separate objects. It leads us to eternity, it leads us to death, and through death to continuity. Poetry is eternity; the sun matched the sea" (25). Bataille, like Severin, locates in poetry the same transformative power of eroticism/masochism. It is the poetry of his love for Wanda that keeps the fires of his passion for her alive. And, it is precisely that poetry that is attacked by the presence of a man who actively removes Severin from Wanda's sexual and romantic world. Accordingly, Severin is "cured" of his fantasies, and, forced to choose between being "a hammer or an anvil" (271), he chooses to be the hammer,

because ultimately “whoever allows himself to be whipped deserves to be whipped” (271). Adamantly rejecting that which formerly gave him immense pleasure, Severin finds himself with a newfound belief that men and women are inherent enemies and forever isolated. Severin moves back into the social order that allows him to be, as Bataille suggests, a “self-contained character.” This “death,” then, does not bring continuity, as poetry and traditional death do, but rather reaffirms his own discontinuous existence.

Samson’s end, on the other hand, is not quite as simple as Severin’s reclamation of an isolating tradition and a presumed masculinity. Immediately after the Philistine’s proposal to Delilah, that she should “cajole [Samson] and find out what gives him his great strength, and how we can overpower and bind him and render him helpless” (16:5), Delilah begins her prompting. The first three attempts are failures, with Samson responding to her falsely; yet, with each of these responses, Samson gets closer and closer to the true nature of his secret. First he tells Delilah that “seven fresh bowstrings not yet dry” (16:7) will weaken his strength to the level of an ordinary man, emphasizing the purity of the Nazirite vow. His next response, “if I were tightly bound with new ropes that have never been used” (16:11), reveals the conditional nature of his strength; just as the ropes must never have been used, so Samson’s hair must never be cut. The third reply, “take the seven loose locks of my hair, weave them into the warp, and drive them tight with the beater” (16:13) locates the source of Samson’s power explicitly in his hair. Each of these three attempts ends in the arrival of the Philistines who proceed according to the information that Samson has shared with Delilah: Samson awakes only to find himself bound by precisely the instrument of destruction that he has previously mentioned to Delilah. There is obviously no question that Delilah is leaking information. Samson, however, cannot stop himself from getting closer and closer to revealing his secret in its entirety; he is playing with fire.

As Delilah “pesters” and “wearies” (16:16) Samson for the fourth time, it is clear that only Samson has the power to hand over the information that will inevitably lead to his capture. While it appears that Delilah is magically in control of this situation, with Samson simply unable to refuse her, the lies that he tells Delilah initially allow us to understand that it is Samson who is in full control. Delilah might, in fact, think that she is in charge, taking for granted the fact that Samson will admit the truth, but Samson’s position in the story suggests otherwise. This apparent struggle over control and power is at the core of Sacher-Masoch’s theories about masochism. Severin cajoles Wanda into the position of authority, thereby retaining a degree of control even though he is presenting himself as fully submissive, yearning to be completely dominated. Yet, Severin and Wanda’s relationship evolves—an inevitability within a true masochistic complex—so that Wanda fully embraces her role as cruel dominatrix, relishing in her own power over Severin, while he embraces the contract that negates the possibility of the fruition of any of his independent impulses. Therefore, once the power shifts completely, the masochistic contract virtually nullifies itself; when Wanda finally allows her own desires to trump Severin’s, he becomes “the hammer.” Samson and Delilah fall into precisely the same trajectory; Samson appears to bequeath control unto Delilah by enabling her to believe that she has the power to coax out of him the secret that he has kept from his birth, but the falsity of his responses reminds the reader that he still wields the power.

For Samson, much like Severin, the give-and-take with Delilah is a game that is enjoyable in itself. Presumably after sex, he wakes up to find himself improperly bound and makes a spectacle out of breaking those bounds, triumphant yet again. However, the closer that Samson gets to the root of his secret—the transition from information that is tangentially related to information that is dangerously close to the truth—the higher the stakes become. By keeping

his secret, he remains a part of Bataille's self-contained discontinuity. The slow revelation of cleverly hidden aspects of the source of Samson's strength embodies his struggle with becoming ordinary. It is the secret nature of the Nazirite vow that marks him as unique and that, in many ways, prevents him from fully rejecting the social order. The moment that he finally appeases Delilah and reveals his secret—"No razor has touched my head…because I am a Nazirite, consecrated to God from the day of my birth. If my head were shaved, then my strength would leave me, and I should become no stronger than any other man" (16:17)—he gives himself up and becomes wholly enveloped by Delilah and her financial backers.

Shorn, bound, and blind, Samson is forced to face the type of humiliating victimization to which he has previously subjected his enemies. He is clearly broken. Yet, Samson still attempts to make one last show of his strength. As he is prepared to be the entertainment for a temple filled with his enemies, Samson begs God:

> "Remember me, Lord God, remember me: for this one occasion, God, give me strength, and let at one stroke be avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes." He put his arms round the two central pillars which supported the temple, his right arm round one and his left round the other and, bracing himself, he said, "Let me die with the Philistines." Then Samson leaned forward with all his might, and the temple crashed down on the lords and all the people who were in it. So the dead whom he killed at his death were more than those he had killed in his life. (16:28–30)

Interestingly, of course, Samson only asks for revenge for his blinded eyes, not for the abuse, imprisonment, or humiliation he endured. Such specifically charged vengeance suggests that Samson understood the stakes he raised by telling Delilah the truth, and that the punishment he

expected was the abuse and imprisonment; it is the blinding that he is unprepared for and therefore, seeks to avenge. As a result, there is ripe symbolic space surrounding the two pillars between which Samson successfully kills himself and his enemies. Bal reads the two pillars as a woman's thighs, concluding that in his death, Samson reenacts the birthing process: "From the perspective of a newborn child, the mother's thighs, several times larger than the baby's head, must be enormous. During birth, the opening from the thighs is small, too small, oppressively tight. Samson corrects the act of birth: he forces open a larger gap" (62).[5] The two pillars, however, are heavy with alternative symbolic potential, as they could represent any number of pairings in this tale: Samson's eyes, the two relationships he has prior to Delilah, Samson's parents, the dually matched Samson and Delilah, even Samson and God. Bal's reading, in this case, limits such possibilities, but the conclusion that she reaches, that "Delilah has not betrayed him. She has helped him to be reborn" (60) is true for a different reason. Samson's suicide is quintessentially masochistic. Within it lie the paradoxes inherent in the masochistic tradition: Samson is simultaneously active and passive, heroic and victimized, in control, uncontrollable, and fully controlled.

More importantly, Samson, with God's approval, is primarily responsible for the pain that he has experienced and is about to experience and, thus, wholeheartedly embraces it. He finally finds, for himself, the continuity that masochism, and eroticism in general, promises; he becomes Bataille's subject matter, because "discontinuous beings that we are, death means continuity of being" (13). The sensuality of death is the ultimate erotic climax and it is the ideal culmination of the struggle between continuity and discontinuity that underscores our understanding of taboos, transgressions, and sexual perversions as Bataille reads them. Delilah, then, is not a traitor, but rather the means to Samson's fantastic erotic end. The rebirth that Bal

conceives of as one that leads to "imprisonment and powerlessness, shortsightedness, symbolized in his blinding and womanlessness" (61) is a myth that renders all participants passive and unintentionally victimized. By placing this tale in a masochistic framework, though, we uncover a narrative that consists of two (Samson and Delilah) very active characters that seek out their desired positions and work to attain them. Samson's construction of Delilah enables him to live out his fantasies in their most extreme form, legitimizing his position as the founding father of masochism and justifying Severin's romantic longing a relationship reminiscent of this tale.

Divided and Conquered: Theoretical Interjections

Should we approach masochism from Samson's final end, we can trace important and overlapping ideologies within the sexological approach to masochism that has dictated its terms from the nineteenth-century onward. As prominent sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing so tellingly suggests, "the desire to be killed was indeed the ultimate consequence of masochism, just as murder for lust was the ultimate form of sadism" (Oosterhuis 267). The simplicity of this approach, in some ways, betrays the complexities of both impulses. Indeed, it also suggests that sadism and masochism are always intimately tied together—a claim that this dissertation actively works against. By declaring Sacher-Masoch the namesake of "masochism," and the Marquis de Sade the namesake of "sadism," Krafft-Ebing brings forth a completely new discourse about the nature of sexuality and, more importantly, sexual perversity. Harry Oosterhuis rightly explains Krafft-Ebing's approach: "the differentiation of outward behavior versus mental experience and imagination was essential. Masochism differed from mere flagellation, he emphasized; masochists did not desire to experience actual physical pain, but they derived pleasure from the

inner feeling of being dominated and abused. This perversion was all about imagination and fantasy" (60). Interested in the motivations and circumstances fostering the behavior, Krafft-Ebing makes broad, sweeping generalizations about what constitutes normal sexual behavior: "He explained that sadism and masochism were inherent in normal male and female sexuality, the former being of an active nature, the latter passive and submissive. They were the most extreme forms of sexual hyperesthesia: sadism, at bottom, was a quantitative extension of the normal sexual psychology of males, while masochism was an exaggeration of the female sexual nature" (Oosterhuis 64). Krafft-Ebing, by locating a measure of cruelty and humiliation in various aspects of sexual relations, actively establishes a spectrum by which more extreme aberrations could be gauged. His equation of aggression with masculinity and submission with femininity, while clearly problematic for twenty-first century readers, accurately reflects one set of presumptions about gender that infiltrated sexology as a field.

Sigmund Freud, taking his definitional cue from Krafft-Ebing, acknowledges the "normalcy" underneath masculine sadistic tendencies in his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1924): "the sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of *aggressiveness*—a desire to subjugate; the biological significance of it seems to lie in the need for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing" (252). For Freud, sadism is the more understandable and socially acceptable perversion in the pairing; men are, naturally, the aggressors and sadism, then, becomes an easily explainable and understandable exaggeration of perfectly natural impulses. In fact, he uses sadism as means of defining masochism, famously claiming that "masochism is nothing more than an extension of sadism turned round upon the subject's own self, which thus, to begin with, takes the place of the sexual object" (252). The primacy of sadism, then, for both sexologists and psychoanalysts encourages approaches to

masochism that identify it as a perversion primarily in men. Based upon the idea that a degree of submission is an expected, if not required part of female sexuality and identity, excessive submission on behalf of men is cause for an aberrant label. Indeed, this basic premise is one of the primary overlaps between sexological and psychoanalytical approaches to masochism.

The historical importance of male subjugation in courtship rituals leads many sexual theorists or sexologists, like Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis, to rely on the premise that masochistic tendencies manifest themselves in men; according to Ellis, perhaps unexpectedly, the display of subjection on behalf of the male is an intrinsic and necessary part of heterosexual courtship rituals: "All love…is a kind of slavery. The lover is his mistress's servant; he must be ready to undertake all sorts of risks, to encounter many dangers, to fulfill many unpleasant duties, in order to serve her and gain her favor" (203). Such submission is a part of the long standing and accepted process by which a male woos a female; this form of subjection, though, is balanced out by the anticipated possession of the female, thus validating momentary passivity as little more than a means to an end. As Krafft-Ebing and Ellis point out, masochism as perversion can be traced back to the excessive exaggeration of these tendencies, which loses sight of the motivational possession underneath. For Ellis, specifically, "all sexual deviations involved an imitation of both the actions and the emotions of normal heterosexual courtship and intercourse" (Oosterhuis 71). The temporary subjection of the male is set against the perpetual subjection of the female, as Ellis suggests, "masochism is more especially found in men; this may be in part because in women a certain degree of sexual subjection, the primary stage of masochism, may fairly be regarded as almost normal" (207). Thus, women have been historically, scientifically, and psychologically approached as possessing an acceptable, innate masochism.

The notion that masochism is an intrinsic and expected aspect of female identity is surfaces in virtually all transhistorical discourses about masochism. Of course, the diagnosis of "masochism" as deviant falls upon men who cultivate a specifically feminine sexual satisfaction. As Freud writes of the Wolfman, "he understood now that active was the same as masculine, while passive was the same as feminine" (416). Equating femininity with passivity yields a logical correlation, then, between femininity and masochism. As Juliet Mitchell further outlines, "the masochist…wants to be in a female situation. Behind 'moral' masochism, too, is the wish to be punished by the father which is close to the wish to have a passive (feminine) sexual relation with him…Masochism is 'feminine' in whichever sex it occurs" (115). The association between femininity and masochism plays a pivotal role in psychoanalytical approaches to both women and masochists. As a result, Freudian psychoanalysis consistently suggests that female passivity, an ideal and inherent part of femininity, is itself pleasantly masochistic. Women—at least the good ones—relish their naturally passive position, being on the receiving end of the always active, always male pursuit of sex. Accordingly, Marie Bonaparte, a passionate adherent of Freud's suggests, "woman is biologically doomed to suffer" (170). Of course, such claims inspire vehement responses. Twenty years later, Kate Millett in her groundbreaking *Sexual Politics* (1970) critiques such Freudian sexual politics by suggesting "the notion that women's role in coitus is passive and therefore masochistic, its only delight in enduring pain, while a very revealing projection of masculine attitude toward the female situation in intercourse, is unlikely to be the source of further wisdom" (195). Despite Millett's acknowledgement that Freud speaks of sexual politics as they are, not necessarily as they ought to be, she is still driven to read psychoanalysis as prescriptive, and not just descriptive. Millett's awareness of the misogyny within psychoanalytical approaches to female sexuality is apt, but her dismantling of this

misogynistic approach to female sexuality misses a broader point: the compulsion to disassociate masochism from femininity reflects contemporary distaste for masochistic tendencies and bolsters an approach to masochism that still reads it as a deviant perversion. Rather, it is far more useful to consider the ways in which masochism could be a vital element in non-gendered human experience. This dissertation argues for the universality of ordinary masochistic experiences, ultimately transcending previously divisive gender delineations.

One of the first difficulties in this endeavor lies in the way that both psychoanalysts and sexologists have been intensely reluctant to separate masochism from what they perceived as its counterpart, sadism. Ellis dedicates a chapter in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* to the conglomeration "Algolagnia (Sadism and Masochism)," writing that the merging of two impulses is "psychologically… sound" (199). Despite definitive distinctions between the two impulses, there is a profoundly consistent pairing of the two. Indeed, Ellis declares, "clinically, they often exist separately…and though it may be rare to find an element of sadism in the pure masochist, it is common to find an element of masochism in the sadist" (199). While Ellis is more overt than his contemporaries in differentiating between sadism and masochism, he still sees them as part and parcel of a broader grouping of perversions. Freud, too, speaks of the inseparability of the two impulses; approaching sadism and masochism as a singular perversion, rather than two distinct sets of behaviors, Freud actively suggests that sadism and masochism coexist co-dependently:

> The most remarkable feature of this perversion is that its active and passive forms are habitually found to occur together in the same individual. A person who feels pleasure in producing pain in someone else in a sexual relationship is also capable of enjoying as pleasure any pain, which he may himself derive from sexual

> relations. A sadist is always at the same time a masochist, although the active or the passive aspect of the perversion may be the more strongly developed in him and may represent his predominant sexual activity. ("Three Essays" 252–3)

Later, sexologist Albert Eulenberg who acknowledges the important differences between them, reinforces the idea that that, "'sadism' and 'masochism' are therefore mutually exclusive opposites in theory only; in truth they are closely related aberrations which, like so many apparent antitheses, are to be found joined near each other in the same individual" (16).

More modern theorists, though, have worked to debunk the mythology that linked sadism with masochism. In what may be considered the seminal theoretical work on masochism in the twentieth-century, Gilles Deleuze outlines the distinctions between the two sexual impulses by highlighting their means and motivations: "a genuine sadist could never tolerate a masochistic victim…neither would the masochist tolerate a truly sadistic torturer" (40–1). For the sadist, the sexual pleasure inherent in sadistic behavior lies in the complete destruction of his/her victim; the masochist, however, crafts and coerces his/her torturer into that role. Despite the impulse to believe that sadism is active and masochism passive, both the sadist and the masochist are active participants in their own fantasies; thus, the masochistic complex and the sadistic complex are complete unto themselves. As Anita Phillips so fervently argues, "Sade's victims do not agree to their tortures and mutilations – if they did they would cease to fulfill their role. The masochist cannot impose himself by force; the true sadist must" (66). Echoing the differences that Deleuze reveals, Phillips further clarifies the nuances of sadistic and masochistic tendencies, all of which prevent the two from coexisting: "The sadist has to know that he is on top in a literal way, while the masochist is more sophisticated, a manipulator. Both want to direct the show, the first by force, the second by persuasion" (11–12). Because the sadist is in clear control of his/her victims,

and the masochist is at the mercy of another, it is easy to presume that the masochist's position is entirely passive. Yet, as Victor Taylor further articulates, "the pleasure does not come entirely from the whip, but from the masochist's manipulation of the hand holding the whip" (65). The constant, cross-textual repetition of various forms of the word "manipulation" speaks to its prominence in the masochistic arrangement. Importantly, it is this act of coercion and construction that enables the masochist to remain in full and complete control over his/her masochism. Indeed, it is only when Wanda steps *outside* of the role clearly and articulately carved out for her by Severin that his pleasure and satisfaction are compromised.

Taking his cue even more explicitly from Deleuze, Slavoj Žižek further articulates the primary difference between sadism and masochism:

> Masochism…is made to the measure of the victim: it is the victim (the servant in the masochistic relationship) who initiates a contract with the Master (woman), authorizing her to humiliate him in any way she considers appropriate (within the terms defined by the contract) and binding himself to act 'according to the whims of the sovereign lady', as Sacher-Masoch put it. It is the servant, therefore, who writes the screenplay – that is, who actually pulls the strings and dictates…he stages his own servitude. (91–2)

This explanation speaks to the critical misstep of sexologists and psychoanalysts alike: the presumption that playing a passive role is an inherently passive act. Within the submission that masochists crave is the pursuit of a stage on which to perform that submission and a partner with whom to enact that fantasy. Both Samson and Severin are active participants in the construction of their own masochistic fantasies: each man chooses his mistress and institutionalizes his terms. In many ways, it is the range of the role of the masochist— simultaneously active and

submissive—that inspires Phillips's celebratory *A Defense of Masochism*. The principle claim on which Phillips maps out her defense occupies a vital position in the formulation of this dissertation: "[Masochism] has signally failed to defend itself as a human tendency, resisting reclamation, generalization, the movements of empowerment and integration that have transformed and enlarged views across the century…A century after Krafft-Ebing, masochism is still defined as a perversion, and masochists share their dubious distinction with a mixed bag of companions, from necrophiliacs to beast festishists" (7). Rightfully, though discouragingly, suggesting that masochism is still approached as deviant, Phillips attempts to recuperate it from the still relevant aberrant diagnoses of the nineteenth-century. The love letter to masochism that Phillips writes is a celebration of far more positive approaches to and interpretations of masochism.

At her most innovative, Phillips links the creative staging of the masochist's fantasy to the crafting of literature: "Masochists implant ideas and fire the imaginations of others to draw them into their own visions of eroticism, so there is a strong capacity to formulate and plot and characterize—elements essential to the writing of novels" (21). The stage on which the masochist enacts his fantasy is directly parallel to the text crafted by the novelist. Žižek, too, embraces the same sentiment, focusing on the importance of the fictive element within the masochistic fantasy: "Sacher-Masoch, at every level, is about fiction, and the lived life is a sophisticated, daring manipulation of reality. And masochistic experience, too, is a lived fiction, not sexological case history: any reading of it as such misses its fictive core, is a misreading or literalization. The masochist is a conscious manipulator, not a victim" (19). The comparison between the masochist and the novelist might initially seem to necessitate a leap in logic, but the

fantasy crafted by the masochist and the worlds constructed by the writer have, for Phillips and Žižek, the same foundations.

Those foundations are, in many ways, the underlying tenets of this dissertation. Contemporary scholars of masochism often attempt to recuperate it from the depths of the institution and the bedroom. In *Sadomasochism in Everyday Life* (1990), Lynn Chancer's seminal examination of sadomasochism as "a contemporary symbol of transition and struggle" (31), she explores the ways in which sadistic and masochistic power dynamics can be located in "the structures of everyday life in the family, sexual and nonsexual" (30). Chancer carves out an approach to sadism and masochism on an individual level and on a broader systemic level. While her reading actively and productively repositions sadomasochism as a common entity, the assumption that "the sadists" are "at the top of the hierarchy" (214), is part of what this dissertation situates itself against. Indeed, masochism's way out, so to speak, of deviant marginalization is a public acknowledgment of the empowering possibilities that it encourages.

As Nick Mansfield explains, "I do not believe that masochism is a condition to which its adherents are condemned, nor do I believe that it is a mere lifestyle choice. Masochism is a cultural and historical formation, and is easy to choose or reject as any other of our forms of subjectivity, sexuality or ontology" (16). Mansfield's claim to define masochism as a "cultural and historical formation" is a useful way of reorganizing approaches to masochism; indeed, novelists have approached masochism as an empowering form of "subjectivity, sexuality or ontology" at the same moment that it is being clinically condemned in the case-study. Although early sexologists and psychoanalysts deem masochism a gender-specific *perversion*, novelists writing at the same time are actively presenting readers with an alternative approach to masochism—one that celebrates its versatility and inevitability as part of various human

relationships. Instead of relegating masochism to institutions, brothels and case studies, authors like Charlotte Brontë, George Moore, D.H. Lawrence, and Jean Rhys provide representations of masochism that are far more ordinary and surface in various everyday experiences. In each of the chapters that follow, I analyze the representation of different forms of masochistic relationships: courtships and partnerships in *Villette* (1860), unrequited lesbian desire and its recalibration as religious zeal in *A Drama in Muslin* (1886), surprising marital partnerships in *The Rainbow* (1915), and an adulterous love triangle in *Quartet* (1928). As Jean Laplanche articulates in his analysis of Freud, the three cites of masochism are "the body," "fantasy," and "interpersonal/intrapersonal relations" (205). The latter two arenas through which masochism manifests itself are explicitly experimented with in the novels analyzed. Their authors work against prescriptive diagnoses of masochism as deviant, instead portraying masochism in a variety of forms, all of which are presented as an inevitable part of everyday life.

Chronology and conventions are particularly important for the grouping of texts in this project; the literary works analyzed allow for the construction of a transhistorical lineage of masochistic tendencies that accounts for important stages in the demarcation of representations of masochism. As I progress from the beginning of the Victorian period to the height of modernism, certain contextual and narrative features necessarily evolve and influence the presentation and reception of the relationships in question. In the world of *Villette*, representations of sexuality and aberrant behavior are coded relative to remnants of Gothic conventions and mid-nineteenth-century concerns with propriety. Moving forward to the case of *A Drama in Muslin*, though there are slightly more explicit non-normative expressions, such insinuations are ultimately trumped by the guise of religious devotion. Public participation in discussions of psychoanalysis and sexology bolster the presentation of marriage in *The Rainbow*,

which contains more assertive reactions against prescriptive approaches to sexual and psychological behavior. Finally, the triangulation of masochistic desire that takes center stage in *Quartet* attests to the self-aware participation of all parties involved, a far more overt acknowledgement of a masochistic consciousness. This dissertation approaches texts that, by virtue of their context, content, and readership, prove pivotal in the development of theories and ideologies on the still controversial topic of masochism.

In Chapter 2, I discuss Lucy Snowe's experimentation with different sadistic and masochistic positions before finding a mutually masochistic partner in M. Paul. With Ginevra Fanshawe, Lucy plays cruel sadist, taking extreme enjoyment in the abuse she dishes out. Although Lucy pretends that her encounters with Ginevra are an unavoidable annoyance, readers are quick to realize that Lucy's approach to the young girl is filled with sexual tension. With Dr. John, however, Lucy tries on the hat of the traditional courted female, who relishes in a seemingly inactive position as the object of courtship. Her relationship with Dr. John is her experiment with the kind of inherent female masochism psychoanalysts and sexologists identify as organic to the female experience. She places Dr. John into a position of supreme authority over certain aspects of her life and she lets her imagination run wild as a result. Ultimately, both of these relationships fail; the satisfaction Lucy yields from them is fleeting and insubstantial. These two relationships, though, prepare her for the reciprocal, mutually satisfying, and decidedly non-gendered masochistic relationship that she engages in with M. Paul at the end of the text. Lucy is able to create a partnership with M. Paul precisely because of her previous trial-and-error experiences; she is able to bridge two virtually opposing roles because she finds a lover who is equally well rounded and willing to engage in the kind of masochistic role-play that Lucy demands. This chapter is a discussion of Lucy's initially unsuccessful attempts as rather one-

dimensional sexed and gendered role play and the later development of a more fulfilling, mutually masochistic engagement that revolves around theatricality, suspension, and anticipation. M. Paul encourages Lucy to link the two worlds that she has previously flirted with—the conventionally female masochistic realm and the conventionally male sadistic realm—so that both Lucy and M. Paul respectively function as the abuser and the abused, the dominator and the dominated; and, though their relationship is not quite equally balanced—we are, of course, in the middle of the nineteenth-century—it is all the more exciting for Lucy. Her prior failed experiments come to fruition in the all-encompassing affair that she has with M. Paul, an affair that fundamentally encourages Lucy's masochistic tendencies to trump her sadistic inclinations.

George Moore's *A Drama in Muslin* is the focal point of Chapter 3. In the midst of a group of young girls on the cusp of adulthood, Cecilia Cullen is perpetually out of place; physically marginalized by her hunchback, religiously marginalized by her staunch Protestantism, and emotionally marginalized by her intense lesbian desires, Cecilia never quite fits in with those around her. Her love for the novel's heroine, Alice, consumes her and Cecilia finds herself unable to control the intensity or expression of those feelings. The build-up of her frustrated desire finds an outlet vis-à-vis religious conversion and its accompanying discourse. At the novel's close, the once possible fulfillment of her desire for Alice is overshadowed by the ecstasy of her sacrifice. Renouncing her love for Alice, Cecilia paints herself as the penultimate martyr and relishes in the abuse of God. Such a gesture enables God to take the place of Alice, whose primary position earlier in Cecilia's life demands reconfiguration. Cecilia's account of her grief, her pain, her sin, and her love echoes the language with which earlier female mystics describe their relationship with Christ. The prime example, St. Teresa of Avila, writes of her relationship with God in terms that foreground Cecilia's own religious masochism. A series of

her formative texts, circulating during the late nineteenth-century, allow Moore to frame Cecilia's extreme religious conversion in terms that echo St. Teresa's. This chapter approaches Cecilia Cullen as a doubly marginalized young girl and as the prototype of Victorian mysticism, a representation of the queer transition to devout religiosity in all its masochistic glory.

The transition from the nineteenth-century to the twentieth-century speaks to the way in which contemporary discourses about sexuality have necessarily shifted. Contemporary readers of *The Rainbow*, the textual subject of Chapter 4, could approach the novel with an awareness of public conversations about sexuality. That awareness means that Lawrence is writing to an audience far more informed than earlier generations of readers. While critics have attacked Lawrentian sexual politics, led notably by Kate Millett, the sexual and emotional philosophy that surfaces in *The Rainbow*, which chronicles several generations of the Brangwen family and the love and lust therein, lacks the misogyny that is often ascribed to Lawrence; husband and wife in *The Rainbow* equally embrace and use masochism as a means of intense interpersonal interaction. Experimenting with the portrayal of generational marriages, Lawrence approaches Tom and Lydia with a more reserved hand in terms of the masochistic tendencies of the couple. The second generational marriage—Will and Anna's—is marked by a keen consciousness of the need for mutual masochism in order to make the marriage succeed. Anna and Will are remarkably well matched and, in many ways, could be considered Lawrence's marital ideal. In some ways echoing some of Freud's circulating lexicon about love—despite his very public distaste for psychoanalysis and psychoanalysts alike—Lawrence approaches this duo as the epitome of balance, based upon the recognition of and response to intense emotional engagement and pain. Put into direct conversation with the flat and failed masochistic experimentation of their daughter, Ursula, Will and Anna are truly a unique representation in the Lawrentian canon. This chapter

traces the three generations in the novel and the ways in which Lawrence's portrait of marital success is contingent upon the recognition of marriage as a wholly accepted, socially sanctioned form of masochism.

Moving farther into the twentieth-century, marriage becomes a far more complicated institution; and, for Jean Rhys, duos become threesomes. In Chapter 5, I work with *Quartet*, which follows the seduction of young, lonely Marya at the hands of manipulative married couple, the Heidlers. Marya, left virtually widowed by the imprisonment of her husband, is left at the hands of Mr. and Mrs. Heidler who actively pursue her, positioning her as a pawn in the middle of their marriage. Both Mr. Heidler and Mrs. Heidler play an active part in Marya's seduction, her contentment, and her misery. The public awareness and ensuing popularity of sexology and psychoanalysis allows readers to conclude that Marya and the Heidlers, like Samson, are fully aware of masochistic possibilities and the consequences of their sexual and romantic decisions. Further, Marya uses her masochistic position as a means of empowerment; given narrative authority to ascribe thoughts and emotions to other characters, Marya uses these moments to bolster a presentation of herself as unavoidably degraded and abused. Marya is complicit in the crafting and unfolding of her fantasies, however hurtful and upsetting they may be. That complicity, intimately tied to her masochistic experiences, gives Marya a tremendous amount of agency in the novel.

This dissertation ends by looking ahead to Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers*, which interestingly returns to the enactment of more literal sadistic and masochistic fantasies. Tourists Colin and Mary find themselves lost in Venice, becoming the objects of desire for an abusive husband and his excessively masochistic wife. The quartet in the novel evokes images of Rhys's novel while the gothic elements that surface in the allure of the strangers tie the text back

to *Villette*. Reminiscent of some explicit passages from *Story of O*, Caroline's enraptured narrative tells of the unfolding of her masochistic tendencies within the confines of her marriage and at the behest of husband Robert's strength and power. Despite the critical claim consistently made that prioritizes Robert's sadism as the dominant sentiment in the novel, McEwan subtly ascribes power and authority to Caroline, reminding readers that it is the masochist who pulls the strings. Possessing the wish for death that Krafft-Ebing initially declares the logical end of masochistic fantasies, Caroline finds that Robert simply cannot kill her. They find a surrogate in Colin and the two set the stage for the ultimate fulfillment of Caroline's desires by proxy. McEwan's novella suggests that contemporary novelists have moved beyond the desire to reposition masochism within the realm of the ordinary. The sophisticated and subtle masochisms of the first four novels investigated in this dissertation are replaced by an explicit prioritization of physical and sexual pain. The extreme violence in *The Comfort of Strangers* fully explains Phillips's assertion that sexualized masochism has yet to defend itself against clinical and criminal diagnoses. Of course, it is absolutely integral to this project that McEwan's portrait of masochism as destruction be considered in direct contrast to the more empowering representations of masochism produced by Brontë, Moore, Lawrence, and Rhys. It is precisely the period bookended by *Villette* and *Quartet* that allowed for the creation of more inclusive and adventurous theories that celebrate masochism, the nostalgia for which lies at the heart of *The Comfort of Strangers*.

Notes

1. Writing about the disparity between sadism and masochism, Deleuze highlights the importance of wholly masochistic partnerships: “Whenever the type of woman torturer is observed in the masochistic setting, it becomes obvious that she is neither a genuine sadist nor a pseudosadist but something quite different. She does indeed belong essentially to masochism, but without realizing it as a subject; she incarnates instead the element of ‘inflicting pain’ in an exclusively masochistic situation. Masoch and his heroes are constantly in search of a peculiar and extremely rare feminine ‘nature.’ The subject in masochism needs a certain ‘essence’ of masochism embodied in the nature of a woman who renounces her own subjective masochism; he definitely has no need of another subject, i.e., the sadistic subject” (43). While Wanda initially needs to be coerced into the position of authority that Severin grants her, she progressively begins to embody the elements necessary to truly torture Severin. Deleuze writes of this rarity: “Thus the novel culminates in sadism: Wanda goes off with the cruel Greek toward new cruelties, while Severin himself turns sadist, or, as he puts it, becomes the ‘hammer’” (49). Apollo, however, is the true sadist in the novel and therefore, he does exist outside of the masochistic unit that Wanda and Severin build for themselves. He needs no coercion into cruelty, he relishes in the pain and agony – and certainly not in the pleasure – of his victim.

2. While Sacher-Masoch relies most heavily on the connotative powers of imagery associated with Samson and Delilah, the reference here to Marsyas is just one of many other allusions to historical and literary figures, which help Severin, and Sacher-Masoch, to establish a lineage of masochism that extends throughout a wide historical trajectory.

3. Sacher-Masoch and the sexologist who come after him always conceive of masochism in purely heterosexual terms. If we are dealing with a male masochist, we find ourselves with a

female dominatrix, and vice versa. It is important to note that Severin is concerned with the nobility of the love of a woman on behalf of a man.

4. Moreover, Freud, in his first essay that deals indirectly with masochism "On Universal Tendency to Debasement in Sphere of Love" (1912), locates the tendencies toward humiliation and debasement in men who experience "psychical impotence," or the "refusal by the executive organs of sexuality to carry out the sexual act, although before and after they may show themselves to be intact and capable of performing the act" (394–5). In his discussion of said tendencies, Freud highlights the dichotomy between two very different types of love: "The whole sphere of love…remains divided in the two directions personified in art as sacred and profane (or animal) love" (397). Freud's terminology, foreshadows Bataille's; it is, of course, profane love—masochism, eroticism—that is the subject of this inquiry.

5. The notion that a man can "correct" the birthing process seems particularly problematic in an analysis that is feminist at its core.

2. Trial and Erotics: Masochistic Experimentation in *Villette*

Lucy Snowe, the critically observant narrator of Charlotte Brontë's *Villette* (1853) declares to her reader at the very end of the text that: "M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life" (461). M. Emanuel/M. Paul leaves for a colonial economic project immediately after his declaration of love and his presentation of his gift of a school to Lucy.[1] His absence, in which Lucy works so that the school—and she—will flourish, is what she speaks of in this passage. She realizes the strange implications of such a statement when she presents it, in question form, to her readers: "Do you scout that paradox?" (461). The paradox here is located within the perceived relation between closeness of one's beloved and consequential happiness: without one the other seems impossible. Although Lucy explains the happiness of those three years as the direct result of her work and her independence, these all prove to be superficially convincing reasons, if convincing at all. What underscores the paradox, however, is a key element of masochism, and a prominent undercurrent in the rest of the novel: the erotic power of anticipation. In *Villette*, happiness is linked to waiting, to the state of perpetually expecting while never quite having those expectations met.[2] For Lucy, that liminal state is eroticized precisely because it is heavily grounded in masochistic possibility.

The potentially confusing nature of this claim is, in many ways, a useful starting point when considering *Villette's* place in Brontë's literary stock. Like many scholars of the Brontë's, Eugenia DeLamotte approaches the novel in relation to its more celebrated predecessor; in her chapter on the novel in *Perils of the Night* (1990), she writes: "Both more grotesquely surrealistic and more bitterly realistic, *Villette*'s images of suffering are more extreme than are those in *Jane Eyre*. Restraint is more recurrent and pervasive; release rare and impermanent" (229). Critics consistently compare Lucy Snowe to Jane Eyre—in much the same vein as they compare M.

Paul to Mr. Rochester—as a means of establishing a lineage of characteristics that Brontë ascribes to her heroines. Consider Miriam Allott's assertion that "Lucy may be thought a younger, feebler sister of Jane" (77), or Heather Glen's suggestion that "If *Shirley* looks back to that shared childhood 'play', *Villette*'s is a narrative of isolation. The voice that speaks at the end of the novel is that of one who survives in a disenchanted world" (135).[3] Both critics fall in line with what seems like the countless number of scholars who compare Brontë heroines, either placing them in a hierarchy of likeability or capability, like Allott, or establishing points of contention between them, like Glen.

Scholars who rely on this lineage also rely, like DeLamotte, on the role that suffering plays in virtually all of Brontë's texts. The distinctions between the types and degrees of anguish, however, open up the critical space for a variety of suffering-inflected readings of *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Shirley* (1849), *Villette* (1853), and *The Professor* (1857).[4] DeLamotte's approach points out that suffering, in at least two of these texts, involves a degree of powerlessness:

> …self-defense and defense against the self are both the same and not the same: once again, but with more consistency than in *Jane Eyre*, the forces of violence outside the heroine are also inner perils, so that her most intimate psychic dramas are dangerously one with the social dramas of the world outside her—a world she is powerless to change. (230)

Yet by considering the control inherent in a relished position of pain as a way of approaching Lucy Snowe, readers can understand her as a significantly more powerful and satisfied heroine than previously characterized.

Over the course of the novel, Lucy Snowe experiments with the possibilities of playfully sadistic and traditionally feminine masochistic relationships; she plays very different roles in the

first sexualized relationships that she experiences with Ginevra Fanshawe and with Graham/Dr. John Bretton.[5] These two disparate dynamics enable Lucy to dabble in role-playing in order to get to know herself. Lucy plays dominatrix to Ginevra and submissive to Dr. John but never quite finds her efforts matched nor herself contented. Because her relationship with Ginevra is her experiment with sadism, Lucy is verbally and physically abusive, simultaneously pretending that her disdain for Ginevra is not fraught with sexual excitement. Conversely, Lucy plays the courted female with Dr. John, savoring the intensity of her objectified position. Perhaps predictably, neither Lucy's tryst with Dr. John nor her flirtations with Ginevra turn into a fruitful relationship. Instead, these two engagements allow Lucy to try out different roles that ultimately allow her to establish a uniquely equivalent partnership with M. Paul. Her sustainable measure of satisfaction is contingent upon finding a lover who is equally well rounded and willing to engage in the kind of role-playing that Lucy demands. All throughout the novel, Lucy tries on a series of roles relative to those around her. Ultimately, she is looking for someone who can anticipate, support, challenge, counter, and inspire those roles. It is with M. Paul, then, that Lucy is able to fully embrace her most nuanced and progressive masochistic tendencies.

Even contemporary critics of the novel discern the ways in which Lucy seems to fit a masochistic model, although the specificity of this discourse is predictably absent from their reviews; an 1853 review from *The Spectator* politely attempts to skirt the issue:

> If it were not too harsh a word to be used of so good a girl as Miss Lucy Snowe, one might almost say that she took a savage delight in refusing to be comforted, in a position indeed of isolation and hardship, but one still that a large experience of mankind and the miseries' incident to the lot of humanity would hardly pronounce to be by comparison either a miserable or a degraded lot. (qtd. in Allott 81–82)

Notably, this reviewer harps on the characterization of Lucy Snowe as "so good a girl" that even insinuating her "savage delight…in a position indeed of isolation and hardship" is too insulting a gesture. The taboo nature of this claim speaks to contemporary views of masochism—or at least, the correlation between pleasure and pain—as a diagnosis, a perversion, a problem; yet, Bronte's portrait of masochism sends an altogether more positive message. Indeed, while the delight that this reviewer speaks of is the focal point of this chapter, Lucy's ultimate engagement with M. Paul suggests that while this position may be one of hardship, it is certainly satisfying.

The company that Lucy keeps in the novel, what undercuts the presentation of her isolation, reveals that theatricality is at the heart of all three of her major relationships. In his "Charlotte Brontë and the Scene of Instruction: Authority and Subversion in *Villette*," Joseph Litvak explores one aspect of the role of theatricality in the novel, making claims about the "assimilation of the theater by the schoolroom" (478). Lucy's direct engagement with theatricality, though, can be more productively approached in sadistic and masochistic terms. Trying out what seem like both ends of the same sexual spectrum, Lucy is actually toying with the kinds of reactions she can get out of a partner. Neither Dr. John nor Ginevra is a suitable partner for Lucy. Dr. John is simply too boring and Ginevra too predictable. It is only through her prolonged, extended interactions with M. Paul that Lucy is able to try on and try out, literally and metaphorically, a new set of exciting parts with a new *partner*; in spite of the inclination to read Lucy's relationships with Ginevra and Dr. John as pairings, they certainly cannot be read as partnerships. As M. Paul challenges Lucy, he subjects her, he dominates her, and he infuriates her, and yet he finds himself in similar positions based upon Lucy's reciprocally challenging behavior. M. Paul encourages Lucy to cultivate more sophisticated and innovative tendencies that had their inchoate roots in her prior engagements with Dr. John and Ginevra so that both

Lucy and M. Paul respectively function as the abuser and the abused, the dominator and the dominated and, as a result, all the more exciting for Lucy. Her prior failed experiments come to fruition in the all-encompassing affair that she has with M. Paul—an affair that eventually allows Brontë to highlight the importance of Lucy's genderless masochistic tendencies in their triumph over her sadistic experiments and her one-dimensional submission.

Doomed to Suffer, or the Bias of Masochism

In "Courtly Love, or Woman as Thing," Slavoj Žižek writes of the requirement of displaced fulfillment, of anticipation, within all true masochistic encounters:

> Masochism…is inherently theatrical: violence is for the most part feigned, and even when it is 'real', it functions as a component of a scene, as part of a theatrical performance. Furthermore, violence is never carried out, brought to its conclusion; it always remains suspended, as the endless repeating of an interrupted gesture. (92)

Žižek bases his reading of masochism on Gilles Deleuze's treatment of masochism in *Coldness and Cruelty*. In the text, Deleuze's intention is to truly distance masochism and sadism by disengaging from the theories of sadomasochism that Freud puts forth: "As soon as we read Masoch we become aware that his universe has nothing to do with that of Sade. Their techniques differ, and their problems, their concerns and their intentions are entirely dissimilar" (13). Deleuze's exploration of both figures and their philosophical legacies reveals two distinct sexual impulses governed by different sets of foundational principles that *never* meet on the same terms. According to Deleuze the sexual pleasure inherent in sadistic behavior lies in the complete absence of pleasure on the victim's behalf, just as the torturer who satisfies the masochist must

be molded, educated, and coerced into such a position of authority. As the introduction to this dissertation articulates, the two models of behavior could not meet in any real way.

Accordingly, both Deleuze and Žižek are interested in the stark differences between sadism and masochism. Despite the impulse to believe that sadism is active and masochism passive, both the sadist and the masochist are active participants in their own fantasies, which become their own worlds; thus, the masochistic complex and the sadistic complex are complete unto themselves. However, a critical, sexologically inflected examination of Lucy Snowe enables readers to distinguish between the type of masochism that Deleuze writes about and the type of masochism that has been traditionally associated with femininity. An adherent to some of Freud's psychoanalytic doctrines, Marie Bonaparte's theories of feminine sexuality highlight what she perceives as the biological roots of female masochism; she writes in *Female Sexuality* (1953) that "in the reproductive functions proper…woman is biologically doomed to suffer. Nature seems to have no hesitation in administering to her strong doses of pain, and she can do nothing but submit passively to the regimen prescribed" (170–171). Bonaparte's insistence on what she perceives as the intrinsic nature of female masochism is furthered by her suggestion, as Nellie L. Thompson summarizes, that "coitus involves a sadistic act of aggression against the female" (358).

Of course, Bonaparte's approach to female masochism relies heavily on the perceived inverse relationship between sadism and masochism that Freud establishes and Deleuze counters. Yet, Bonaparte's theories have been important in shaping critical attitudes toward female sexuality. Even critics interested in problematizing her theories still end up reinforcing some of them; take, for instance, Jessica Benjamin's *The Bonds of Love*, in which she highlights theories like Freud's and Bonaparte's, as well as the difficulty of successfully overhauling them: "Freud

cautioned against the easy equations of femininity with passivity, and masculinity with activity, yet he did in the end conclude that the circuitous path to femininity culminates in the acceptance of passivity" (88). Passivity, as Freud, Bonaparte, and Benjamin suggest is often inscribed in anatomical and biological terms: "Woman is to accept the abrogation of her own will, to surrender the autonomy of her body in childbirth and lactation, to live for another. Her own sexual feelings, with their incipient threat of selfishness, passion, and uncontrollability, are a disturbing possibility that even psychoanalysis seldom contemplates" (Benjamin 89). Although Benjamin seeks to distance herself from her predecessors, she still problematically occupies a space that mimics a negative conception of masochism: "But even in the more common form of masochism—adult ideal love—woman loses herself in the identification with the powerful other who embodies the missing desire and agency" (116). Benjamin's reading of masochism limits its possibilities by presuming that masochism is a coping mechanism—a means to a barely related end—rather than a satisfying end in itself: "I suggest that such a person hopes in a masochistic relationship to overcome her clinging helplessness and separation anxiety even as she simultaneously expresses and gives way to it. Such a person is likely to seek a 'heroic' sadist to submit to…" (119). Like psychoanalysts before and after her, Benjamin adheres to a model of masochism that links it, unquestionably, to sadism; as Deleuze so rightfully suggests, that model is misdirected at best.

The masochistic tendencies that Lucy experiments with in her interactions with Dr. John are, at their most rudimentary, indicative of a traditional, expected feminine passivity as it is articulated by Freud and Bonaparte. An awareness of these unsettling theories, though, encourages readers to approach Lucy's engagement with Dr. John as a condemnation of any notion of an intrinsic female masochism; rather, Lucy's inability to find lasting satisfaction—or

even the illusion of superficial fulfillment—in her flirtation with Dr. John is a testament to the notion that Lucy is simply trying on and trying out this type of conventional masochistic behavior, rather than organically experiencing it.

The masochism that Lucy ultimately embraces is a fundamentally innovative one; instead of bending to a monolithic sense of natural feminine submission, Brontë enables Lucy to experience a genderless masochism that is mirrored in M. Paul. Indeed, one of the most telling examples of this masochism is the set of oft-perplexing circumstances in which the narrative ends; yet Žižek's claim that violence "is always suspended" echoes Deleuze's earlier acknowledgment of the necessary role that anticipation plays in the enactment of masochistic fantasies: "He [the masochist] does not believe in negating or destroying the world nor in idealizing it: what he does is to disavow and thus to suspend it, in order to secure an ideal which is itself suspended in fantasy" (32–33). This notion of suspension is at the heart of Lucy's three happiest years; the ideal of M. Paul's return is literally suspended in fantasy, and, as Deleuze suggests "pleasure is postponed for as long as possible and is thus disavowed" (33). The pleasure of reunion—of the life that Lucy anticipates leading with M. Paul—is suspended for three years; that those three years are filled with such happiness admits the pleasure that Lucy takes in the waiting, in the expectation, in the anticipation, with virtually no regard for the end. The displaced end reinforces the existence of erotic possibilities in the process of elongation through a series of disavowals. It is only during her engagements with M. Paul—and anticipation and displacement therein—that her masochistic tendencies are truly broadened, and, perhaps most importantly, removed from gender-specific categorization.

The Immediacy of Cruelty

According to Lucy's reading of her, Ginevra Fanshawe deserves every harsh quip, mean jab, and cruel gesture that Lucy consistently throws at her. The cruelty that underscores their relationship, however, speaks much more to Lucy's own subject position than it does of any character flaw of Ginevra's. Early on in the novel, Lucy describes Ginevra:

> She must have had good blood in her veins, for never was any duchess more perfectly, radically, unaffectedly *nonchalante* than she: a weak, transient amaze was all she knew of the sensation of wonder. Most of her other faculties seemed to be in the same flimsy condition: her liking and disliking, her love and hate, were more cobweb and gossamer; but she had one thing about her that seemed strong and durable enough, and that was—her selfishness. (79)

"Weak," "flimsy," "transient," and "unaffected" all reappear throughout the text as a testament to the validity of Lucy's initial assessment of Ginevra. These words, too, place Ginevra into direct opposition to Lucy's presentation of herself as strong, sturdy, aware, and intense. Their combative characteristics and positions make Ginevra an object of extreme interest for Lucy, though she often feigns disinterest (and feigns poorly, at that). Lucy conceives of herself as ultimately better than Ginevra; what Ginevra prioritizes, what she says, what she wears, how she acts, who she likes, who she rejects—Lucy believes herself to be far above the sensational and superficial Ginevra Fanshawe. Yet, the reality of Lucy's substantial interest in the girl betrays the veracity of her claims of disinterest.

In spite of her declarations that Ginevra's presence is a nuisance and that she wishes to be rid of the girl, Lucy embraces the role that she plays in her rival's company. While Nancy Armstrong suggests that "Lucy derives pleasure from stimulating the listless Victorian woman"

(111), she does much more than stimulate Ginevra; instead, she is harsh, playing sadistic games with the "listless Victorian woman." The rivalry between Lucy and Ginevra stems from Lucy's initial impression of Ginevra's character when they meet on the ship: she sees Ginevra as possessing "light, careless temperament, and fair, fragile style of beauty, an entire incapacity to endure: they seem to sour in adversity, like small beer in thunder. The man who takes such a woman for his wife, ought to be prepared to guarantee her an existence all sunshine" (51). From the onset of *Villette*, readers interact with a Lucy Snowe who is far from "light, careless…fair, fragile," establishing a tellingly broad distinction between the two. Moreover, endurance, a characteristic of herself that Lucy proudly reminds readers of throughout the novel, is what she tests with her subsequent malicious behavior, all in an effort to force Ginevra to face an existence without sunshine, an existence like her own. Lucy's circumstantial sadism is a reaction to Ginevra's persistent nonchalance.

In their classic reading of the novel in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar write that Lucy is "from first to last a woman *without*—outside society, without parents or friends, without physical or mental attractions, without money or confidence or health" (400). As a direct result, in her narration, Lucy's explanation of Ginevra is always underscored by its overt opposition to Lucy's characterization of herself: "Work or suffering found her listless and dejected, powerless and repining; but gaiety expanded her butterfly's wings, lit up their gold-dust and bright spots, made her flash like a gem, and flush like a flower" (132). Lucy knows nothing of gaiety but instead thrives in situations that necessitate work and suffering.[6] She constantly reminds the reader that Ginevra Fanshawe is no Lucy Snowe; we are perpetually placed in a position to take sides and, by siding with Lucy, we are complicit in inflicting some fairly heavy wounds on Ginevra. Lucy, with the reader in cahoots, simply wants

to break Ginevra. This desire, on Lucy's behalf, is an intrinsic part of sadism, according to Krafft-Ebing, who writes that "sadism is the experience of sexual pleasurable sensations (including orgasm) produced by acts of cruelty, bodily punishment afflicted on one's own person or when witness in others, be they animals or human beings. It may also consist of an innate desire to humiliate, hurt, wound, or even destroy others" (152). Krafft-Ebing claims that all intentional cruelty—akin to the cruelty with which Lucy often approaches Ginevra—is sadistic in nature. Lucy's sadistic experimentation manifests itself in her perpetual interest in humiliating, tormenting, and wounding Ginevra—yet, such trials prove themselves ultimately unfulfilling for Lucy. Further, part of this presentation of sadism is complicated by Lucy's lack of ultimate satisfaction. Readers are aware that Lucy's inability to find fulfillment in the torment that she incites suggests that such sadistic behavior is primarily a performance that yields little power or satisfaction.

Ginevra initially takes to familiar deprecating banter with Lucy, responding to Lucy's early cruelty by calling her "old Crusty—old Diogenes" (81), yet it is Lucy who moves beyond the originally harmless mocking tone, embracing more direct insults: "Take yourself away. I have no pleasure in looking at you or your *parure*" (81). Lucy's abrupt dismissal of Ginevra incites the slightest reaction as Ginevra "seemed taken by surprise" (81), which betrays her oft-unphased exterior. Since Lucy measures her potential satisfaction by her ability to rouse and unsettle Ginevra, once Lucy sees that she can get a reaction out of Ginevra, she works to find more ways to sting her. Of course, the rivalry between the two women becomes explicitly tangible because Dr. John, foolishly infatuated with Ginevra, constantly—though perhaps unknowingly or unintentionally—compares the two: "'She takes cold so easily,' he pursued, looking at Ginevra with extreme kindness. 'She is delicate; she must be cared for: fetch her a

shawl'" (137). By deeming Ginevra delicate, Dr. John simultaneously deems Lucy sturdy; Lucy's durability—usually a characteristic that Lucy claims proudly—turns into her weakness here, whereas Ginevra's perpetual fragility proves advantageous in the sphere of courtship.[7]

For Ginevra, such an advantage often takes the form of being objectified, a subject position that Lucy secretly envies.[8] Lucy declares, "By True Love was Ginevra followed: never could she be alone" (147). Ginevra is constantly being wooed, both by male suitors and by worshipping girls in the school. Paradoxically, Lucy is simultaneously desirous of the position that Ginevra possesses in courtship—taking countless opportunities to remind readers of her solitude and its melancholy ramifications—and of being the one who courts her. She gives Ginevra gifts of sweet rolls and water declaring that she does not know why she chooses Ginevra to be the recipient of them, but readers can read the contradiction of her position in her generosity. Just as she explains the contradictions of her views of Dr. John as the difference between "the outdoor and indoor view" (186), there are two very different sides to her relationship with Ginevra. DeLamotte writes, "From one angle this is a picture of Lucy tormented by a social superior who fails to perceive her as an independent subject. From another, it is a picture of Lucy tormented by selfishness—by the self-absorption that results from her own self-erasure, her collusion in the fiction that she is nobody" (235). Although DeLamotte reads Lucy's relationship with Ginevra in complicated, almost enigmatic ways, it seems like a critical misstep to presume that Lucy's interactions with Ginevra imply, at any point, a gesture of self-erasure. Jealous of the attention that Ginevra receives from men, hateful of the gifts that she has always been and will always be given, Lucy's cruelty seems easily, though perhaps reductively, explained.

However, Ginevra's constant presence in Lucy's life and the momentary niceties that form part of the foundation of their relations cannot be quite so neatly pinned. Lucy's last-minute role in the school's play opposite Ginevra speaks directly to Lucy's conflicted feelings toward Ginevra. As Lucy recounts the play for her readers, she writes: "Ginevra was tender; how could I be otherwise than chivalric?" (131). This phrasing begs questions about the way that Lucy perceives their relationship. Lucy complements Ginevra's tenderness with chivalry. Yet, in the real world, Lucy's efforts, attempts to balance out their inequalities, are also attempts to undercut Ginevra's privilege, whether that privilege is physical, economic, or social; they are also efforts to remind Lucy (and her readers) of her mental acuity and superiority over Ginevra. But, more importantly, the play—Lucy's position as one of the men whom Ginevra's character is coquetting—is mimetic, as Lucy finds herself torn between her envy of Ginevra and her desire for her.

As many critics have pointed out, this play is the apex in the triangulated relationship between Lucy, Ginevra, and Dr. John. Attempting to highlight some of the intricacies of Lucy's involvement with Ginevra, Sara Putzell-Korab, in "Passion between Women in the Victorian Novel," suggests that "Lucy behaves almost like a gentleman towards Ginevra, fetching the younger woman her shawls and supporting her when they walk" (188), eventually leading to her conclusion that Lucy's "passionate nature can find release in relation to either a man or a woman" (189). Of course, Lucy's games do tell us that she is interested in both men and woman, as Joseph Litvak reiterates, "Many critics have noted the lesbian overtones of her performance" (480).[9] Yet, the revelation of such lesbian overtones can prevent readers from realizing that Lucy's interest in men and women is importantly multidimensional; she uses both men and women in order to discover what pleases her, what she can get away with, and what kind of

reactions she can incite in others. Because this utilization is actually Lucy's primary sexual expression in the novel, readers can approach Lucy's apparent indiscriminate gender choice as her prioritization of other characteristics in her pursuits. Further, the flexibility and adaptability of Lucy's desire foreshadows her eventual reciprocated desire for M. Paul and the consistently shifting relationship that ensues.

Granted, her cruelty toward Ginevra is undoubtedly sexually framed, especially when it takes a physical turn: "obliging me, indeed, sometimes to put an artful pin in my girdle by way of protection against her elbow" (310). More than simply "protection against her elbow," Lucy's jab of the pin is the physical manifestation of her stinging words and of Lucy's desire to, so to speak, prick the girl. Although Lucy maintains that Ginevra is asking for a bit of violence in response to her unbearable closeness, it is obvious that Lucy's conflicting desires to hate and to love Ginevra simultaneously express themselves in all sort of telling ways.[10] In this case, Lucy's pinches and prods are gestures of her sadistic paradox.

Sexologist Wilhelm Stekel writes in his monumental two-volume set *Sadism and Masochism* (1929) that active cruelty is an inherent part of sadism: "For cruelty, there must be the consciousness of cruelty, joy in another's hurt, delight in a sense of power over another's life" (27). Lucy's cruelty is directly connected to the last part of this passage. Feeling herself tied to Fate, and suffering at its hand, Lucy uses her cruelty to have some effect on the life of a girl who is at times her friend, an object of her desire, an object of her reproach, and her perceived rival. The desire to be Ginevra and the desire to possess her essentially become inseparable aspects of Lucy's basic sadistic instinct: to get any expressive reaction out of Ginevra. Her cruelest moments spark the biggest reaction from Ginevra, what Lucy relies on to remind us, and herself, of her own reality. The sadist in Lucy is an experiment in interpersonal relations. Based

on the notable lack of personal history on Lucy's behalf, it is clear that she initially has no idea what to expect from a companion, friend, or lover, and gauges her own effectiveness by the reactions of Ginevra Fanshawe. DeLamotte reads Lucy's inability to establish a concrete identity as an integral part of her relationship with Ginevra: "For Charlotte Brontë, the psychological danger of this extreme self-abnegation is one with the moral danger of self-absorbed egotism: a paradoxical identity manifest in Lucy's relationship with another inmate of the convent, Ginevra" (235). By provoking the girl, Lucy attempts to reaffirm the existence of her own selfhood. Her desire for immediate gratification can be viewed as her need for immediate affirmation of autonomy and substance vis-à-vis Ginevra's visible reactions; she wants her words, gestures, and actions to inspire in Ginevra an unmediated, unsettled reaction. The impossibility of maintaining a relationship based upon reactions with someone who is fundamentally uninterested in reacting, cannot possibly be fulfilling for Lucy.[11] As a result, she gives up her flirtation with and performance of sadism in favor of a more traditional behavioral model, an attempt to buy into social codes of more appropriate female behavior.

Anticipation as Aphrodisiac

As her trials with Ginevra reveal the sadist in Lucy, so Lucy's relationship with Dr. John provides a glimpse at Lucy Snowe as the conventional female masochist. With Dr. John, she gives up a degree of power and control and temporarily relishes the subjected position into which she willingly places herself.[12] The ripest example of Lucy's conventional masochistic tendencies with regards to Dr. John is their written correspondence, as early as the first letter that he ever sends to her and her telling reaction to it. During this epistolary engagement, Lucy places Dr. John into a position of supreme, authoritative power over her; the letter that he sends becomes

fraught with various eroticized possibilities, especially because Lucy prolongs her enjoyment (or consumption) of it. With Dr. John, Lucy begins her experiments with the potential sexual charge inherent in anticipation—precisely in the same way that Deleuze explains it—with Dr. John and, importantly, with herself. Because Dr. John cannot live up to the exaggerated image that Lucy crafts in her head, however, Lucy finds that her interactions with him, while potentially satisfying, ultimately prove to be fundamentally unfulfilling.

Perhaps the first telling sign of Lucy's belief in the power of anticipation comes from her holding of the secret of Dr. John's identity. Lucy writes of her awareness:

> To *say* anything on the subject, to *hint* at my discovery, had not suited my habits of thought, or assimilated with my system of feeling. On the contrary, I had preferred to keep the matter to myself. I liked entering his presence covered with a cloud he had not seen through, while he stood before me under a ray of special illumination, which shone all partial over his head, trembled about his feet, and cast light no further. (164)

The revelation of Dr. John's identity pales in comparison to the revelation of Lucy's knowledge of that identity. While, in *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (1980), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick reads this instance as the "most striking" example of "Lucy's deliberate silence" (121), Lucy's deliberate withholding of such information from Dr. John also suggests that she thoroughly enjoys the delay of the revelation itself. Once their prior engagements with one another are revealed and reinforced, readers see that a slight flirtation is developing between them. After Lucy returns the pensionnat, Dr. John asks her about the desirability of an epistolary correspondence: "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll write—just any cheerful nonsense that comes into my head—shall I?" (215) Dr. John's gesture is, much like Dr. John himself, simple and direct,

yet Lucy's exaggerated response betrays the deepest possibilities of its content: "Never think of it: impose on yourself no such task. *You* write to *me*!—you'll not have time" (215). Lucy's inflated reaction reveals her willingness to sacrifice her sense of self-importance—something she was never willing to do with Ginevra. Regardless of Lucy's conceptualization of herself as detached and stoic, Dr. John's suggestion causes Lucy to experience a swell of seemingly irrational thoughts and feelings. Despite her response to him, Lucy is unable to stop thinking about the possibility that a letter will arrive *from* him and *for* her:

> "And will Graham really write?" I questioned, as I sank tired on the edge of the bed. Reason, coming stealthily up to me through the twilight of that long, dim chamber, whispered sedately—
>
> "He may write once. So kind is his nature, it may stimulate for once to make the effort. But it *cannot* be continued—it *may* not be repeated. Great were that folly which should build on such a promise—insane that credulity which would mistake the transitory rain-pool, holding in its hollow one draught, for the perennial spring yielding the supply of seasons."
>
> I bent my head. (215–216)

Reason—Lucy's pessimistic, though often realistic, alter-ego—tries logically to crush the exciting possibilities that Dr. John raised. Reason dismisses everything that Lucy wants or hopes for with wholly logical and persuasive argumentation. In spite of the merits of this argument, Lucy is never fully persuaded, choosing instead to take the negativity and hopelessness that Reason often speaks of and channel it into something significantly more troublesome and pleasurable for Lucy herself. Reason works to suspend most, if not all of Lucy's desires. Furthermore, as Lucy continues to address Reason, readers become aware of the pivotal role that

Reason plays the unfolding of her most conventional masochistic fantasies. As a result, she finds herself constantly caught up in the hypotheticals of romantic interludes, obsessing over the idea and existence of a letter. Deleuze, arguing that a fetishized object is a substantial part of the masochistic complex, writes that "there can be no masochism without fetishism" (32). The letter functions for Lucy as the object of fetishism and implies "the constant return to this object" (33). Lucy's obsession with and necessary suspension of the object speak to Deleuze's reading of the masochistic complex as inherently tied to the fetishized object. Indeed, the fetishized object for Lucy—the letter—is a representation of Dr. John's status as creator, a symbol of his masculine prowess. By desiring something analogous to Dr. John's seed, Lucy finds herself in a state of perpetual submissive anticipation.

Reason's disavowal of the intention behind and production of the letter only catalyzes Lucy's preoccupation with it. Reason effectively does exactly what its name seems to foreclose, fueling Lucy into a tizzy:

> I bent my head: I sat thinking an hour longer. Reason still whispered me, laying on my shoulder a withered hand, and frostily touching my ear with the chill blue lips of the eld.
>
> "If," mutter she [Reason], "if he *should* write, what then? Do you meditate pleasure in relaying? Ah, fool! I warn you! Brief be your answer. Hope no delight of heart—no indulgence of intellect: grant no expansion to feeling—give holiday to no single faculty: dally with no friendly exchange: foster no genial intercommunion…" (216)

By including a fairly exhaustive list of possible consequences derived by Lucy's imagination, Reason actually allows these thoughts to find expression; they are, as possibilities, made more

real because they are vocalized. Lucy understands that she has placed Reason in quite a precarious position by giving her so much power while simultaneously knowing that she will use this power to undoubtedly disavow whatever Lucy desires. This act of disavowal, however, actually reshapes Lucy's desire so that the desire itself—and the very real possibility that it will remain insatiate—is eroticized rather than just the object that is desired.

Using this particular passage to discuss the role of doubleness in the novel, Sedgwick notably reads this scene as a primary representation of doubling: "The tendency of the one letter to double and redouble itself, as the doubles are one after another embedded in Lucy's voracious 'core,' in her dreams, in her inward vision, is paradoxically related to the implacable single-mindedness with which 'I knew it, I felt it to be the letter of my hope, the fruition of my wish, the release from doubt, the ransom from my terror.'" (124). The actual disavowal is significantly more telling than the purpose of doubling, yet Sedgwick suggests that "The 'magnetism' that draws Lucy to the letter seems to be the magnetism of the letter within her for the unread, unopened letter *without*, and her 'terror' is just the terror of that doubleness, or rather doubleness when it is on the point of desired reintegration" (125 emphasis added). "The unread, unopened letter *without*" that Sedgwick interprets as an instance of doubling is actually a momentary celebration of the "without." The act of waiting for the letter places Lucy into a liminal position in which the open-ended waiting, the hesitant anticipation, is itself satisfying. Žižek's emphasis on a specifically masochistic deliberate, powerful delay is particularly apt when considering the relationship between Lucy's conflicting desires—to possess the letter and to displace it—and a consistently suspended violence. As a result, Lucy is able to undermine Reason—a personal coup, of course—by allowing her own desires to be reconfigured and recast; the expectation of

something, in this particular instance, Dr. John's letter, that Reason finds so foolish is wholly undercut by Lucy's ability to find the expectation itself erotically exciting.

As a result of this condescending lecture by Reason, Lucy has no idea what to do when a letter does, in fact, arrive. Toni Wein, in "Gothic Desire in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*," reads the importance of the letter as a testament to the importance of Dr. John: "For both Lucy and Polly, the handwritten word of John supplants the word of God and becomes a physical revelation" (741). Notably, it is the letter and not Dr. John himself that proves so expansive in this regard. Wein notes that, "Each performs a similar ritual of dilation, going so far as to pray before she revels in the letter" (741).[13] The "ritual of dilation" that Wein speaks of is part of the fantasy of suspension for Lucy. By this point in the novel, Lucy has effectively allowed her lust for the letter to be subsumed underneath a lust for something beyond a tangible object of desire. As such, she instead chooses to embrace the position that allows her to simply wait: "A letter! The shape of a letter similar to that had haunted my brain in its very core for seven days past" (224). While Lucy still thinks about letters, she cannot quite grasp the concept of opening the letter immediately: "Did I read my letter there and then? Did I consume the venison at once and with haste?" (225). Lucy's use of the word "consume" here is integral to a full understanding of the scene. The notion that the object of desire can be consumed thoroughly only once is diametrically opposed to Lucy's newfound attitudes toward desire; the letter can be consumed once and the desire for consumption satiated, yet the overall desire for the letter can be sustained. Lucy writes "I knew better" (225) in response to the previous two questions, suggesting that she has transcended that kind of one-dimensional understanding of desire, finding a sense of empowerment by suspending what is desired.

> I went to my bureau…I opened a drawer, unlocked a box, and took out a case, and—having feasted my eyes with one more look, and approached the seal, with a mixture of awe and shame and delight, to my lips—I folded the untasted treasure, yet all fair and inviolate, in silver paper, committed it to the case, shut up box and drawer, reclosed, relocked the dormitory, and returned to class, feeling as if fairy tales were true and fairy gifts no dream. (226)

The letter is a treasure precisely because it is untasted. Lucy enables it to remain suspended and, therefore, cherishes it masochistically. Lucy hides it within layer upon layer of other stuff, burying it in order to distance herself from it: an act of simultaneous disavowal and suspension. Lucy acknowledges the satisfaction of that act by declaring "Strange, sweet insanity! And this letter, the source of my joy, I had not yet read: did not yet know the number of its lines" (226). Understanding her actions as insanity speaks to Lucy's awareness that she *should* theoretically be getting joy out of the content of the letter—by consuming it—but her joy lies in its untouched state and its ability to keep her anticipating.[14] Lucy gives the letter so much power over her that she must physically remove it from her presence. The fear is, then, not simply of Lucy consuming the letter but of the letter consuming Lucy. Ultimately, Lucy, playing the traditional female masochist, wants to be consumed, which is why she bequeaths so much power onto the letter itself. Consumption implies subjection, domination, and surrender—all of which Lucy rejects on a daily basis in her public life, and all of which Lucy actually tries to seek in private with Dr. John.

In *Sadism and Masochism*, Stekel writes of a specific case study, a male masochist who has "surrounded himself with a wall of inhibitions, which are to make marriage impossible for him" (241). It is this idea of inhibitions that seems to be at the heart of Lucy's hiding of the letter

first in her bureau, then later burying it in the ground. By creating a set of physical barriers between herself and her object of desire—importantly, the letter is *not* Dr. John—Lucy makes the consumption of the letter itself impossible. Lucy actualizes one version of the theory of suspension that Deleuze and Žižek later locate within the masochist's fantasy, removing it from the mental sphere and materializing it by her very physical involvement with the letter itself. Lucy subjects herself to the ideal of the letter, an ideal that literally haunts her. Like a good girl in the heart of courtship—even "so good a girl" in the heart of courtship—she is left waiting, and wanting, erotically charged as a result. Literally, in this process, Lucy becomes a Ginevra; she dabbles in notions of traditional courtship rituals, allowing the letter to take on iconic status and importance. But that manifestation of courtship begins to signify much more for Lucy. Within it lies Lucy's experimentation with types and objects of desire. Her fear of her own undesirability and her lack of control in the situation incites the transformation of all her notions of and experiences with desire; she takes what is expected of her, and what has previously been expected of women, in general—submission and subjection—and experiences it in its most ordinary form, finding pleasure in being consumed by an object, a symbol of male desire and desirability.

These notions of consumption—and inquiries into the nature of female masochism as a whole—beg questions about Lucy's past. Stekel writes of the "psychosexual infantile" origins of masochism (59). He reads the masochistic complex and the behaviors associated with all aspects of it as linked directly to one's environment and one's experiences in childhood, using Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten" to ground his ideas. Following a similar psychoanalytically grounded path, Michelle Massé in *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism and the Gothic* (1992), argues that masochism in gothic heroines is the result of an early psychological trauma: "Masochism is

a sensitive node that registers the paradoxical relations between women and culture brought about by that early and continuing trauma" (43). The trauma for Lucy Snowe, though, is abstract and unnamed. The absence of much of Lucy's childhood from the text of *Villette* makes this element of Stekel's argument, and Massé's, as well, difficult to read into the novel. The shipwreck may easily be read as a trauma, and the origins of Lucy's masochistic tendencies isolated and contained, but the ambiguities of the shipwreck within the novel actually speak to Brontë's interest in those ambiguities and the desire to deviate from paradigms of traditional female masochism. Further, Lynn Chancer's approach to masochism in women locates its origins not in anatomy, trauma, or victimhood, but in patriarchy: "a proclivity in women to assume a masochistic role more regularly than do men strikes me as a rather predictable, logical, and ultimately defensive outcome of any society organized patriarchally" (28). Despite the clear representations of patriarchal authority in the novel, the unsatisfying conclusion of Lucy's foray into traditional masochism actually subverts patriarchal authority. Finally, the ultimate failure of these masochistic tendencies—propensities that are supposedly a natural part of a woman's biological and psychological make-up—to provide Lucy with a sustainable pleasure reinforces the reluctance to accept traditional female masochism as a valid and a productive outlet of expression.

The Balancing Act, Theatricality, and True Love

Throughout the novel, Lucy experiments with all of the ideals that surface during the trials of courtship. In his foundational sexological text, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, Havelock Ellis writes that "Courtship is…a game…courtship tends to involve a mock-combat between males for the possession of the female which may at any time become a real combat; it

is a pursuit of the female by the male which may at any time become a kind of persecution" (88). Ellis declares that the rules of courtship imply a competition that can, and often do, become extreme and violent. Lucy's experimentation with the rules of courtship bespeaks the same phenomenon. With Ginevra, Lucy experiments with the role of the suitor, and the mock-combat of her conquest of Ginevra dissipates as, perhaps, Lucy realizes the relationship's inevitable failure: Lucy's courting of Ginevra will never trump small but wealthy M. de Hamal's, though we could argue that it trumps foolish Dr. John's/Isolde's.[15] Her inability to effectively court Ginevra (and effectively be Ginevra) leads Lucy to play with cruelty and aggression, marking this courtship with sadistic tendencies. With Dr. John, however, she attempts to be courted, mimicking the daydreaming girl who obsesses over the simplest gesture; Lucy allows herself to become dependent upon the ideal of the letter and it holds a power over her that implies an adherence to predictable female submission. The relationship finds its end in much the same way as her previous trial: an inevitable, one-dimensional failure.[16]

In these relationships, Lucy tries out the only two roles that *seem* to exist in the sexual sphere: dominant and submissive. The exclusivity of those two subject positions is stifling; being entirely domineering (even when Lucy is generously giving Ginevra something, it is still an effort to control her) or being entirely submissive (even when she takes control of the letter by hiding it and burying it, Lucy is still consumed by its presence) proves far too one-dimensional to be satisfying for Lucy. Ellis asks a question more apt to all of Lucy's relationships: "Why is it that love inflicts, and even seeks to inflict, pain? Why is it that love suffers pain, and even seeks to suffer it?" (87). Love and pain are intrinsically tied together for Ellis—and for Lucy Snowe. Suffering, as readers are constantly reminded, is an integral part of Lucy's life and a foundational part of the way that Lucy defines herself in relation to the rest of the world. As a result, she

wants to cause suffering to her beloved *and* be someone else's suffering beloved.[17] While scholars like Sedgwick read "the Lucy-Paul" romance as "heightened, eroticized, more sado-masochistic" (132), it is more telling of Lucy's desire for, and Brontë's celebration of, a more mutually masochistic relationship. With Ginevra, she could never dig deep enough to cause suffering and with Dr. John she tried to suffer herself, ultimately finding all parties involved—including herself—unaffected. It is only upon the introduction and subsequent development of M. Paul that we realize that Lucy may have found her match—a man capable of helping Lucy to cultivate and satiate her own masochistic tendencies while enjoying her ability to help him cultivate his own.

After reaching Villette and inquiring about a job, the headmistress calls out for someone to judge whether Lucy is suitable for the job:

> "Mon cousin," began Madame, "I want your opinion. We know your skill in physiognomy; use it now. Read that countenance." The little man fixed on me his spectacles: A resolute compression of the lips, and gathering of the brow, seemed to say that he meant to see through me, and that a veil would be no veil for him. (60)

M. Paul, the "little man," is summoned to gauge Lucy's character by looking at her; his response is "I read it" (60) and a poignant question is posed: "'Bad or good?' 'Of each kind, without doubt,' pursued the diviner" (60). M. Paul does, in fact, read Lucy, and read Lucy well, at that. As Helene Moglen rightly suggests, "In fact, M. Paul can read Lucy's eyes, her face, her gestures—and he responds to the spark of her being instead of the shadow of her seeming" (217). M. Paul understands her multidimensional, even contradictory natures and suggests that Madame Beck "engage her" (61). Importantly, "engage" is precisely what M. Paul and Lucy do with one

another over the course of the novel. Their interactions, telling in their depth and intensity are, notably, "of each kind." This engagement is a tremendous deviation from her previous relationships, as DeLamotte points out, "Like Ginevra, and for a version of the same reason, Graham is a nonknower, and his incapacities in this regard make him a representative of most of the world in its relation to Lucy" (245). This notion of being a "nonknower" is vital to the understanding of Lucy's unsatisfying interactions with Ginevra and Dr. John; their inability to know themselves and to know Lucy contrasts substantially with M. Paul's instinctive and expanding knowledge of himself and Lucy.

While Lucy is a fairly accurate reader of both Dr. John and Ginevra, M. Paul presents Lucy with a much more complicated subject. Lucy's early instinctive sneer at him stems from the intrigue that he arouses, described as "little," "harsh," "austere," and "fiery" all throughout the novel. Even contemporary readers of the novel realize that these seemingly negative traits have a strange, though perhaps predictable allure:

> From the moment when M. Paul Emanuel begins to insult Miss Lucy Snowe, we give up her heart as gone. It is true, that it has shown signs of hanging itself on another object less contradictory and fierce, that it has wisely and delicately rooted out such a fancy, owing to a perception of that other's serene worldliness; – but by the relish with which, after such a fit of sickness, it sits up to scold in answer to the scolding little Professor – we know that the right man has only now come, and that the match when made will be one after Currer Bell's own heart. (qtd in Allott 86)

This 1853 review from *Athenaeum* speaks both to the attractiveness of M. Paul's seeming unattractiveness and to the ways in which Lucy and M. Paul seem uniquely evenly matched. The

strength of M. Paul's "fierce" nature might explain why he, unlike Lucy, certainly has a solid idea of her character. When he wants her to take a role in the school's theatrical production, he says, "play you can; play you must" (123). Despite her seriousness and apparent severity throughout the duration of the novel, Lucy is constantly playing (even playful): she is an actress.[18] Accordingly, Joseph A. Boone writes that "one is not quite sure where the stage ends or the audience begins" (26) and M. Paul is fully aware of this as he references his ability to "read" her when he demands she play this specific part: "I read your skull, that night you came" (123). M. Paul uses the discourse of physiognomy as a way of lending credibility to his observations. He believes that he *knows* Lucy and, as we see throughout the text, he does *read* and *know* Lucy—a distinct contrast to both Ginevra and Dr. John whose knowledge of Lucy is perpetually cast as a reconceptualizing of their own identities rather than a substantial awareness of Lucy, herself.

In spite of herself and her impressions of M. Paul, Lucy is persuaded to take on a part in the school's play, under M. Paul's direction, yet she refuses to fully place herself in her director's hands. She puts up a fight when it comes to her costume, refusing to dress the part of a man: "No. I would keep my own dress, come what might. M. Paul might storm, might rage: I would keep my own dress. I said so, with a voice as resolute in intent, as it was low, and perhaps unsteady in utterance" (128). Lucy takes this opportunity to test M. Paul; he has held a firm hand thus far in the narrative and Lucy wants to find out exactly the kind of power he actually wields. Fearful of, yet somehow still hoping for a reaction, Lucy laments that "He did not immediately storm or rage, as I fully thought he would: he stood silent" (128). M. Paul reads this challenge as such and refuses to react. Unlike Ginevra, M. Paul is intrigued by Lucy's firm stance and sees it is a rather open-ended challenge. As Gilbert and Gubar suggest, "The principal sign of Lucy's

desire to exist actively, however, is her role-playing in a school theatrical" (413). Because of Lucy's productively active position, the circumstances of the play enable M. Paul and Lucy to begin what looks like a give-and-take courtship. Lucy circumstantially puts up a fight or lets herself be controlled, almost seamlessly transitioning between roles. The play itself reveals Lucy as actress and M. Paul as actor, with the theatricality of performance underscoring all of their subsequent interactions throughout the novel.[19]

While readers are aware that Lucy is playing a part, both on and offstage, Lucy, seemingly unaware of her perpetual performance or M. Paul's, is surprised when after the play she sees M. Paul not as the "harsh little man" that she is used to but as someone else entirely:

> His hour of managerial responsibility past, he at once laid aside his magisterial austerity; in a moment he stood amongst us, vivacious, kind, and social, shook hands with us all round, thanked us separately, and announced his determination that each of us should in turn be his partner in the coming ball. On his claiming my promise, I told him I did not dance. "For once I must," was the answer; and if I had not slipped aside and kept out of his way, he would have compelled me to this second performance. But I had acted enough for one evening; it was time I retired into myself and my ordinary life. (130)

The transformation that M. Paul undergoes is literally breathtaking for Lucy and she does not know quite how to read and respond to it. M. Paul has authority over most situations that involve Lucy, but she draws the line when she deems it appropriate—she will dance once, but not more.[20] She gives a little, he takes a little, and a shifting and reciprocal equivalence is established between the two. They both find ways to remind each other that they are each in charge (at least at times) and will be swayed only until a certain point. Both M. Paul and Lucy are playing a

game, playing a set of roles, and testing out the limits of their engagement with one another. The depth of the reciprocity inherent in their interactions could never have been present when Lucy would interact with either Ginevra or Dr. John, simply because this degree of recognition could never be established with Ginevra or Dr. John.

Reciprocity becomes problematic as the stakes of their exchanges escalate substantially. The more time that Lucy spends with M. Paul, or notably away from him, the more she understands about his nature and his character:

> His passions were strong, his aversions and attachments alike vivid; the force he exerted in holding both in check by no means mitigated an observer's sense of their vehemence. With such tendencies, it may well be supposed he often excited in ordinary minds fear and dislike; yet it was an error to fear him: nothing drove him so nearly frantic as the tremor of an apprehensive and distrustful spirit; nothing soothed him like confidence tempered with gentleness. To evince these sentiments, however, required a thorough comprehension of his nature; and his nature was of an order rarely comprehended. (191–192)[21]

Obviously, this entire description seems applicable to Lucy, herself; replacing the male signifiers with female ones would allow it to translate to Lucy without hesitation. Lucy directs her readers, consciously or not, to pay attention to all of the aspects of M. Paul's personality that can be located in her own[22]; his keen observation skills, the uselessness of other people's fear, the demand for a thorough yet wholly improbably understanding of character.[23] M. Paul's understanding of Lucy is always glaringly accurate, even when she thinks it mistaken: "Professor Paul Emanuel, to wit, never lost an opportunity of intimating his opinion that mine was rather a fiery and rash nature—adventurous, indocile, and audacious. I smiled at them all. If any one

knew me it was little Paulina Mary" (282). Lucy thinks the only person who knows her is the person she mistakenly feels herself most like; readers however, are privy to the knowledge that Lucy, contrary to her conception of herself, is both fiery and rash, precisely the characteristics that she locates in M. Paul and which would never surface in docile Polly. While these qualities do not always surface, M. Paul is consistently able to incite them. Furthermore, just as M. Paul reads Lucy, she is eager to read him; Lucy's flippant dismissal of anything worth reading in Ginevra and anything worth reading beyond Dr. John's *letter* again separates M. Paul from those who have previously helped lay the groundwork for his romantic pursuit of Lucy.

What mesmerizes Lucy most about M. Paul is his transformative nature—of course, that is precisely what mesmerizes readers about Lucy, but is something she barely recognizes in herself. When M. Paul's countenance changes, a much more drastic change than he undergoes after the play, Lucy is stunned, and effectively seduced:

> This distinction existed not for him, however, and he was quite satisfied with the English phrase. He smiled. You should have seen him smile, reader; and you should have marked the difference between his countenance now, and that he wore half an hour ago. I cannot affirm that I had ever witnessed the smile of pleasure, or content, or kindness round M. Paul's lips, or in his eyes before. The ironic, the sarcastic, the disdainful, the passionately exultant, I had hundreds of times seen him express by what he called a smile, but any illuminated sign of milder or warmer feelings struck me as wholly new in his visage. It changed it as from a mask to a face: the deep lines left his features; the very complexion seemed clearer and fresher; that swart, sallow, southern darkness which spoke his

> Spanish blood, became displaced by a lighter hue. I know not that I have ever seen in any other human face an equal metamorphosis from a similar cause. (301)

Lucy has never played observer quite the way she plays it here, chronicling every detail of M. Paul's disposition and the way that it has instantaneously been altered by her presence. Realizing, suddenly, that she is far from the "shadow" that she has consistently cast herself as to her readers, Lucy's sense of her surroundings expands tremendously; her set of critical observation skills is in a state of upheaval at the revelation of this side of M. Paul. Moreover, the fact that Lucy's decision to be on more familiar terms with him—to use "my friend" instead of "Monsieur"—is what inspired such a marked change is intriguing both to Lucy and to her readers. The exaggerated terms of this description reveal Lucy's interest in her own power within their exchanges. Already aware that M. Paul has drastic and unpredictable effects on her, she is finally the cause of a substantial set of positive reactions in M. Paul. Lucy is not simply seduced by M. Paul's transformation, but is seduced by the power that she possesses to be able to cause such a visible change in a man she previously perceived in unfairly one-dimensional terms.

The power that Lucy wields is certainly exciting and attractive to her; it is, in fact, what she plays with most harshly on M. Paul's birthday. As custom in Villette, a professor's birthday warrants a celebration, a set of gifts, and a tremendous amount of respect and joy on behalf of the students. All of the girls present their bouquets to M. Paul, who, realizing that Lucy has not presented anything, repetitively asks "est-ce lá tout?" (320). Lucy, having worked diligently on a gift for M. Paul, confesses to readers that "I might yet have made all right, by stepping forward and slipping into his hand the ruddy little shellbox I, at that moment, held tight my own. It was what I had fully purposed to do" (320). Instead of making M. Paul happy—instead of giving him what he wants and expects—Lucy withholds her gift, foregoing simple gratification for a temper

tantrum and a "tragic" M. Paul. Just as M. Paul plays with Lucy's reactions to him, so she asserts her own set of rules befitting this particularly disastrous encounter. As Boone rightly argues, "she proves herself the consummate actress in deliberately tempting his outbreaks" (34). Indeed, M. Paul does fume with frustration, taking his disappointment in Lucy out on Englishwomen in general: "Never have I heard English women handled as M. Paul that morning handled them: he spared nothing—neither their minds, morals, manners, nor personal appearance" (321). No longer simply Lucy, she becomes a representative of all English women—an even grander testament to the reaction she was able to catalyze by her simple defection. Even though Lucy declares that she finds this behavior and this treatment of herself, and her kind, hateful, she acknowledges that she could not be "indifferent" (321); as such, she will always be influenced and altered by M. Paul—his behaviors, his words, his gestures—because, as she so aptly reveals "I *was* stung" (321). M. Paul's sting is not transient or momentary but lasting and powerful; and Lucy is unquestionably attracted to it, its constant enduring presence, and the ensuing erotic pain.

When Lucy finally reveals that she had her gift ready all morning, M. Paul is shocked and Lucy proud—again, a testament to the theatricality that underscores many of their most telling and intimate moments. While peace is restored between them, Lucy remains aware of the true nature of their relationship: "'We are friends now,' thought I, 'till the next time we quarrel'" (327). At this point in the text, there are no pretenses left; the rules of engagement have been set, the give-and-take, its effects, their respective power—all of these have been toyed with and explored. Their respective power, in fact, demands to be read in terms of masochistic fantasies. As Ellis suggests, "the infliction of pain must inevitably be a frequent indirect result of the exertion of power" (88). The exertion of power is exciting for both partners, but the experience of pain has the capacity to be far more exciting with its longer-lasting effects. Ellis, falling in line

with his sexological contemporaries, highlights the ways in which pain becomes an integral part of a woman's romantic fantasy:

> It is still easier to trace in woman a delight in experiencing physical pain when inflicted by a lover, and an eagerness to accept subjection to his will. Such a tendency is certainly normal. To abandon herself to her lover, to be able to rely on his physical strength and mental resourcefulness, to be swept out of herself and beyond the control of her own will, to drift idly in delicious submission to another and stronger will—this is one of the commonest aspirations in a young woman's intimate love-dreams. (110)

In the case of *Villette*, however, the "intimate love-dreams" that we are most exposed to are Lucy's, and, to a lesser extent, M. Paul's. Subjection to the will of one's beloved is part of the game that the two play when they flirt with power and pain and seek only to rouse the other. The sense of abandonment that Ellis highlights is what happens momentarily to each of them. The anger they feel toward one another, even the intense but fleeting hatred, is fueled, as M. Paul says, by "passion." In their case, passion manifests itself in true fantasy role-playing: "when M. Paul sneered at me…his injustice stirred in me ambitious wishes—it imparted a strong stimulus—it gave wings to aspiration" (331). Throughout the novel, Lucy is excited and inspired by the abuse she is dealt at M. Paul's hand, although she disguises her feelings by limiting the scope of her reactions. In this situation, M. Paul's anger and frustration inspires Lucy's quest for knowledge; that knowledge, however, has obvious romantic undertones, as "she wanted to posses them more fully" (331). Possession is at the heart of their engagement; when Lucy withholds the gift from M. Paul, she has invaded and possessed him, just as when M. Paul invades Lucy's desk, he possesses its contents, and its owner.

M. Paul is a match for Lucy because he allows her to affect him much more so than the previous objects of Lucy's interest. Their relationship is based on a real sense of the necessity of masochistic engagement within any given romantic interplay. Lucy and M. Paul are equally interested in inciting a response from one another, and they are both equally well equipped to do so. Their instinctive violent reactions to one another are a sign of their passion, their fury, and their intensity—ultimately, what attracts them to one another in the first place.[24] Both Ginevra and Dr. John lack the depth necessary to engage with Lucy on the level that M. Paul does. He digs deep, he plays with her secrets, and he makes her suffering exciting and pleasurable. Of course, she does the same in return, yet it is the fact that her suffering is an essential part of their relationship that reveals Lucy as a playful, experimental masochist at heart.

What Would Lucy Snowe Do?

Critics of the novel appear at a variety of points on the spectrum when negotiating Lucy's response to M. Paul's presumed demise. Some, like Kate Flint, suggest:

> the narrative, one may argue, is ultimately very much dependent on M. Paul's ghostly presence. The inundation of the text with reference to storms and shipwrecks, indicating and obsessive, repetitive concern with death by water, points to his continual presence in the workings of her imagination. In *Mourning and Melancholia*, Freud tells us that profound mourning involves not just a sense of pain, but a 'loss of interest in the outside world—in so far as it does not recall' the lost one…Lucy's self-deprecation and desire for self-effacement may thus be seen as a reluctance to love—even fully accept herself after M. Paul's death. (189–190).

Flint reads Lucy's problematic contentedness after M. Paul's "death" as a sham—as code for mourning. Helene Moglen presents a significantly more political reading of the gesture: "[Brontë] did not know what would happen to that emergent self if it were joined in marriage to 'a man in whom there is much to forgive, much to 'put up with'; if it were joined in marriage, in fact, to any man… Paul Emanuel's death…represents a rejection of patriarchal forces and suggests the personal and imaginative losses which result from social failure" (228). Moglen's reading, while obviously different than Flint's, still adheres to a model that presumes a difficult loss for Lucy—and, apparently, for specific types of women in general. Yet, readers have the option to rely more heavily on the declaration that Lucy makes, the declaration that began this chapter: "M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life" (461). Readers can approach Lucy's entanglement with M. Paul, one that is fraught with mutually masochistic tendencies on behalf of both partners, as one that continues after his absence because of its unconsummated state; the eroticized anticipation that enables Lucy to relish their separation does not necessarily end because M. Paul's life presumably does.

In her exploration of the relationship between the heroines of gothic novels and masochism, Massé writes that: "The role of the spectator seems to promise protection" (40). For Lucy, that is not quite true: while she conceives of herself as spectator, she is not nearly as distant as she pretends to be. Moreover, the only person Lucy needs to be protected from in the novel is herself. Often under the guise of Reason, she desperately tries to squelch emotions, experiences and excitement. Notably, Reason usually fails to crush Lucy's desires, as M. Paul is right about Lucy's "fiery" and "adventurous" nature. The sturdy, plain, suffering girl that Lucy presents herself as is only half-true. The erotically charged, antagonistic, intense girl that M. Paul brings out is what lies, most interestingly, beneath the surface.

The question of protection usefully seems to relate to the act of reading the gothic novel, as well. Lucy Snowe has eyes and ears that are always admired and enjoyed, even if readers do not always trust them. Massé writes "To look, then, can be to know, to be privy to the forbidden knowledge that means power. This knowledge is sometimes denied, sometimes reluctantly acknowledged, and sometimes embraced, but each protagonist of the Gothic must, in her role as voyeur, come to terms with it in order to deal with her own suffering and that of others" (41). For Lucy, to look is to presume to know; for the reader, to look is to demand to know. While Lucy may be the voyeur within *Villette*, readers are the voyeurs *without*, acting as a means of surveillance in their approach to and appropriation of the text, itself.

By the end of the novel, M. Paul has declared his love for Lucy, has bought her space—and, a space of her own, to be exact—and the reader is left presuming a happy ending. Yet, we never see M. Paul return. In fact, the declaration Lucy makes that started this chapter suggests that their years apart are the years in which she feels most fulfilled. Independent, hard working, waiting—Lucy finds contentment and satiation. She declares, "Strange to say—strange, yet true, and owning many parallels in life's experience—that anticipatory craunch proved all—yes—nearly *all* torture" (461). Lucy's obsession with anticipation and the promise of situation that necessitates waiting, expecting, and hoping, is wholly tied to her innovative masochistic tendencies. Happiness, for Lucy, is linked to suffering, to pain, and to challenge.

This reading ultimately diverges from critics, like Robert M. Polhemus, who view Lucy's ultimate romance with M. Paul as a symbol of her spiritual growth and anticipated salvation:

> Lucy Snowe, pathetic ugly duckling, suffers many trials, including an unrequited love for the handsome Dr. John. By the end, however…she wins the love of a fellow teacher, a good, if flawed, man, Paul Emanuel. Through their faith in one

> another, she achieves both vocational success—a career as head of her own school—and the power of imaginative expression. Though it seems clear that Paul dies at sea before they can be married, Lucy finds the strength to articulate her vision of the world out of her experience of being in love and being loved. (110)

Polhemus is interested in pursuing the ways in which Lucy's development over the course of the narrative can be measured "by feeling love from another or being in love" (108); problematically, his reading of Lucy's erotic engagements is narrowly one-dimensional: "Brontë shows us the force of love in Lucy's world, that love made manifest in the flesh of Paul, and the power of erotic imagination to inscribe itself and make love live in her narrative" (131). While this statement appears to be opening up the space for readers to approach "the power of erotic imagination" as tinged with anticipation, creativity, and, therefore, masochism, Polhemus reads spirituality as the single-most defining feature of Lucy's character: "Lucy Snowe writes about providence—erotic providence. For her, erotic providence is world, life, and destiny ordered and given meaning by the desire for human love; and the force of love and desire is what allows her to regard Divine Providence with stoic faith" (112). Ultimately, because Polhemus's assessment of Lucy's character seems to underestimate her depth, it proves itself too reductive to accurately account for Lucy's many complexities.

Masochism, an alternatively accurate account of such complexities, provides Lucy with a framework within which to view herself and those that surround her. It is, however, tellingly problematic for Brontë's contemporaries; in a March 1853 issue of *Eclectic Review*, a reviewer writes "She [Lucy] is sensible, clever, and somewhat emotional, but she lacks enthusiasm and deep womanly love, with all those weaknesses and ganders which belong to it, and which irresistibly touch the heart and chain the interest of the reader" (March 1853 91). The suggestion

that Lucy is "somewhat emotional" speaks to a fundamental inability to read through Lucy's often detached presentation of self and circumstances. Furthermore, the criticism leveled against Lucy Snowe is a testament to the ways in which *Villette*'s heroine does not lack deep womanly love, but rather is a truly progressive representation of expansive, deep love; such love, then, involves suffering and partnership, equivalence and intensity and is, for Brontë, human love, not womanly love. As a result, then, this presentation of Lucy's masochism removes typical and predictable demarcations of gender, providing readers with a masochism—and subsequent satisfaction—that is universal in scope.

It is now useful to return to the establishment of a critical lineage of Brontë's heroines; while this critique of such a lineage focused on the critical emphasis on the tragedy of suffering as a means of connecting the characters, Kate Flint presents us with a significantly more lively reading: "Yet one must consider Lucy Snowe *not* as an absence, but, like Jane Eyre, as a shaper of her own fiction. Certainly she suffers insecurity throughout much of the novel, both at the hands of individuals and as a result of certain of her experiences" (188).[25] Although Flint does mention suffering explicitly, the idea that Lucy is a "shaper of her own fiction" seems particularly important considering the ways in which Lucy actively shapes her relationships within the text. John K. Noyes writes of the nineteenth-century father figures of masochism, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, that for each, "masochism is used as a means of displaying and attempting to resolve various conflicts in current discourses of subjectivity" (55). According to Noyes, the individual's struggle for control, dominion, and triumph underscores Krafft-Ebing's sexological work about masochism; in *Villette*, we see Lucy caught between what we could infer as "nature's forces and civilization's restraint" (62). The forces of Nature—the ambiguous shipwreck, the plainness of Lucy's appearance—are out of

Lucy's control. The restraint of civilization—the dictates that forbid Ginevra from being a legitimately courted object, the way that Lucy's life must be shaped by a male figure—are also out of Lucy's control. Her ability to grasp her own suffering and recast it—compartmentalizing it, experimenting with it, choosing it—is Lucy's negotiation with the powerhouses that Noyes identifies. For Lucy, masochism is power, and masochistic engagement is empowerment.

Notes

1. For clarity's sake, I will refer to Paul Emanuel as M. Paul for the duration of this chapter.

2. Kate Flint, in "Women Writers, Women's Issues" proposes a different alternative: "Lucy, in the final paragraphs of the novel, writes of the warm anticipation with which she prepared for M. Paul's return. The gifts she gathered for him link literature with careful nurturing…Yet in fact, like Jane Eyre, Lucy has also moved herself into a position where she can tell her own story, devotedly tend her own autobiographical seedling – as well, of course, as self-fulfillingly following her own career…The physical presence of a husband is hardly necessary for her possession of the little foreigner: such ownership, such control, can be achieved through the act of writing" (189). Although Flint's prioritization of the act of writing as a means of coping with trauma and of discovering and asserting self is persuasive, ultimately, the satisfaction that Lucy experiences during this period is a testament to her inability to need a coping mechanism at all.

3. Glen writes, too, that "*Villette* was conceived and written in unprecedented isolation. 'I can hardly tell you how I hunger to have some opinion besides my own, and how I have sometimes desponded and almost despaired because there was no one to whom to read a line – or of whom to ask a counsel,' Charlotte Brontë confessed to her publisher in October 1852" (138).

4. *The Professor*, importantly, was actually written before *Jane Eyre* but published posthumously.

5. I use the term "sexual" because Lucy's interests in Dr. John and Ginevra are filled with sexual tension regardless of the fact that neither relationship was physically consummated. The erotic implications of both relationships, if not explicit, are absolutely irreplaceable undercurrents in the narrative of the text. Again, for clarity's sake, I will refer to Graham as Dr. John for the remainder of this paper.

6. Part of Lucy's adherence to work and suffering is manifest in her adamant rejection of what she perceives as the excesses of Catholicism. Helene Moglen suggests that, "Lucy fears Catholicism because she equates its apparent excesses of feeling with loss of self" (218); that loss of self for Lucy is based upon a definition of self in relation to a Protestant work ethic.

7. This comparison foreshadows the inevitable failure of Lucy's flirtation with Dr. John; his admiration of Ginevra's flimsiness seems to prevent the fruition of his admiration of Lucy's hardiness.

8. Indeed, it is also a subject position that Lucy later tries to re-create vis-à-vis Dr. John and his letters to her, to which I will return.

9. Litvak reminds readers that "this is just one of a dizzying plurality of complications intimated by a polymorphous scenario in which a woman dressed from the waist up as a man plays the effeminate suitor of a coquette who plays herself" (480). Litvak is primarily concerned with the role of theatricality and performance in the text, yet it seems vital for our purpose—and his—to mention the importance of the fact that that "coquette…plays herself." Putting this assertion into conversation with Litvak's suggestion that Madame Beck's masculine attire is "grimly expressive of the ambitious woman's confinement to male impersonation" (473), readers can realize that Lucy's half-male, half-female costume for the play represents Brontë's construction of a hybrid space for Lucy.

10. Gilbert and Gubar write that "It is Ginevra, too, with her familiar physical demonstrations, who violates Lucy's self-imposed isolation not only when she waltzes Lucy around, but also when she sits 'gummed' to Lucy's side" (410). Their reading of Lucy's interactions with Ginevra attests to the same idea that Ginevra is somehow asking for Lucy's violent reaction.

11. One way of understanding Ginevra's inability to react to Lucy is a consideration of the rules of courtship that have already established, for Ginevra, a set of premeditated reactions that she has at her disposal given a wealth of possible circumstances. Ginevra's role in the play—as, presumably, herself—is a testament to the ways in which Ginevra's reactions to the behavior of suitors has already been inscribed for her.

12. That Lucy's trial with a conventional masochism associated with femininity is something that she willingly tries on is a testament to its inorganic existence. Had Lucy experienced the type of intrinsic female masochism that, according to Freud and Bonaparte, has its foundation in unarguable anatomy, her shift toward Dr. John would not have been a deliberately active one; rather, Lucy would have found this subject position a natural outgrowth of her femininity.

13. Wein continues, making the distinction between Dr. John's letters and M. Paul's: "But Paul's letters do more than refresh or sustain (p. 713); they enable Lucy to incorporate her lover, so that his absence marks the summit of their love: 'I thought I loved him when he went away; I love him now in another degree; he is more my own' (p. 714)" (741).

14. Of course, Lucy does read the letters. Her eventual burying of them, though, is part of the same obsessive masochistic suspension. Lucy's "consumption" of the letter pales in comparison to the letter's consumption of her.

15. I would argue that Lucy's relationship with Ginevra is more powerful than the encounters that Dr. John has with her. By making fun of Isolde, her sad nickname for Dr. John, to Lucy, Ginevra is somehow validating her own skewed efforts at courtship.

16. Of course, Dr. John is, in no way, a suitable match for Lucy. Helene Moglen declares: "If Lucy's attraction to Graham persists despite repression, it persists because of the power of her ambivalence…Ambivalence grows out of Lucy's recognition that if she cannot be a satisfactory

mate for Graham, the fault is as much a function of the defects in *his* character as it is a result of her own inadequacy. Because she cannot rid herself of her sense of the second any more than she can deny her knowledge of the first, the conflict remains unresolved" (212). Dr. John's failure as suitor, however, is still a testament to Brontë's pioneering approach to masochism.

17. Ronald Pearsall writes that "the submissive instincts [in women] were rationalized by many as the necessity of sacrificing oneself" (107). Pearsall speaks to the seeming naturalness of even extreme submission on behalf of women, locating it in the requirement of self-sacrifice. Lucy flirts with this idea throughout the novel. Maria Marcus, too, writes "Oppression creates masochism, and oppression of females creates female masochists" (241). While Marcus's text, *A Taste for Pain* (1981) is quite difficult to parse, this point is well-taken. As I've said in reference to Miss Marchmont, Lucy embraces the suffering that she has a hand in creating.

18. In no way is my characterization of Lucy as an actress meant to diminish the veracity of her story or the genuineness of her character.

19. Critics, including Boone and Litvak, have consistently broached the subject of theatricality in the novel, both in terms of the play itself and also in terms of the more casual plays that persist throughout.

20. Perhaps the most apt example of a simple give-and-take between them is when M. Paul asks Lucy to be less formal with him: "'I will have no monsieur: speak the other word, or I shall not believe you sincere: another effort – *mon ami*, or else in English, -- my friend!' Now, 'my friend' had rather another sound and significancy than '*mon ami*,' it did not breathe the same sense of domestic and intimate affection; '*mon ami*' I could *not* say to M. Paul; 'my friend,' I could, and did say without difficulty" (301). Lucy is careful to make sure that she plays the game alongside M. Paul, not simply under his rules.

21. Lucy's distaste for M. Paul is evident throughout the text—the quintessential condition for overt sexual tension—and it is when M. Paul says "you are to be feared" (392)—that Lucy feels herself truly empowered. Moreover, when Lucy breaks M. Paul's spectacles, she actually lives up to this description of herself; the intensity of their relationship literally hits a climax at that point and places them back to their respective corners after a break from one another.

22. References like this can be found all over the text; M. Paul's first reading of Lucy, "of each kind," while it may seem a rather general observation, is vital to our understanding of what M. Paul instinctively sees in Lucy and what she eventually sees in M. Paul: "Never was a better little man, in some points, than M. Paul: never, in others, a more waspish little despot" (284).

23. Kate Flint provides an explanation for Lucy's inability to recognize herself in her descriptions of M. Paul: "It takes an almost perverse effort to master her desires: the effort to control them is described as driving nails into her temples: 'they did not die: they were but transiently stunned, and at intervals would turn on the nail with a rebellious wrench; then did the temples bleed, and the brain thrill to its core' (110). In command so long as she can look at others, Lucy is unprepared, dislocated when circumstances suddenly force her to look at herself" (187).

24. John Maynard, in a rather dismal exploration of *Villette* does come to the useful conclusion that "the final picture that Brontë gives of sexual awakening is one of mutual help: of mutual provocation, stimulation, encouragement – sometimes by love, sometimes by anger or challenge, sometimes by jealousy" (199).

25. Flint suggests that "she takes revenge for this suffering by making the reader, in turn, insecure" (188). This assertion is a useful amendment to previous readings of Lucy's problem

relationship with her reader, suggesting a much more complicated engagement than a simple lack of disclosure.

3. Mystics and Masochists: The Whipping Girl in *A Drama in Muslin*

The title of Adrian Frazier's essay on George Moore's sex life is telling: "On His Honor: George Moore and Some Women." The "Some Women," initially implying a casual anonymity, speaks to Moore's peculiar approach to female figures in his life and his work. Of course, Moore's relationship with Lady Maud Cunard is at the heart of the controversy surrounding his sexuality: whether or not he fathered Nancy Cunard becomes not simply a subject of inquiry for his biographers, but also a subject of inquiry for Moore himself.[1] The ambiguity inherent in this triangulated relationship is indicative of the ambiguity surrounding Moore's sex life in general. Rumors about his sex, sexuality, and sexual prowess circulate between friends, colleagues and strangers, alike[2]; Frazier's piece focuses on the veracity in some—though notably not all—of these rumors. Perhaps the most notable in Frazier's article is his statement on Moore and love, which forms a useful point of entry into the female world of *A Drama in Muslin* (1886):

> Love for Moore only becomes an art when it ceases to be reproductive. Indeed, he is happiest when sex is polymorphous: that is, when it is transferred from genital intercourse to touch and talk, to sight and speculation, to future prospects or long retrospection, where it can be indefinitely prolonged through thought. Sex that is only speculative, or better yet, speculations that are sexualized, he preferred to the brief deed of procreation. (428)

Here, Frazier highlights Moore's prioritization of the mental intricacies of love and sex over the physical, emphasizing Moore's interest in what can be considered alternative expressions of sex and sexuality. For the purposes of this examination of *A Drama in Muslin*, the implications of Frazier's analysis encourage the pursuit of a deeper reading of the text's non-procreative relationships. Cecilia Cullen, the focal point of this chapter, is the apex of various non-

procreative decisions and yet, contrary to Frazier's reading of Moore, is a character he criticizes, caricatures, and ultimately condemns; her sex and sexuality are tied, for Moore, to problematic social rules and regulations, and religious fervor and zeal. While social propriety and religious extremism may seem at odds with one another, it is the implicitly masochistic nature of Cecilia's character that bridges these ostensibly disparate elements. Masochism as Cecilia experiences it, is tied to all defining aspects of her character and her interactions with those around her. Indeed, it becomes the vehicle through which she gains any authority whatsoever.

Readers of *A Drama* first encounter Cecilia Cullen as a girl "of a nature more than delicate and sensitive" (3). Her sensitivity ascribed to her deformity, Cecilia, a hunchback, conceives of herself as the perpetual victim within Moore's text about young women negotiating the oft-frustrating marriage market. The novel is Moore's treatise on the "Woman Question" and chronicles the lives of five girls as they depart from the comfort of convent school to enter into the public sphere of courtship. Toward the end of the nineteenth-century, the various plights of such women came into political and literary focus, with a variety of novelists attempting to chronicle the role of women and its crucial yet seemingly unpredictable evolution. With the impending onset of fin-de-siècle anxiety about the single woman, Moore is one of the first authors to actively consider the predicament of the "New Woman." Just as Henry James publishes *The Bostonians* in 1885-6, Moore is engaged with similar questions of female selfhood: how female subjectivity is developed, framed and expressed; how social expectations and daily reality are navigated for the women in question; how female sexuality is and could be manifest.[3] Accordingly, Moore gives substantive consideration to the gap between women whose marriages are a social and personal inevitability and those for whom marriage is removed from the sphere of future possibilities. As Frazier articulates:

> *A Drama in Muslin* had been projected as a book on rational atheism; it had been a book on the "Woman Question"; and it had been a book providing serious discussion of relationships between men and women…the plot of this 'girl book' certainly features women's destinies, treating in an original way the conflict between the sexual desires of the debutantes and the social ambitions of their mothers. (*George Moore* 134)[4]

Each girl embodies different virtues and flaws, which eventually dictate their marital fate: for example, Olive Barton's ditzy informal superficiality foreshadows her poorly played flirtations and subsequent loneliness while Alice Barton's noble intelligence allows her to find an equally noble match:

> Violet gets a lord, May gets pregnant, Alice gets a job and a dispensary doctor, and the beautiful, brainless, and ambitious Olive gets nothing. The simplicity of the 'This Little Piggy' plot enables GM to examine the moral worth of his heroines, and to show that the rational, independent, atheistic, considerate, and sexually honest Alice deserves the reader's admiration. (Frazier, *George Moore* 134)

Notably, Cecilia is absent from this overarching schema of the text. Of course, Cecilia's misshapenness, demands her exclusion from virtually all of the pomp-and-circumstance that surrounds the girls' entrance into high society—and consequently almost all critical readings of that pomp and circumstance. As a result, Cecilia's alienation grows indefinitely and is only temporarily mediated by her intense connection with Alice.

Cecilia's love for Alice is all-consuming in every respect; her feelings simultaneously seem to sustain and torture her with a "love that was wild and visionary, and perhaps scarcely

sane" (3). This love for Alice is overwhelming and, as the novel progresses, Cecilia finds herself uncontrollable, fraught with lovelorn declarations that are, in their own way, self-indulgent. Most importantly, though, Cecilia's declarations of her feelings for Alice explicitly echo the feelings of medieval and early modern mystics for God. Reading Cecilia in light of the discourses of such mystics, specifically St. Teresa of Avila, whose works and story are in circulation during the two decades prior to the writing and publication of *A Drama in Muslin*, reveals Cecilia as the un-marry-able/unmarrying Victorian mystic: a girl who embraces the masochistic, decadent language of Catholic mysticism as a means of self-degradation, self-expression, and self-fulfillment.

From the onset of the novel, Cecilia is described in ways that immediately distance her from her more ordinary peers, as "she shrank from the normal pleasures and loves of life" (3). Such pleasures and loves are removed from Cecilia's life by virtue of their normality and her abnormality. Moreover, Cecilia's nature already cannot be measured by the conventional means that are applicable to her friends. As Moore's representation of a girl whose external deterioration rivals her internal cynicism, Cecilia forces readers to ponder the causality of that relationship. After witnessing the dinner party interactions between several men and her friends, Cecilia, responding to Alice's insinuation that "I believe there are nice men in the world" (59), sharply responds with "Oh! No there aren't" (59).[5] Although Cecilia's overtly imperfect body prevents her from having first-hand experience with male suitors, she speaks with a shocking steadfast authority. When Alice tries to undermine that authority by suggesting that Cecilia has "seen as yet very little of the world," Cecilia retorts with "I know it instinctively, and I hate it" (59). While the other girls in Cecilia's world search for love, Cecilia satiates herself with a discourse of intrinsic hatred, an aspect of her character that Moore consistently reinforces.

This personal disapproval is something that Moore critics, who rarely discusses this particular novel, still manage to address. As Richard Cave suggests in his *A Study of the Novels of George Moore* (1978), "Cecilia is capable only of despising life; she cannot read into it as God's creation any of His beauty. Hers is a tragic perversion of a fine ideal; she has simplified her vision to the verge of intolerance…" (64). This capability of "only…despising life," as Cave sees it, is what marks Cecilia in the text; I argue, however, that it is part and parcel of Cecilia's exaggerated, decadent approach to Catholicism as it is revealed later in the text. Furthermore, it is through the masochistic language of extreme Catholicism—for Moore, the only type of Catholicism—that Cecilia appears to begin relishing life as opposed to despising it. Reading Cecilia as a prototypical Victorian mystic allows us to understand the complexities of Moore's critique of marriage, Catholicism, sexuality, and his exploration of the masochism that seems inherent in all three.

Despite Moore's intriguing characterization of all of the girls, and his desire to take on the task of writing about women's entry into marital discourses and spaces, criticism of this text is remarkably rare. As such, *A Drama* is often overshadowed by Moore's other works. *A Modern Lover* (1883) and *A Mummer's Wife* (1885) both receive a lot of attention because they were more publicly controversial, at some point or another either banned or deemed unsuitable at some point. Meanwhile, *Esther Waters* is particularly well suited to the analysis of the sympathy-inducing trajectory of the fallen woman. *A Drama* is, in many ways, constricted by its political underpinnings. Moore deliberately parallels his treatment of the young girls and Ireland's disenfranchised peasants, a political gesture meant to strike deeply in the heart of his Irish readership. Using the crusade of the Irish Land League as the backdrop of the narrative, Moore explains his notably distinct, but often overlapping concerns: "My new book deals with the

questions: whether English girls…will take professions or continue to consider marriage as the only profession open to them. The scene is laid in Ireland during the land agitation – while the girls are crying for white dresses the peasants are crying for the soil...” Moore connects the upheaval experienced by Ireland’s peasantry—and the intensity of their crusade—with the apparently impending dissolution of the Irish nuclear family. Ireland’s contemporary political and social concerns hinge upon challenges to its established order; the rebellion of the peasants—an attempt to dismantle a political system of inequality—is mirrored by the dissent of Moore’s girls in *A Drama*, most of whom do not end up in traditional, procreative heterosexual bonds; rather, the girls seem to represent the challenge to an Irish patriarchy that can no longer account for or provide for them.

Occupying a unique and solitary position within the cast of characters, it is Cecilia who becomes the face—and body—of some of Moore’s most adamant criticisms and concerns. It is Cecilia who poses the most direct challenge to Irish stability in the novel; her vehement rejection of heterosexual engagements, maternal tendencies, and religious moderation declares war on Moore’s troubled Ireland. Yet, critical attention paid to Cecilia often undercuts her agency, authority, and sanity. Richard Cave explains: “True beauty, Cecilia argues, lies only in the unattainable mystic ideals of Christianity, but her ecstasy, her longing to take the veil as a nun is in reality sensual hysteria. The world in her view is to be suffered only as a temptation to be resisted, so that she welcomes her nausea with life as a kind of chastening penance” (64). While Cave astutely makes the connection between Cecilia’s turn at the end of the novel and the discourse of Christian mysticism, this chapter goes far beyond his assertion, drawing more substantial connections between Moore’s characterization of Cecilia and a lineage of female mystics. In addition, my analysis seeks to move away from any notion that Cecilia’s desires are

the result of "sensual hysteria," as a diagnosis of that magnitude removes much of the critical space that Moore has created to allow us to read Cecilia as a deliberate, shrewd, imposing character in the text.

The Death of Desire

Watching her friends as they progress in their courtship quests, Cecilia feels isolated and excluded from the accompanying rites and rituals. While the other girls have their own sets of rather serious problems with their male suitors or lack thereof, Cecilia's inability to participate at any level prevents her from living a public life. Marriage, or the prospect of it, enables the girls to enter into public space and public discourse; with the possibility of marriage removed for Cecilia, she is quarantined, both literally within her house and metaphorically within her mind. With female authority figures like Mrs. Barton suggesting that "A husband is better than talent, better even than fortune – without a husband a woman is nothing" (137), the tragic nature of Cecilia's predicament is magnified; although Mrs. Barton reveals her ignorance throughout the text—disastrously misreading Olive's situation—Cecilia's problematic and complicated evolution as a character remains a testament to the underlying legitimacy of Mrs. Barton's claims.[6] Cecilia's retreat from the forefront of the novel, as her interactions with the girls shift from physical company to primarily epistolary references, contribute to her internationalization of being "nothing." Further, Cecilia's subsequent declarations about her spinster status and her forbidden feelings continuously reinforce her nothingness–a position she truly begins to savor. Cecilia's inclination to find something pleasurable about the pitied position she is in is an integral part of her character. In fact, reading the futility and frustration intrinsic in Cecilia's desire for Alice yields an understanding of Cecilia's progression from a marginalized figure—

both in terms of society at large and even with her girlfriends—into a masochistic, self-declared martyr.

Before Cecilia's final exaggerated declaration of love, lust and abjection for Alice, she tests the waters. In her attempt to mimic a male suitor, she tells Alice that "it seems like heaven to see you again. You look so nice, so true, so sweet, so perfect" (227). Although this intimate flattery may have been appropriate when the two were schoolgirls, Alice quickly realizes that there is an element of impropriety in Cecilia's affectionate gestures, dismissing them as "absurd" and "not quite right" (227). Attune to the external influences in Alice's logic, Cecilia asks "Why is it wrong – why should it be wrong for me to love you?" (227), consequently suggesting that "if Harding were to speak to you so, you would not think it wrong" (227). Aware of the standard of sexual and gendered behavior, Cecilia places herself in the role of suitor, comparing her position to that of the first man for whom Alice has feelings. Alice, caught off guard, blushes uncomfortably and declares that Cecilia gives her "great pain" (227). The tension in this situation is the direct result of Cecilia's aggressive courting of Alice as well as her awareness that what she is doing may be construed as wrong. Cecilia's desire to place herself in the position of the men she so despises is a testament to the intensity of her desire for Alice. Given a different set of circumstances, wherein Cecilia's desire could be "right" instead of "wrong," Cecilia's sentiments might be matched. Instead, even though Alice has previously felt a strong connection to Cecilia and developed a shared intimacy with her, this excited conflict marks a strong shift in Alice's approach to Cecilia: a previously open relationship becomes tempered and guarded.

While historians have debated the scope and proliferation of same-sex attachment in the nineteenth century—led notably and controversially by Lillian Faderman's *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981)[7]—Cecilia's desire for Alice ought to be approached as a sexual and romantic

desire. As Sharon Marcus declares in *Between Women*, "Victorian narratives…considered [female friendships] crucial to realizing marriages between men and women" (18). Marcus book claims that during the nineteenth-century there are meaningful and substantial relationships between women that exist entirely outside of a heterosexual sphere. Marcus does acknowledge, though, that much of the perceived Victorian approval of female intimacies is based upon the belief that such intimacies prepare women for marriage. As Martha Vicinus argues, the role of the heterosexual marriage in Victorian England is all-encompassing:

> In the nineteenth century the dominant ideology of separate spheres gave both women and men opportunities for a wide range of emotional and erotic relationships among themselves, but heterosexual marriage remained the presumed emotional, religious, and social center of society. The Victorians themselves worked hard to create a hegemonic culture of cozy domesticity. (72)

While Vicinus's understanding of the "hegemonic culture of cozy domesticity" seems spot-on, it has the potential to narrow approaches to Victorian lives. As a result, Marcus very deliberately seeks to move away from a reading of heterosexual marriage as a dominant institution—a frame through which all other relationships are measured, justified, and experienced. Instead, Marcus explores the existence of various types of relationships among Victorian women "without Oedipus, without castration, without the male traffic in women, without homophobia and homosexual panic" (21). Marcus's Victorian England belongs to women.

Interestingly, George Moore gives us characters in *A Drama* that experiment *both* sides of this critical spectrum, in some ways building upon Katherine Binhammer's view that "female same-sex desire enters our historical vision as a 'propensity' in heterosexuality, as a dynamic marking the extreme limits of normative sexuality" (472).[8] Throughout the novel, Cecilia

attempts to treat Alice as if men do not—and/or should not—exist for either of them. Grounded in the all-female convent school, Cecilia and Alice's initial intimacies are cultivated in a space that has little to do with men. Like many of the examples Marcus uses, their friendship begins without the implications of subsequent marriage or future intimacies with men.[9] Admittedly, the looming presence of heterosexual union could be located in this space, too, as it is possible to speculate that Cecilia's initial attraction to Alice may have stemmed from Alice's predicted invisibility in the courtship game—her own plain looks and perceived unattractiveness constantly differentiate her from her sister, Olive, the "human flower" (4). More concretely, Cecilia's feelings for Alice intensify when Alice becomes unpredictably visible in the marriage sphere. Abiding by the rules that Vicinus highlights, the dominance of heterosexual marriage, or at least heterosexual relationships, infiltrates and forever alters the closeness that the two friends once shared. As we witness Cecilia's uncontrolled frustration with the invasion of male suitors, we also witness her resignation at the suggestion of marital inevitability for Alice and marital impossibility for herself. Alice's trajectory, then, represents the typical and acceptable evolution from youthful, female love to broader, heterosexual commitments. Cecilia, on the other hand, chooses always to belong to a sphere that is dominated by women, moving back to the convent at the end of the text, thereby refusing to decry her desire for Alice as a step in her initiation into heteronormativity.

Because their once overlapping paths begin to diverge, the two have a constantly evolving, usually tumultuous engagement with one another. Cecilia, unable—or unwilling—to understand Alice's desire to fit into the world of courtship and marriage, refuses to reconfigure their friendship accordingly. Because of this, the two girls continue to have substantial altercations that end with Alice's wounded feelings and Cecilia's consequential apologies.

Cecilia's battle cry of loss seems to be at the heart of this cyclical tête-à-tête; as Alice goes about her business, which includes entertaining the idea of flirtation and courtship, Cecilia continues to suggest that these acts fundamentally damage Alice and all that defines her in Cecilia's eyes: "All I loved is gone! … The whiteness, the purity, the feminacy, all in gone! …it is blacked, it is worthless. Cruel, cruel! Why am I thus tortured? why do I suffer?" (232) While the friendship between the two girls continues, "both were conscious that it was neither so bright nor so communicative as in the olden days" (233). Forever tainted by Cecilia's antagonistic confession of her romantic intent, their relationship never fully recovers its prior sense of mutual fulfillment. Whereas Alice turns to her writing as a means of coping with the change in her most meaningful friendship, Cecilia struggles to find an alternate outlet for her strong feelings. Consequently, those strong feelings escalate as the novel progresses.

While Cecilia's friendship with Alice is indicative of a larger set of desires, especially on Cecilia's behalf, it is vital to consider the implications of the eventual devolution of that friendship. As Alice is able to refocus her intimacies onto Dr. Reed—regardless of the impossibility of replicating her intimacy with Cecilia—Cecilia lacks any other romantic or emotional channel, thereby becoming a spinster. Yopie Prins, in "Greek Maenads, Victorian Spinsters," traces the history of the spinster figure, suggesting that during the end of the nineteenth century, "the 'redundant woman' was recategorized in various ways: a working woman, a suffragette, a single woman living outside the sphere of family, a woman living with other women, a celibate woman, a mannish woman, a sexually autonomous woman, an 'odd' woman not to be paired with a man" (47). Although Prins sees this recasting as a liberal reconfiguration of gender roles, Moore provides a more complicated reading of the spinster.

The circulation and aftermath of Francis Power Cobbe's "What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?"(1862) overlaps with the crafting of *A Drama*; Cecilia's progression from hunchback to best friend to rejected suitor to outcast to odd woman is a part of Moore's understanding of the female social and sexual sphere. Alice's initial discomfort with the idea of marriage and her respective undesirability is overshadowed by her ultimate willingness to become a wife, but Cecilia's unwillingness to play by the rules of courtship prevents her from being a part of daily, heterosexual society. Ultimately, then, Cecilia's same-sex desire for Alice is something that further isolates her from the social, normative world in which the rest of the girls exist. The circulation of ideas about odd women and spinsters tells readers that Cecilia, while singular in the novel itself, is not in a particularly unique position, but rather a position that exists as a result of the limited possibilities for women in the Victorian period. Thus, Moore uses Cecilia's isolation within the novel to establish a connection to a larger isolation that women are experiencing.

The Curse of the Hunchback

Because readers are introduced to Cecilia's physical appearance before being substantially acquainted with her character, she is initially and perhaps primarily defined as the novel's deformed girl. That deformity, in one way or another, dictates virtually every subsequent event and experience in Cecilia's life, but equally importantly, speaks to a trend in Victorian literature that Helena Michie identifies in Dickens's *Bleak House* and *Our Mutual Friend*. She writes that "pain necessarily both temporarily reproduces female physicality and makes any notion of the stable and fully representable female self impossible" (199). While Cecilia's pain is slowly uncovered throughout the body of the narrative—and often appears more associated with

her emotional state rather than her physical—the obvious implications of her body cannot be overlooked. As it prevents her from being a part of a complete women's world, including courtship, marriage, and motherhood, Cecilia's misshapen body does, in fact, complicate the presentation of a completely "representable" female self within Moore's text.

Furthermore, Michie suggests that both Dickens novels "are in some sense about the construction of the female self through pain and fragmentation and against the teleology of the conventional integrative plot of the Victorian novel" (200). This notion of pain and fragmentation is crucial for Cecilia and for her role in *A Drama*. Cecilia's inability to participate in the expected construction of her own future is itself an act of fragmentation. While the traditional (and perhaps not so traditional) Victorian marriage narrative unfolds for the rest of the girls, Cecilia is perpetually removed from its development physically and mentally. In fact, she virtually disappears from the action of the play, resurfacing mostly in epistolary form. The disruptions to Cecilia's physical appearance in the text are a testament to the disruptions within her life: her strained relationship with herself, her friends and the world around her.

Ultimately, though, Cecilia's pivotal role as *A Drama*'s hunchback *and* lesbian seems worth critically pursuing. While the causal relationship between the two is blurry at best, Cecilia's characterization as abnormal in terms of her body and her sexuality is telling. Perhaps even more telling is the scarcity of critical resources about the hunchback as a deformity. While there has been a recent abundance of sources dedicated to the Victorian interest in circuses, sideshows, and freak shows, the hunchback figure does not seem to fit into these particular categories. Take, for instance, Nadhja Durbach's expansive and inclusive *Spectacle of Deformity: Freak Shows and Modern British Culture* (2010)—a text that focuses on such prominent freak show characters as the Elephant Man, Conjoined Twins, and the Missing Link. Durbach spends a

significant portion of the text's introduction discussing the potential relationship between the Victorian freak show and the rising field of disability studies. In fact, the focus of her analysis seems to be the discourse that differentiates the two, and its surrounding historical context: "'The disabled'—as distinct from 'the deformed,' 'the infirm,' 'the important,' or 'the crippled,' terms with their own discrete meanings—emerged as a category in Britain only around the turn of the century" (16). Durbach suggests that the spectacle of bodily difference on display at the Victorian freak show does not fall in line with "the field of disability studies, which seeks to reveal the ways in which perceptions of bodily difference are culturally conditioned" (18) since the freak show performers were often "able-bodied" and "healthy" regardless of their physical anomalies; they were "often 'deformed' but neither 'infirm' nor 'disabled'" (21). Durbach locates the site of these distinctions at the level of language; she points to the historical and social definitions of and stigmas associated with words like these, all of which have a particularly loaded history.

According to Durbach's logical understanding of the terms, Cecilia's hunchback must be seen as a deformity and *not* a disability. Even though her focus is, in fact, on deformity rather than disability, Durbach's analysis of typical freak show figures suggests that Cecilia's deformity is far too ordinary to be a subject of inquiry along these lines. Yet, we can understand Cecilia's importance in *A Drama* and outside of it as Durbach understands the importance of the freak show itself: "It is precisely because human oddities were always open to a variety of interpretations that the freak show is such an important site for interrogating the specific ways in which nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Britons differentiated between 'normal' and 'abnormal' bodies and the significance that they attached to these distinctions" (21). Cecilia's own "abnormal" body becomes, then, a site onto which other "abnormalities" are projected—

hence, her marginalized sexuality and religious extremism. Other charged eccentricities are projected onto the hunchback, Cecilia's most defining and consistent characteristic.

Interestingly, in his revised edition of *A Drama in Muslin*, or, *Muslin* (1915), Moore actually removes the reader's introduction to Cecilia's deformity from the first pages of the text.[10] The first lines: "At a glance you saw she was a hunchback; but in a standing position her deformity would have appeared less marked than it did at present. It lay principally in her right shoulder, which was higher than her left—now she was seen at her worst. Cecilia was the wonder and enigma of the convent" (3) were revised to read: "Lady Cecilia Cullen sat next to Alice, and her high shoulders and long face and pathetic eyes drew attention to her shoulders—they were a little wry, the right seemingly higher than the left. Her eyes were on Alice, and it was plain that she wished the other girls away, and that her nature was delicate, sensitive, obscure, if not a little queer" (3). The removal of the words "hunchback" and "deformity" are obviously the most important changes here, as they indicate Moore's desire to encourage a more ambiguous reading of Cecilia's character and condition. The shift from the diagnosis of a hunchback to the inference of a slight physical asymmetry encourages the reader to locate Cecilia's peculiarities within her character rather than to connect those peculiarities to Cecilia's physical self. Of other importance, too, is the replacement of "wonder and enigma" with "queer," having the opposite effect of replacing a kind of positive ambiguity with a more specific, localized peculiarity with potentially queer signification.

Though Cecilia's hunchback places her outside of the realm of sideshow freaks, at least according to Durbach, she still falls in line with some images of freakery in Leslie Fiedler's *Freaks* (1978). Fiedler, whose book traces the appearances and uses of freaks and specific cultural responses to them—"the balance of revulsion and attraction" (305)—uses Henry James's

response to Dickens's Jenny Wren as a way of describing his own reaction to his subject matter: "Like all of Mr. Dickens's pathetic characters, she is a little monster…she belongs to the troop of hunchbacks, imbeciles, and precocious children, who have carried on the sentimental business in all Mr. Dickens's novels" (269). This reference allows Fiedler to come to terms with his own emotional engagement with Dickens's "pathetic characters"; more importantly, though, it groups together physically and mentally disfigured characters as the sites of sentimentality. As we have established, Moore's characterization of Cecilia as a hunchback allows her to function as a platform onto which concerns about normalcy, both bodily and otherwise, are expressed. Yet, taking Fiedler and James into consideration, we must also think of Cecilia as a character whose actions betray the intensity of her feelings, forcing readers to cultivate their own sentimental response to Cecilia, and Moore's text as a whole. Cecilia, a character whose internal and external deviation from the norm, evokes in the reader a sense of inevitable alienation: as a "pathetic character," it is her individual pathos that initially draws the reader to her.

Overall, Cecilia's hunchback forces her into a unique solitary position: she is too "abnormal" to participate in the ordinary social world around her and yet she is too "normal" to participate in the world of the freakshow. Accordingly, Cecilia is actually marginalized from marginalization. Unable to exist within acceptable public space or within the peripheral spectacle of the sideshow, Cecilia lacks virtually any point of entry into the world around her. It is telling, too, that Moore finds it necessary to make the details of Cecilia's deformity less explicit as he revises his text, moving Ceclia's deformity out of the realm of diagnosis and into the realm of speculation.

The Fever of Fervor

Initially, it is Alice who ties Cecilia to her world and inspires in her a passion that is only surpassed by her later religiosity. The relationship between the two girls, though, proves disastrous as the novel progresses. While John Harding may have been initially presented as Alice Barton's first flirtation—as, indeed, he is the first man that Alice finds herself attracted to as she "lapsed into dreams of him" (146)—he proves to be a more useful asset in terms of writing rather than romance. Harding becomes connected to Alice's dream of independence and productivity rather than to her heart. Instead, the more respectable and appropriate Dr. Reed surfaces as Alice's main suitor and the dominant force pacing her path to marital security. Reacting perhaps to Dr. Reed's increasing presence or to Alice's growing distance, Cecilia, one last time, needs to declare herself in front of her beloved. This, Cecilia's last great severe monologue, reveals a new, perhaps unexpected religious side of Cecilia. After waiting for Alice to finish writing, Cecilia begins:

> Alas! you would not understand! But oh! if you knew the pain I suffer, the pain that is mine when I think of the sin that is yours, and the awful end that must overtake you! But you! you know nothing of the short starting sleeps, the dream-haunted vigils, the vicious demon-shaped terrors, intense, terrible, and profound, and the silences filled up with the cries of the damned. (297)

This declaration is filled with distortions of iconic Christian images. Contrasting some misplaced notion of a prior tranquil state–a Cecilia that we, as readers, have not once been privy to over the course of the narrative–with her current torment, Cecilia takes an accusatory tone against Alice. Instead of introducing the subject of her visit, she begins with overarching generalizations about the miserable state of her existence. Previously, she has mitigated her aggressive overtures with flattery; at this moment, though, all hope seems to have been lost and Cecilia forges ahead with

apparently nothing more to lose regarding her relationship with Alice. Richard Cave contends that this engagement is representative of Cecilia's "consciousness heightened to hysteria…the Biblical cadences and tortuous rhetoric…wholly in character with her evangelical attitude…" (66) By reading Cecilia as hysterical he removes intent and motivation her frantic expressions. Such an approach undercuts the stern, strong-willed character that Moore has crafted in *A Drama*; further, it problematically prevents Cecilia's turn to Catholic zeal from being intentionally empowering.

In fact, earlier encounters with Alice prepare readers for this moment in the text, and allow readers to conclude that Cecilia does not devolve into hysteria but rather progresses logically on a spectrum of behavior and ideology. During their arguments about men and marriage, Cecilia has previously been described as possessing the "prominent eyes of the mystic…veiled with strange glamour" (60). Moore explicitly connects Cecilia to a trans-historical lineage of female mysticism of which she later becomes a part. Her possession of something kindred to the mystic foreshadows her later denunciation of the secular world in favor of a theoretically pure life of religious servitude. Because that kinship spans centuries, it does not initially help Cecilia to feel less isolated from the world around her; as such, the strange glamour that veils Cecilia, at this point, is the manifestation of her unknown and unknowable isolation:

> At every moment a new Cecilia was revealing herself, the existence of whom Alice had not even suspected in the old. She knew that she herself was altered, that the last few weeks had taught her much, had strangely modified her ideas of life and things, but this was nothing to the transformation she thought she perceived in her friend. In reality Cecilia was the least changed…it had merely unveiled a state of soul that had existed for years in its present condition. (63)

This moment is integral in the unfurling of the relationship between the two girls; Alice's misinterpretation of Cecilia's ideas explains her inability to sympathize and empathize with her dearest friend. The discrepancy between Alice's reading of Cecilia and the "truth" of Cecilia's intrinsic character is exploited when the two finally face-off. At this early point in the text, Cecilia is attempting to court Alice while dismissing the institution of heterosexual courtship altogether. It is Cecilia's subsequent unwillingness to continue her complicity in this type of engagement with Alice that forces her to rehash and condemn her feelings.

While former encounters between the two have insinuated that these feelings are based upon a romantic desire for Alice, it is not until this moment that Cecilia explicitly acknowledges the raw strength of that desire, and her subsequent weakness. She states: "But you! you know not of my sin, of my sin! Yes, Alice, I have sinned, and deeply, for I desired more than God had willed to give me, and I have suffered accordingly. Yes, Alice, I had desired more than God had willed to give me, for I desired you. I desired to possess you wholly and entirely" (298). Firstly, the issue of possession is at the heart of this massive confession. Cecilia takes direct ownership of her sin throughout this dialogue, and the possessive nature of her desire for Alice further speaks to Cecilia's command of the situation: the sin is "my sin" and Cecilia's desire is for the whole and entire envelopment of Alice. Although Cecilia may believe that she has come to speak to her friend about Alice's own situation, the repetitive emphasis of Cecilia's "I" reveals the narcissism underneath her intent; accusing Alice is the means by which Cecilia can stage a conversation that revolves around her sense of personal injustice and devout martyrdom.

This "I" is integral to understanding just how Cecilia's masochistic tendencies find a home in the language and sentiments of Catholic mysticism; in addition, it is Moore's acknowledgement of the empowerment that can be found within any expression of masochism.

Prior to this climactic point in the novel, a variety of circumstances has distanced Cecilia from Alice and the rest of her girlfriends, most notably, physical appearance. However, while the girls are attending Catholic convent school, Cecilia's earnest Protestantism is pitted against the others' Catholicism as a means of further differentiation. Moreover, while the girls begin their marriage quest, Cecilia harps on her own Protestantism as a means of protesting the spectacle of courtship as it is manifest in the girls' experiences. Yet, during Cecilia's ultimate encounter with Alice her discourse takes on excessively Catholic under and overtones. In fact, it is this notion of excess that lies at the heart of Cecilia's self-indulgent confession. From the images themselves to the tone with which she conveys them, Cecilia is performing her version of devout Catholicism, going so far as to suggest that she has "prayed until [her] soul was sick with famine for the Holy face of God" (298). Even though Cecilia actively mentions God, Alice, and Dr. Reed in her reverie, the conversation itself functions as a construction of Cecilia's masochistic agency.

For Moore, though, such agency is not without its pitfalls, as Cecilia is presented to readers as absurd and melodramatic throughout this scene, and these two characteristics are ones that Moore often associates with his own Catholic upbringing. In his memoir, *Confessions of a Young Man* (1886), Moore reveals that one of "two dominant notes" in his person include "a brutal loathing of the religion I was brought up in" (117); he even suggests that "dear, sweet Protestant England claims me" (117). Moore's self-declared affinity for England lies, at least partially, in his rejection of Irish Catholicism. Nancy Cunard, in her *GM: Memories of George Moore* (1956), asks a particularly telling question and poses a particularly telling response:

> Was he so anti-Catholic because he felt himself a Protestant at heart? G.M. would reply in the vein of what he had told the Colonel in *Salve*: 'One doesn't become a Protestant, one discovers oneself to be a Protestant, and I discovered in those days

> that magicians and their sacraments estranged me from all religious belief, instead of drawing me closer to it.' (78)

This tract, repeated by Moore throughout his life, suggests that part of his dislike of Catholicism has its roots in what he sees as typically Catholic excess and superficiality, which reveals itself intensely in *A Drama*.[11] As Robert Stephen Becker suggests, "Christian themes grew to occupy a central place in the Moore canon…The jarring influence of Protestant doctrine had its Catholic counterpart in other novels. When Olive Schreiner resided at the Convent of St. Leonard's, Hastings, in 1885, she transmitted an account of convent life to Moore, who adapted it for the opening scenes of *A Drama…*" (71).[12] In much of his work, Moore takes up the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism, simultaneously a public and private affair for him.

Perhaps also a factor in his loathing is what Tom Inglish identifies as "Irish Prudery," with its roots in the Catholic Church: "This problematization of sex and its inscription on Irish bodies were closely linked to the development of the monopoly over morality exercised by the Catholic church" (12). Of course, Moore objected to this monopoly and the way that it strictly institutionalized a set of behavioral rules and regulations with which he had substantial concerns. As Inglis suggests, "most married women willingly subscribed to the concept of the ideal mother put forward by the Catholic Church. More important in this regard may have been the fact that Irish women, particularly mothers, were dependent on the church for status and authority; consequently, they may have redoubled the influence of this image among each other" (18). For Inglis, the inseparable connection between Irishness and Catholicism had, as one of its primary consequences, the ability to cut off discourses about sexuality and identity. In his exploration of the roots of a perceived Irish prudery, Inglis concludes that "the lack of a discourse about transgressive pleasure and desire is linked to the more general absence of a discourse about self,

pleasure, and enjoyment" (22). Moore, in much of his canon, is clearly engaged with questions about the development, construction, and circumstantial amputation of female sexuality. Regardless of how diverse the cast of *A Drama* is, very few of the young women represent what Inglis sees as the female idea of "the weaker sex…not proactive in seeking sexual pleasure…romantic rather than sexual—passive, submissive receivers" (25). This description harkens back to Mrs. Barton's philosophies about the importance of marriage as the *only meaningful* option for a woman. Yet, at Moore's encouragement, we dismiss Mrs. Barton in favor of the younger generation that is, of course, imperfect in itself. In this respect Moore can be seen as participating in "the resistance [that] revolved around women and especially the rejection of the modest, chaste, virginal woman championed by the Catholic church and epitomized by the image of the Virgin Mary" (Inglis 13).

It is clear that Cecilia's embrace of a Catholic-inflected melodrama is made parallel to her desperation with more secular pursuits. Moore's association of Protestantism with Cecilia earlier on in the text may be meant to balance out her otherwise flawed self; as a result, his later linkage of Cecilia and Catholicism proves to be the ultimate judgment of her character.[13] The reader is left, at the end of this showdown, with the image of Cecilia endowed with the shrill antagonism of exaggerated Catholic righteousness. The harshness of this judgment, though, is potentially complicated by an alternative reading of Cecilia. Without any acceptable social space within which to comfortably exist as herself—with her body, her desires, and her religion—Cecilia has virtually no options. Taking Moore's criticisms of Irish Catholicism seriously, we can actually look at Cecilia's downward spiral as a problematic social inevitability. Without a sphere within which Cecilia could love Alice reciprocally and freely or without a sphere within which Cecilia could acceptably enter into public space and sociability, her only recourse is to

turn to religious extremism. That she is able to find a tremendous amount of complicated satisfaction in it, is a testament to Cecilia's resourcefulness and the masochistic framework built into Catholic ritual and discourse.

Vital to reader's understanding of Cecilia's evolution, the language of "ultimate judgment" is the language that Cecilia uses to explain her newfound position to Alice. Part of Cecilia's preparation for that ultimate judgment involves the sacrifice of her selfhood, a rather commonplace part of Christian masochism. Stuart Charmé, in his analysis of the relationship between Christianity and masochism, cites Erich Fromm and Karen Horney's belief that "masochism represents a deliberate flight from the individual selfhood and responsibility" (228). Responding to impending powerlessness—especially in the case of one's position relative to God—the religious masochist finds power in subjecting himself to the wrath of God. This is significant in the presentation of Cecilia because of her inability to come to terms with her own powerlessness, evident in her arguments with Alice about the nature of courtship and marriage. Cecilia's aggressive and assertive responses to circumstances she knows little about are presented as acts of compensation. As she becomes more and more intensely attached to Catholicism, her crisis of selfhood—that initially centers on her deformity and its consequences—resolves itself through the act of burying herself into God and ecclesiastical discourses. While this might seem like the ultimate sacrifice of selfhood, the religious masochist still has a notable degree of autonomy, especially in Cecilia's case. The repetition of the "I" reminds the reader that Cecilia is still the foundation for this speech and for this decision; although masochism might appear to celebrate the annihilation of the self, its foundation is the consistent emphasis and emergence of the self in question. Thus, it is through Catholic excess, perhaps one of the only viable outlets for her masochism, that Cecilia finds an authoritative voice.

As Cecilia becomes more and more excited in her monologue, she begins to reconfigure her approach to Alice. All of a sudden, the more intimate dynamic between the two is replaced by the active triangulation of Cecilia's desire. While she continues to explore the tumultuousness of her feelings for Alice, Cecilia starts to incorporate her feelings for God:

> My soul is thrilled, is pierced with the long delight of contemplation; my heart is bruised, and the wine of ecstasy bubbles to my lips; the fumes of strange, keen, and unconquerable joy rise to my brain, and in uncontrollable and ever-ascending vision – vision keen and impalpable, my life reeks to thee – to thee and to God. Yes, in the mysticity of God's love, and thine, my delight shall wax and wane; in the arms of God, I faint – my soul sickens, I falter, I yield myself. (299)

The language that Cecilia uses is telling in its seeming contradiction. That Cecilia's soul is "thrilled" and "pierced" while other parts of her are "bruised" and touching "ecstasy" reveals the complicated nature of this masochistic position. At this moment, while accusing Alice of great sins, the pleasure of this interaction for Cecilia lies in the presentation of her self-sacrifice, of her torment, of the punishing presence of God. All of that might seem complicated or undercut by the pleasure that Cecilia derives from it, but the joy of the experience for Cecilia *is* the torment.[14] Using the image of an all-encompassing, omnipotent God might generate the illusion that Cecilia is in a passive position, but it is through Cecilia's construction of her relationship with God that such circumstances are actively empowering for her.

Here lies Cecilia's great revelation: that the potential satisfaction that she once attained from romantic ideas about and feelings for Alice has been replaced by the pleasure that she now gets from her torturous engagement with God–and, of course, from revealing its exclusivity to Alice. Further, as Amy Hollywood explains early on in her discussion of sexuality and mysticism,

"Masochism is not a secondary phenomenon, a disordered experience of sexuality, but is primary to its constitution; subjects are always in tension with themselves, desiring autonomy and yet at the same time finding their pleasure in the shattering of subjectivity" (54). Cecilia, of course, is outwardly more interested in shattering Alice's subjectivity than her own as she distances herself from Alice not simply by her "sin" but also by Alice's perceived inability to comprehend the truth behind Cecilia's words: "No, Alice, no; Alice, thou who art mine, mine in eternity, I am speaking wildly, madly; you do not understand me–no, you do not understand, for you have not prayed as I have prayed; you have not spent the whole night on your knees gazing on the pale tranquility of the skies–the home of God" (299). By holding her religious devotion and its manifestation in prayer to a standard of superiority, Cecilia asserts the power and distinctiveness of her engagement with God. The way that Cecilia has "prayed"—the way one ought to pray—is a primary concern of Teresa of Avila (or St. Teresa of Jesus), whose works in translation are circulating throughout the 1850s and 1860s. Teresa suggests that an integral part of prayer obedience: "the reason why obedience…is so quick and so sure a means of arriving at so happy a state, is this, that as we are by no means masters of our own will, so as purely and sincerely to devote it all to God, and to subject it to reason, obedience is the shortest and most efficacious means of doing so" (*Foundations* 28).

In *The Book of the Foundations,* St. Teresa takes it upon herself to impart what she deems the rules of a devout and pleasurable life for her "daughters," religious women interested in pursuing a life in the convent. Like Teresa of Avila, Cecilia believes that prayer and obedience are vital elements within her relationship to God. Prior to this moment, Cecilia has played the victim and continues to do so by blaming circumstances beyond her control for the positions that the two girls find themselves in. During this moment though, Cecilia is the active force in

differentiating her own experience from Alice's by the penance that she pays for it and the ritual associated with such penance. That penance takes its most pleasurable manifestation in what Teresa identifies as "the fire of His love," which "may descend from Heaven and consume the sacrifice" (*Foundations* 29); moving from the realm of personal sacrifice to the more extreme idea of self-*as*-sacrifice, both Teresa and Cecilia envision themselves becoming part of a Christian ideal, an image the ultimately hinges upon masochistic self-identification.

Accordingly, it is at this moment that Cecilia reveals the connection between her suffering, her pleasure, and her God. Previously defined by her deformity, and/or her "wrong" feelings for Alice, Cecilia defines herself in this interaction by her devotion to God and its expression in excessive prayer. Cecilia's sense of self-righteousness surfaces clearly in this definition: "But you have not prayed, and can know nothing of the joys of prayer!" (300). The way that Cecilia distinguishes her experiences from Alice's, and the opposition that she sets up between her subsequent virtuous reward and Alice's secular sin is precisely the type of masochistic Christian iconography that Theodor Reik discusses in *Masochism in Modern Man* (1941). In his discussion of martyrdom and masochism, Reik identifies Christ as the ultimate martyr figure: "Christ's very life and death becomes the glorification of suffering and its conquest. The royal way of the cross becomes the path that all mankind should walk" (347). Just as Stuart Charmé defines the masochist as "[living] through his partner, seeing his partner as everything and himself as nothing" (222), so Reik points to the ultimate pious relationship with Christ: one in which Christ is everything and self is nothing. Reik chooses a handful of Biblical passages from the plethora that could fit into this mold, establishing what Charmé identifies as "a tradition of martyrdom and asceticism in Christianity where abuse and pain produce a feeling of closeness to God" (227). When that abuse and pain are exaggerated and extreme, the desired end

of feeling close to God escalates proportionately; thus, the increasing intensity of Cecilia's explanations parallels the increasing intensity of her pleasure.

The masochism inherent in certain types of Fundamentalist Christian piety is further iterated by Robert Price: "According to this form of spirituality, the believer takes a kind of morbid delight in suffering" (164). He points to the Biblical origins of this delight: "For Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties" (II Corinthians 12:10). The difficulties often take various forms of physical torment, including whippings and beatings by rods, yet the emotional torment that yields physical and psychical ecstasy suggests that Catholic iconography and mythology legitimates all of Cecilia's suffering. Therefore, Cecilia feels justified in emphasizing the correlation between suffering and higher, ultimate, heavenly rewards in her final conversation with Alice. After declaring that Alice knows nothing of the joys of eternal prayer, of seemingly endless nights filled with longing, pain and brutal reminders of her devotion to God, Cecilia speaks of what she perceives as her deserved potential glory: "and there, soaring with white and vigorous wings, I shall go when the hour comes for me spirit to tear this impeding veil of flesh, past the holy stars of Heaven, and enter an eternity of happy prayer and unapparent love" (300). Cecilia's equation of a life of torment and an eternity of happiness is the root of this masochistic Christian martyr complex. While he attempts to distinguish between religious martyrs and sexual masochists, Reik does draw a number of important overlaps between the two, and is ultimately unable to convince readers to believe that there is no sexualized pleasure in the act of Christian martyrdom.

Perhaps the most important of these parallels is the question of fantasy. Reik suggests: "In the place of the individual phantasy, which we observe in sexual masochism, we find here the great collective preparation of phantasy, which merges the individual with the divine figure

by identification. There arises a tremendous longing to emulate the prototype, to win the pains and the glory of martyrdom in his name" (352-3). While the masochist cultivates an individual fantasy for the attainment of his/her personal pleasure, the martyr's focus is on a more collective fantasy: one that necessarily involves identification with Christ in his own sacrificial suffering. As Julie Melnyk reminds her readers, "a disciplinary account of the effects of Christian ideology…would claim that women who identified themselves with a feminized Christ were succumbing to a patriarchal ploy: the model of the suffering Savior was an effective tool for controlling women and encouraging their self-sacrifice" (132). Melnyk, though, finds this reading far too reductive as it eliminates other, more complicated experiential possibilities. She cites Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*: "In the humiliation of God she sees with wonder the dethronement of Man; inert, passive, covered with wounds, the Crucified is the reversed image of the white, blood-stained martyr exposed to wild beasts, to daggers, to males, with whom the little girl has so often identified herself" (qtd. in Melnyk 132). Using the idea of the feminized Christ as a means of empowerment rather than submission, Melnyk identifies this Christ as "conqueror, ruler, teacher, and, ultimately, judge" (132). Cecilia's own identification with Christ seems to complicate both Melnyk's reading and that which she attempts to disprove. Part of Cecilia's pleasure in this identification with Christ is the celebration of the suffering victim; Cecilia's perpetual reminders of her crippled body remind readers that she has *always* suffered. Nevertheless, the satisfaction of victimhood for Cecilia, speaks directly to the primacy of excitement and enjoyment in religious masochism and martyrdom, contrary to Reik's desire to distinguish between the sexual masochist and the religious martyr.

Beyond the perhaps predictable celebration of the sufferer, these notions of conquering, ruling, and judging still line up with a masochistic ideal. Part of the pleasure, for the masochist,

is in the cultivation of a masochistic contract that initially begins with the masochist as subject: by designing the contract, the masochist brings in a participant who will enact a masochistic fantasy. The enactment of that fantasy, then, for the masochist is tied to being made into an object; as Charmé suggests "suffering…shows that God is treating you like a son, that is, as an object of his love" (224). To Charmé, Sartre's view of masochism represents "the desire to be an object and to lose one's own subjectivity by identifying with that of the Other" (230). As she desires Alice, Cecilia is the subject—possessing desire for the objectified Alice—but as she desires God, Cecilia becomes objectified. That shift is vital in understanding Cecilia's masochistic transformation. For Cecilia, God is not only the subject of her love, but the definer of her existence. Alice, a mere human—and a woman, at that—cannot possibly compare.

The delight that Cecilia experiences while discussing both her own torment at Alice's and God's hands, and the eternal reward that awaits her (vis-à-vis the pain of abstaining from the fulfillment of her improper and sinful desires, or her participation in socially sanctioned heterosexual trajectories) allows us to see her as the bridge between the religious martyr and the sexual masochist.[15] Cecilia uses a language of violence and pleasure to make Alice aware of the intensity of her newfound position relative to God: Cecilia experiences an "unconquerable joy" because of God's ability to "pierce" her heart and soul (299). For Cecilia, the pain that she experiences when Alice rejects her advances is minute when compared to the exquisite pain doled upon her through her daily self-sacrifice to Catholic ritual. It is no surprise, then, that Teresa of Avila, too, seizes upon the virtue inherent in that ritual, identifying "mortification" and "humiliation" as virtues associated with "the highest degree of prayer" (37).

Cecilia's sacrificial version of Catholicism has its roots in the earliest description of mystical experiences. As Julie B. Miller points out, "scholars agree that suffering and violence

were often defining characteristics of the practical piety and religious experience of medieval women mystics" (26). Miller is quick to point out that piety, suffering, and violence are not specific to the medieval period in order to explain the emphasis—or lack thereof—that scholars place on the overlap of these characteristics in female mystical experiences. Miller gestures to what is external scholarship again when it comes to drawing connections between suffering and early Christian experiences: "As women were increasingly denied the opportunity to imitate Christ through apostolic works such as preaching, teaching, and communal acts of charity from the thirteenth century forward, they turned instead to the imitation of Christ in his human, bodily, suffering form—an imitation of the crucified Christ" (26-7). The social and religious spheres through which Cecilia is able to circulate narrow substantially over the course of the novel: doubly marginalized because of her deformity and her sexuality, Cecilia cannot escape the limitations that prevent her from entering into socialized space. When she finds a devoutly ritualistic religion that emphasizes identification through suffering, however, Cecilia suddenly finds a satisfying niche within an acceptable and legitimate space.

That comfort, pleasure even, is complicated by the anguish that Cecilia seems to relish during her encounter with Alice. Miller, in fact, calls for "a more thorough analysis" of the "discourse of medieval women…saturated with the imagery and rhetoric of eroticized violence" (27). In particular, she is bothered by a scholarly trend of dismissing the intricacies and implications of such discourses. Hence, Miller sets out to read the rhetoric of suffering located in mystical accounts as "constructing the feminine—be it the soul or psyche, flesh or affect, woman or body—as that which attains its deepest desire only through the pain and suffering of violent love" (28). Given that much of what defines Victorian femininity and womanhood—the female body and the institutions of courtship, marriage, and motherhood—is off limits for her entirely,

Cecilia's construction as "feminine" is usefully ambiguous. Miller's reading of the role that this mystical discourse of suffering plays in the construction of the feminine allows for a more thorough understanding of the way that Cecilia's femininity is cast and recast throughout the novel.

Miller identifies five defining elements in mystical literature: "(1) God's active assault upon and (2) piercing penetration of the soul; (3) the soul's vehement desire for God; (4) the consequent combat between God and the soul; and (5) the necessity of the soul's final annihilation" (29). Given her existence in Victorian England, Cecilia is clearly not a medieval mystic. Nonetheless, these five elements are undeniably present in her descriptions of her own private and personal experiences with God, prayer, and torment. Miller's five points help establish a substantial connection between the discourse Cecilia employs to declare herself to Alice and the discourse that medieval and early modern mystics use to declare themselves to God. By virtue of that linkage, Moore turns Cecilia into a prototype of the Victorian mystic, helping to extend the lineage of and circumstances surrounding female mysticism. Miller points out that medieval mystics "speak of being repeatedly scourged, scolded, slapped, assailed, buffeted, beaten, wounded, and tormented" as the experience "erotic love and delight, insisting that such violence does not extinguish but rather inflames the soul's ardor for the divine" (32). Although Hadewijch of Antwerp experiences "Love" and its ability to "assault and blow" (32) in physical terms, Cecilia's "terrible moments" and "suffering" (302) at the hand of Alice, other people, and God are primarily mental and emotional. Thus, Cecilia's wounds may seem less overt than some of the medieval mystics that Miller cites. Still, the shift from these theoretical moments to the specificity of piercing or penetration is one that readers, following the impulses

of St. Teresa, can make easily; Teresa explains the power and desirability of "certain violent impulses" and "ardent desires"(*Foundations* 37).

Moreover, St. Teresa's *Foundations* are composed of stories of the founding and establishment of a variety of Spanish monasteries and the accounts of various female figures therein; she tells of Doña Catalina Godinez in St. Joseph in Veas, who is perpetually filled with "so ardent a desire of suffering for God, that she even wished to suffer what the martyrs endured…joined with such a deep sense of humility and hatred of herself" (*Foundations* 125). St. Teresa explicitly discusses the intensity of Doña Catalina's perpetual desire to suffer, to be tormented, to be annihilated. The excesses of such torment, though, are framed in ecstatic and pleasurable terms, suggesting that Doña Catalina is sustained and satisfied by the graphic nature of these images:

> From the commencement of God's calling her, He inspired her with such a detestation of herself, that her afflictions appeared nothing to her. She says she had such a vehement desire of suffering, that she implored of God, with all her heart, to exercise her therein in every possible way. His Divine Majesty did not fail to accomplish her wish, for during those eight years they bled her more than *five hundred times*, besides many sacrifications the marks of which she still has in her body. (*Foundations* 131)

Doña Catalina's desire for a personal martyrdom is akin to the martyrs in what she perceived as their continuous, unyielding suffering. So, too, Cecilia's portrayal of herself as archetype of contemporary Victorian sacrifice has its foundation in her perpetual and seemingly everlasting anguish.

Although the vows of the Catholic nunnery imply a marriage between Jesus Christ and the nuns themselves, Cecilia attacks Alice for the presumed inevitability of her marriage to Dr. Reed. Drawing the most extreme parallel possible—that Cecilia should "pass through the heavenly gate…among the blessed…[to] look down and see" Alice in hell (300)—Cecilia views her marriage to God and Catholicism as the only marriage worth pursuing: "your yearning soul shall call to be delivered of its uncleanness. You shall wring your hands and weep in secret, but in vain; for you will be then as a slave chained to daily and nightly degradation, and none shall be able to break your fetters but death" (300). Throughout the novel, Alice is uncomfortable with Cecilia's forthright cynicism regarding marriage and yet, at this moment Cecilia is significantly more explicit about the miseries she envisions in Alice's future, reminiscent of Teresa's warnings to her "sisters": "Let us not consent, O sisters! for our will to become a slave to anyone, but to Him who has purchased it with His own blood: otherwise consider, that without knowing how, you will find yourselves tied fast, and you will not be able to escape" (*The Way* 23). There is but one means of acceptable, of holy, enslavement and both St. Teresa and Cecilia use it to denounce the institution of marriage. Moreover, Cecilia's language echoes much of Teresa's:

> Those whom God raises to this state [of perfect love] are noble-royal souls. They are not content with loving such vile objects as our bodies are…for this they would consider to be loving a thing without substance, and embracing a shadow; and this would make them so ashamed of themselves that they would not have the face without being exceedingly ashamed to tell God that they love him. (*The Way* 36)

Despite Alice's inability to understand how Cecilia can make such claims, Cecilia moves on to explain the gap between fantasy and reality that she believes Alice cannot fully grasp: "Now you

see man's love in the fair moonlight of your imagination, but draw nearer, and its animal exhalations shall poison your nostrils, and all its foul abominations shall be revealed to you" (301). Cecilia presumes to be fully aware of all of marriage's "foul abominations" without experiencing them precisely because she never cultivated the "fair moonlight of…imagination" that she accuses Alice of possessing. Cecilia firmly believes that her realistic, clear-headed view of the world is the result of her detachment from it, whereas Alice, despite the intuition and atheism that distinguishes her from her friends, is embedded within the world far too deeply to maintain an objective view of the stakes of marriage. Readers tend to side with Alice, more willing to believe her moderate and tempered approach to the world over Cecilia's exaggeratedly cynical view of the world. Thus, even though Cecilia finally finds a validated space to occupy—she does, after all, remove herself to a convent—the religious fervor that drives her is condemned by Moore and readers alike.

While Cecilia's remonstration of Alice is bitter, it is also quite revelatory. As she continues to insult and offend Alice, Cecilia repositions herself into the equation: "My heart bleeds for you. I am sick of grief" (301). The love that Alice once inspired—and, arguably still does given the intensity of their final engagement—in Cecilia has been replaced by a violent, painful ache that Cecilia still seems to relish. Indeed, Cecilia's detailed explanations of her own pain set her into a self-fulfilling frenzy that Alice cannot successfully interrupt. When Alice finally begins to participate in the conversation, Cecilia invokes God as the ultimate referee, hoping to silence Alice's heartfelt protests:

> Oh, God! Thou, who knowest all things, Thou canst judge of its sharpness and its bitterness. Thou in thine infinite mercy hast estimated the burden and deemed it befitting to be laid upon me; and for Thy sweet sake, O Lord, I will, as bravely as

> may be, bear my cross to the end until I lay it one day at Thy feet, and at Thy white feet beg mercy of Thee. For Thou in Thine infinite wisdom hast taken heed of its weight and my power. (301)

God functions like a buffer for Cecilia. Alice cannot recuperate from Cecilia's hardened critique because Cecilia has used God as the means by which she is entitled to judge and punish Alice, just as she herself is judged and punished by God. Most importantly, Cecilia envisions herself as one with Christ, as a Christ-like martyr figure willing to sacrifice more than those around her. Cecilia makes this distinction of superiority and self-righteousness clear when she declares that "not that of man nor woman, but that of a poor little cripple—a girl cripple—weak and deformed in body, but endowed with a soul capable of feeling every passing pain, and a heart in which every wandering grief may make its nest" (301). Not only is Cecilia a girl, but she is a deformed girl; not only does Cecilia have strong emotions, but her heart and soul are so overwhelmingly sensitive that she possesses ultimate virtue. Reminding Alice of her deformity allows the reader to understand the allure of the veil for Cecilia. As St. Teresa points out: "the first thing we must aim at, is to banish from ourselves the love of this body of ours" (*The Way* 59). While Cecilia's body acts as a means of distinguishing her from her peers, it becomes a signifier that Catholicism allows her to forsake in the name of her newfound God. Furthermore, her connection with Christ—his ability to suffer for all mankind's sin—resurfaces when Cecilia uses the word "every" to describe the pain and grief that find a home in her character. This identification with Christ is what critics have identified as a defining characteristic of the religious masochist and the early mystical figure. Further, it is how Cecilia understands and frames her own suffering and subsequent masochistic satisfaction.

Cecilia's grand departure from the novel is filled with extreme images of suffering and pleasure. As a result, readers are encouraged to approach her as more than a cultural anomaly despite some of the characteristics that continuously catalyze her marginalization; as her body ought to be viewed as a site of Victorian anxieties about the boundary between physical normalcy and abnormality, her desire to be abused could be viewed as a reflection of public interest in both sanctioned and illicit private punishment. Moore constructs Cecilia Cullen as a masochist, reminiscent of revered female mystics and representing an inclusive set of Victorian concerns about bodies, sexuality, spirituality, and selfhood.

Sweet, Sweet Punishment

For our purposes, it seems useful to mention a trend, highlighted by Steven Marcus, in *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (1985). Marcus devotes an entire chapter to the generation and circulation of flagellation literature:

> …wherever the setting may be placed, what goes on is always the same. A person is accused of some wrongdoing…The misconduct he is charged with is sometimes unspecified…The accuser is almost invariably some surrogate for his mother…The accusation or admonition is delivered in ritual form, accompanied by dire threats…The instrument of punishment is then fetched…(256)

The formulaic narrative is one that highlights what has often been perceived as the origin of traditional masochistic behavior: boy is punished by mother and subsequently sexualizes all aspects of the site and scene of punishment.[16] Yet, what is important to note in Cecilia's case, is the public influence of the circulation of this type of erotic flagellation literature. Without the

experience of explicit ritualistic punishment, Cecilia sexualizes the internal torment that she experiences as punishment for what she deems her sinful behavior. Interestingly, the shift from the eighteenth-century proliferation of pornography containing images of flagellated and flagellating women to the nineteenth-century proliferation of whipping boy pamphlets is useful when considering Cecilia's same-sex desire and her turn toward Catholicism.[17]

Moore's interest in the construction of queer, religious masochism is the logical progression of his interest in non-traditional sexual experiences. Perhaps an unexpected subject of inquiry, George Moore makes a fascinating appearance in Barry Reay's discussion of Kraff-Ebing's sexological classification of fetishes. After discussing the potentially queer life of Arthur Munby, Reay turns to George Moore,

> the celebrated Irish-born London novelist, friend of Zola, Manet and Degas, and author of, among many works, mostly long forgotten, *Esther Waters* (1894), the story of a fallen maidservant. Moore was fascinated by the rejection of marriage and sexual procreation, writing a series of novels on the theme of what his most recent biographer, Adrian Frazier, has aptly termed 'the secret workings of sex in those who don't have sex. (163)

Like Frazier, whose critical reading of Moore and sex began this chapter, Reay is fascinated by Moore's interest in non-sex. Reay profiles Moore and several of his celibate characters in order to uncover the implications of Moore's fascination with celibacy, using John Norton, the protagonist of *Celibates*, who claims that he is "not suited to married life. There is a better and purer life to lead … an inner life, coloured and permeated with feelings and tones that are intensely our own" (qtd. in Reay 164). Purity isone of the principles on which Cecilia bases her final confession to Alice, and her devout religious zeal seems to accompany this notion of a

"better and purer life"— that will not be tainted by the materiality and the lust associated with heterosexual marriage and procreation. Cecilia, a woman with lesbian desires interested in non-procreative sex, becomes a spinster without the option of procreative-sex and turns to a nunnery to close off the possibility of sex entirely. Or, at least, that's how her evolution appears on the surface.

Katharine M. Rogers, in her exploration of eighteenth-century fictional convents, suggests that few writers "considered the possibility that women might find more fulfillment in the convent than in marriage—might prefer a community of congenial women to a husband whom they were bound to obey, or enjoy running their own domestic affairs or administering schools and property" (302-3). Rogers is critical of any approach to the convent that does not take into account is potential for personal contentment and, therefore, highlights a variety of textual representations of convent life that portray the convent and its inhabitants as "oppressive" or "picturesquely melancholy" and "invariably gloomy" (299). Although she concludes that "the convent was always a romantic or melodramatic setting, never an everyday scene" (308), Rogers mostly sidesteps representations of the convent in literature; she barely mentions, only to ultimately dismiss, the "lurid sexual fantasies…about nuns" (299). Rogers's project, though it appears to be about the fictional convent as extraordinary and singular setting, neglects to genuinely entertain the representations of the fictional convent as sexualized space. Contrastingly, Tracy Fessenden, in her exploration of Protestant women's spaces, locates the inventory of the "nun-as-prostitute figure…in Western cultures: in one or another incarnation she inhabits medieval hagiography; the works of Boccaccio, Chaucer, Erasmus, Shakespeare, Rabelais, and Diderot; eighteenth-century No-Popery tracts; Victorian pornography; and contemporary camp" (452). Fessendan's location of the nun-as-prostitute is, for our purposes, the nun-as-sexualized

female figure. Therefore, the possibility that the convent itself could be a sexual site enables a wholly different reading of the ending of the Cecilia's narrative.

In the appendix of the Broadview edition of Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina and Other Works,* Alexander Pettit, Margaret Case Croskery, and Anna C. Patchias cite *Venus in the Cloister; or The Nun in Her Smock (1724)* in order to establish an appropriate historical context to widen critical readings of the end of Haywood's text. In *Fantomina* (1725), the titular character, who disguises herself to continuously seduce the man who took her virginity and subsequently lost interest, gives birth to his child and is blamed for her exploits. The novella ends by invoking Fantomina's future from her mother's point of view: "and as soon as her Daughter was in a Condition, sent her to a Monastery in *France*, the Abbess of which had been her particular Friend. And thus ended an Intreague, which considering the Time it lasted, was as full of Variety as any, perhaps, that many Ages has produced" (71). The editors of this Haywood collection cite the1724 excerpt "probably written by Jean Barrin and certainly translated by Robert Samber" (258) in order to draw attention to certain literary tropes that appear in eighteenth-century erotica: "the sexual enthusiasm of young women in European nunneries, the tendency of nunneries and monasteries to be havens of transgressive sexuality, and the eagerness of the Catholic clergy to debauch their charges" (258). With this particular appendix, Pettit, Croskery, and Patchias insinuate that Fantomina's time at the convent, rather than a punishment than closing off the possibility of further sexual experimentation, actually widens up that possibility substantially.

Taking this pornographic context into consideration, we can look at the possible parallels between Fantomina's future and Cecilia's. Contrary to the idea, "that the nun might qualify as a perfect embodiment of the Victorian idealization of womanhood, particularly with her qualities

of virginity, docility, dedication, spirituality, and modesty" (Casteras 157), the pornographic interest in the nunnery could, in fact, be located in the Victorian tendency to mistrust the convent itself.[18] Casteras cites Mrs. Anna Jameson: "I conceive that any large number of women shut up together in the locality, with no occupation connecting them actively with the world or humanity outside, would not mend each other, and that such an atmosphere could not be perfectly healthy, spiritually, morally, or physically" (165). Casteras is interested in the discrepancy between the image of the idealized female nun and the corrupted directionless nun as it can be identified in portraits of nun figures. While she mentions "the projection of romantic and latent erotic appeal into the depiction of religious maidens" (178), this phenomenon is attributed to forces outside the convent walls. Regardless of Casteras's location of the source of the eroticized nun figure, the fact that she could be eroticized at all during the nineteenth-century gives this sexually charged reading of Cecilia's cloistered future some credibility.

While the most obvious reading of Cecilia's decision to enter a convent concludes that she will spend the rest of her days formally dedicating herself to God through routine ritualistic devotional practices, the lingering legacy of convent-based pornography during the nineteenth century actually suggests that Cecilia's self-righteous stomp towards the convent could be a gesture toward the possibility of a fulfillment of illicit and impossible desires. Overall, then, readers are left with a conglomeration of impressions regarding Cecilia Cullen: the hunchback, the lesbian, the lover, the friend, the judge, the Protestant-turned-Catholic, the nun, the mystic, the martyr, the masochist. Despite the vast array of roles ascribed to Cecilia, her character reveals the validity and necessity of masochism, and the ordinary institutions through which such tendencies could be satiated.

Notes

1. Frazier writes: “In March 1896, Nancy Cunard was born, seven months after GM and Lady Cunard met at Windlestone, and more than nine months after Moore’s return to London from Ireland. He was never certain that he was not the father of Nancy Cunard. When Nancy was old enough, and troubled enough, to ask, GM replied that he was not sure; only her mother knew; and when Nancy then said she’d put the question, GM exclaimed, ‘Oh my Lord! Never ask your mother that!’ But Maud may not have known for sure either” (259). Yet, both Moore and Nancy seem to be playing with a remote possibility rather than coming to terms with a viable search for paternity.

2. For example, Frazier writes in his biography of GM: “Even in his better days, Yeats sneered, ‘Moore has never had a love affair with a lady. But always with women of his own class.’ The tide of ridicule was rising” (396)

3. Further, *A Drama* seems to stem from texts like Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* (1851). The relationship between the two female-center tales encourages readers to trace the trajectory of portrayals of female experience from female authors to male authors. Although Cecilia is the primary character for whom marriage is an impossibility, *A Drama* looks ahead, too, to texts like George Gissing’s *The Odd Women* (1893), which takes almost its entire cast of women out of the marriage market. Additionally, Grant Allen’s *The Woman Who Did* (1895), whose protagonist takes marriage off the horizon for herself, speaks to the lineage of texts about the female marital conundrum that Moore to which Moore is a foundational chronicler. This type of pairing would allow for a conversation about male representations of the female experience.

4. Moreover, Robert Stephen Becker invokes the following explanation of Moore’s text: “Writing to the Dutch author Frans Netxcher in 1885, Moore explained ‘My new book deals with

the questions: whether English girls…will take professions or continue to consider marriage as the only profession open to them. The scene is laid in Ireland during the land agitation – while the girls are crying for white dresses the peasants are crying for the soil…The principal character is an atheist who is likewise a virtuous woman'" (73).

5. Frazier, in his biography of GM, identifies statements like these as perfectly indicative of Cecilia's most prominent characteristics: In *A Drama in Muslin*…Moore excoriates a woman-centered attitude to life, along with feminist hatred of sex with men, through his bitter characterization of Cecilia, the hunchbacked Irish lesbian who changes her religion in order to join a nunnery" (127).

6. Importantly, Mrs. Barton is constantly and consistently proven to be a silly, misguiding mother. Giving her daughters bad advice in terms of their priorities, expectations and worth within the courtship process, Mrs. Barton can be viewed as the most harmful character in the text. It is vital, though, that her words, while continuously proven wrong throughout the novel, still maintain an element of contextual truth. Through Moore's characterization of Mrs. Barton, we are left concluding that while she may be correct about any number of observations, that correctness is overshadowed by the absurdity of the situation in question.

7. For an excellent, brief explanation of the critical debate about the historical definition of "lesbian," see Katherine Binhammer's introduction to "The 'Singular Propensity' of Sensibility's Extremities: Female Same-Sex Desire and the Eroticization of Pain in Late-Eighteen-Century British Culture." *GLQ* 9.4 (2003).

8. Of course, Binhammer's argument must be put into context, as she is looking at the late eighteenth-century when she suggests that "neither heterosexuality nor same-sex sexuality was seen as a distinct type of sex during the period, but that female same-sex sexuality is an extreme

point on a continuum of sexual tastes that increasingly locates at its center moderate sexual intercourse between married couples for the purposes of reproduction" (472). Binhammer's project is to remove the opposition between same-sex desire and heterosexuality and instead to create a continuum of sexual expression that does not allow for any sexual dichotomies to exist.

9. Even "King Cophetua," the love story that Alice composes and the girls perform is cast only with girls, as "male" roles in the convent school are simply played by women.

10. This revised edition, though obviously intentionally recrafted by Moore, is not treated as the authoritative edition of the text. As Edwin Gilcher suggests: "although he revised and republished the story [*A Drama in Muslin*] in 1915 as *Muslin*, most commentators prefer the earlier text" (140). Furthermore, Gilcher invites readers to speculate that part of the reason for this rather universal preference has its roots in the quality of the revisions: "Richard Allen Cave in his *A Study of the Novels of George Moore* (Gerrards Cross, 1978) says, 'In revising the novel…Moore attempted to overcome…[the] problem of style by heavily cutting all the lyrical passages, but the loss was greater than the gain'" (140).

11. In his biography, Frazier writes of the following situation: "Moore got the editor of the *Irish Times* to publish a lengthy letter on 24 September 1903 entitled 'Mr. George Moore and the Roman Church.'...'Irish' and 'Catholic' had come to seem synonymous terms; Moore said they were contradictory. It was mad!" (333). While this is a specific example of Moore's public opinions regarding Catholicism, his biography is littered with other references to his active denouncing of Catholic beliefs, rituals, institutions, and figureheads.

12. According to Frazier, it is Schreiner who introduces Moore to sexologist Havelock Ellis, potentially influencing the ways in which he approaches Cecilia's masochism.

13. Becker cites Moore's explanation: "My heroine is an atheist: she is an atheist on the first page, she is an atheist on the last; she is neither prude nor prostitute but a woman endowed with much common sense and a deep rooted belief in the *practical rectitudes* of life" (73).

14. Expressing this torment to Alice, then, is the icing on Cecilia's cake. Her torment is singular and therefore, Alice can be made aware of its existence but she could never actually share it with Cecilia. Previously, Cecilia's isolation drove her away from her friends; here, though, the isolation that comes from a prioritization of *one* ultimate relationship that wipes away the need for and existence of all others allows Cecilia to be the center of attention in her own uniqueness.

15. The torment that Cecilia locates as having its roots in Alice Barton has to do both with Cecilia's "wrong" feelings and Alice's rejection of her overtures; obviously, this torment is of a different scope than the torment that she speaks of as a part of her daily engagement with God, but Cecilia virtually asks readers to place them side by side by constantly going back and forth between the two in her conversation with Alice.

16. Of course, this formula is reinforced by a variety of scholars of masochism.

17. Binhammer locates "cultural anxieties over the pleasures of pain" in the figure of the female flagellator as she appears in 18th century pornographic texts (474); she also suggests that "pornographic periodicals in the 1780s and 1790s…portray[] sexual flagellation as an act occurring between women and associated with the same-sex erotic propensities of its practitioners" (475-6).

18. It's important to note that Casteras is focusing on the Anglican convents in England. Moore's Irish Catholic roots and the novels Irish settings, combined with Alice's difficult in

getting over the fact that Cecilia is not even Catholic, remind us that her convent is a Catholic one.

4. Tying the Knot: Marriages and Masochisms in *The Rainbow*

A survey of criticism about D.H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* (1915), especially within the context of what is now considered the field of gender and sexuality studies, reveals what Marianna Torgovnick calls a "time warp" (33), in which critics make little or no reference to the development and influence of potentially relevant theories including structuralism, psychoanalysis, and feminism. Remarkably, despite the overabundance of sex and sexual philosophizing that appears in the novel, sexually focused readings of this Lawrence text are scarce—and often scarcely productive. Torgovnick, in an effort to distance herself from the critics she sees as fairly unsuccessful in their readings of Lawrence, his characters, and his ideas, places a significant emphasis on the contextual discourses about sexuality surrounding Lawrence during his writing of *The Rainbow*. By citing the groundbreaking work of Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and Sigmund Freud as "possible model[s]" (45) for Lawrence, Torgovnick usefully establishes connections between Lawrence's work and contemporary theories about sex that undoubtedly inform his writing.

Perhaps most potentially fruitful, however, is Torgovnick's almost fleeting mention of Sacher-Masoch and the late nineteenth-century publication of *Venus in Furs*. Although Torgovnick is more specifically interested in the overlaps between Lawrence and Ellis, to which I will later return, the influence of Sacher-Masoch, his novel, and his theories—first classified "masochism: the association of passively endured cruelty and violence with lust" (159) by Krafft-Ebing in *Psychopathia Sexualis*—is simply unmistakable upon an educated reading of *The Rainbow*.[1] In many cases, the masochistic elements that Lawrence appropriates become the cornerstones of the relationships that comprise the narrative itself; moreover, it is the fact that these masochistic elements exist in everyday life and everyday interactions that make some of

Lawrence's characters so difficult for critics to negotiate, yet so obviously ripe for inventive analysis.

The frank and tumultuous sexual haven that Anna and Will Brangwen experience within the confines of their marriage appears to pose an interpretive problem for critics determined to see Lawrence as conservative, misogynist, queer, homophobic, and fascist, among others.[2] In their rare appearances in *Rainbow* scholarship, Anna and Will, as a couple, are mentioned in passing, if at all. James Twitchell, focusing predominantly on the vampiric characteristics often ascribed to Lawrentian women, lumps Anna and Will into a conglomeration of other couples: Gudrun and Gerald, Ursula and Anton, Tom and Lydia. [3] Despite his reliance upon specifics to discuss the other relationships, he cannot seem to recuperate Anna and Will from this more general grouping of couples. In fact, though Twitchell attempts to outline a set of categories into which *all* heterosexual relationships in Lawrence's fiction will fit, he noticeably omits Anna and Will: "A relationship can achieve repetitive stasis (the 'harmonious flux' of Tom and Lydia), it can split apart (Birkin and Hermione), it can have one member dominate (Ursula and Anton), or it can cause death (Gudrun and Gerald)" (83). In a rather revealing set-up, Twitchell sees the only relationship that comes to some semblance of long-lasting fruition, Tom and Lydia's, as significantly less active, in terms of the rather mundane reactions they provoke in one another and the more stable status of their interactions, than the other ultimately destructive pairings. Telling, of course, is Twitchell's inability to place Anna and Will into this seemingly all-encompassing paradigm; instead, he attempts to treat them as individuals who happen to be married. However, when he falls into alignment with other critics who effectively approach Anna and Will as distinct individuals, Twitchell focuses primarily in Anna's naked dancing or Will's extra-marital fling. These two moments in the text initially appear to define each character

exclusive of his/her partner; Anna's dancing is solitary and Will leaves his home and his wife for new sexual pursuits. It is a critical misstep, though, to treat these instances as ones in which their respective protagonists exist in isolation. Rather, Anna's dancing and Will's "adultery" are inextricably tied to their marriage, their relation to it, and their relation to one another. Additionally, Twitchell's analysis of women as devourers would be complicated in wholly productive ways by the acknowledgement of Lawrence's characterization of Will in those precise terms: "Gradually she [Anna] realized that her life, her freedom, was sinking under the silent grip of his physical will. He wanted her in his power. He wanted to devour her at leisure, to have her" (183). Their actively opposing individualities create the passion, action, and fire that comprise Anna and Will's relationship.

While Twitchell's treatment of Anna, and Lawrence's other women, as female vampires necessarily places their male partners in the position of victim, it is vital to recognize the more even playing-field that Lawrence sets up between men and women, especially in *The Rainbow*. Yet, Twitchell is not alone in his reading of the novel as contemporary responses to the text betray similar readings. Take, for example, John Middleton Murry's 1931 review of *The Rainbow*:

> The rainbow, in the symbolic sense of a harmony between spirit and flesh, is as far away as ever at the end of the book. It shines over the first generation, where man is really man, and does not need to arrogate authority over woman, it begins to be remote in the second, where the woman begins to establish the mastery, in the third, where woman is not only *victrix* but *triumphans*, it fades into the dim future. (74)

Murry's review of the text focuses mostly on Lawrence's characterization of Ursula Brangwen, to which I will later return, with fleeting and marginal references to other characters, including Will and Anna. While Murry seems interested in what he perceives as Lawrence's obsession with "surrounding 'darkness'" (76), he approaches this darkness primarily in terms of Ursula. Yet, this darkness seems to be even more explicit when approaching the evolution of Anna and Will's marriage.

One of the missteps in contemporary scholarship about Lawrence's writing is the critic's reliance upon the heavily connotative term "sadomasochism," according to some scholars a misappropriation and misinterpretation of the underlying principles upon which sadism and masochism are *independently* based.[4] Writing of Lawrence's literary treatment of identity and sexuality, Robert Langbaum explains:

> …sexuality must be purchased at the price of obliterated consciousness and obliterated sense of the partner's otherness, of his or her real existence…there should be a reciprocal flow between consciousness and unconsciousness, a sexuality that heightens consciousness all over the body, an individuality open to connection through the interlocking relation of opposite archetypes. Instead, there is in modern people the split between consciousness and unconsciousness that makes sex a clash of hard-shelled egos, each out to dominate the other and exploit the other as an instrument of sexual gratification. This is sadomasochism.[5] (811)

Sadomasochism, as a unit or an idea, never reappears in Langbaum's essay. Instead, he drops the phrase as if a passing mention was enough to explain the complicated relationships between Lawrence's characters. The trap that Langbaum falls into regarding Lawrence's views on sex and sexuality is a fairly common one, yet, as a term, sadomasochism, unable to adequately account

for all of the relationships in this dissertation, proves unable to encompass the intricacies in the dynamic between Will and Anna Brangwen.

Although it may initially seem logical to approach sadism and masochism as complementary and therefore part of the same sadomasochistic entity, Deleuze's more nuanced understanding of each proclivity demands more sophisticated approaches to Sacher-Masoch's specific theories: "As soon as we read Masoch we become aware that his universe has nothing to do with that of Sade. Their techniques differ, and their problems, their concerns and their intentions are entirely dissimilar" (13). Regardless of, or even because of the intensity of their feelings, Anna and Will are true, evenly matched *partners*; they experience the same sets of problematic emotions and impulses, thereby negating the gendered prioritization and subsequent misogyny that critics often ascribe to Lawrence. As a result, readers can understand the creation of this perpetually shifting balance as part of Lawrence's experimentation with Sacher-Masoch. By revising his plans, ideas and fantasies to apply to females, Lawrence creates a heterosexual masochistic complex in which both partners play a variety of roles to satiate themselves and their partner. Then, it is within this realm that Lawrence's fictional relationships can be seen at their most pioneering—as the means through which they can come to terms with his own attitudes towards the bondage inherent in human interactions, most obviously and importantly, love. Further, by approaching *The Rainbow* in light of a reading of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*, among other contemporaneous theories about masochism, we can approach D.H. Lawrence as a novelist experimenting with the principles of masochism in order to remove the masochist from his extreme victimized position and reposition him (and, notably, her) within the world of the ordinary.[6]

Further, when considering the central marriage in the novel, it is masochism that generally underscores the marriage between Anna Lensky and Will Brangwen. While their relationship has some qualities that could be seen as sadistically tainted, the masochistic elements therein are far more revelatory of Lawrence's attitudes toward sexuality, coupling, marriage, and love. Anna and Will possess a rather remarkable ideal: the *recognition* of the marriage contract *as* masochistic contract. While Lawrence is engaged with the masochistic tendencies that his characters embody or employ, in *Sons and Lovers* and *Women in Love* such propensities appear as relatively natural fragments of marital and other romantic relations, usually without the participant's awareness of said tendencies. Anna and Will, however, understand that their marriage is based on a set of principles that, as established by Sacher-Masoch, are vital aspects of masochism: the redefinition of their respective identities within the masochistic contract and the coalescence of the previously distinct parts of the pleasure/pain dichotomy. We can see Lawrence, then, as removing the masochistic from the realm of the fetish and naturalizing it—without, importantly, essentializing it—as an inevitable element of everyday relationships, thereby appropriating and revising Sacher-Masoch's philosophies.

Bound, Gagged, and Legal

For Lawrence, in *The Rainbow* and in other works, love and marriage are inextricably tied to masochism, as it is presented as a part of the consistent foundation upon which all human relationships are built. In a posthumously published essay entitled "Love" (1936), he asks what may be considered the pivotal question facing his characters, whether they are aware of it or not: "What worse bondage can we conceive than the bond of love?" (34) Viewing love in terms of bondage enables Lawrence to establish equivalence between the two; that equivalence reveals

masochism and love as mutually inflected, mutually dependent and mutually influential in the world of romance. Lawrence reminds us of the constant existence of masochism in everyday life by using variations of the surprisingly flexible masochistic contract, a literal set of "laws that regulate the partnership" (Smirnoff 65). These rules establish a set of guidelines and conditions that, by virtue of the weight given to them by those entering into the contract, create the specific role that each participant must play. In Sacher-Masoch's own contract with Wanda, his wife, *she is set up* to demand the following of her servant[7]:

> My Slave… You shall renounce your identity completely. You shall submit totally to my will…You shall be neither a son nor a brother nor a friend; you shall be no more than my slave groveling in the dust…You have nothing save me; for you I am everything, your life, your future, your happiness, your unhappiness, your torment and your joy. (278–9)

Masochism, for Sacher-Masoch, necessitates a power hierarchy in which one partner *appears* to be wholly in control and the other wholly subjected. *Venus in Furs*' "victim" Severin constantly places himself at the mercy of a woman he coerces into the position of physical and emotional tortures.[8] Not only is Severin subject to the whims and fancies of the cruel women he literally creates, but he stops being called "Severin," so that his own identity can be broken down, reshaped, and reconstructed within the confines of the contract. Both participants in the contract undergo a revision of their respective identities, much as Will and Anna move into the realm of husband and wife. Both transitions necessitate the automatic redefinition of one's identity from complete individual to lover, spouse, dependent.

Marriage, for the duo, reveals secrets, emotions, concerns, and confusions. Early on in their married life, Will discovers a new woman in Anna, one who is "reckless," "independent,"

and “indifferent” (146) while Anna finds out that Will is “hard,” “evil,” and “cruel” (151). Both see the revelation of these frightening new characteristics as directly related to their newly attained marital status, an indication of the immediacy of their identity shifts within marriage. These sudden realizations spawn Will’s moment of clarity about the condition of marriage:

> Things are not what they seem! When he was a child, he had thought a woman was a woman merely by virtue of her skirts and petticoats. And now, lo, the whole world could be divested of its garment, the garment could lie there shed away intact, and one could stand in a new world, a new earth, naked in a new, naked universe. It was too astounding and miraculous. This then was marriage! The old things didn’t matter any more. (148)

Here, Will faces the shedding of the external signifiers that both he and Anna possessed before their marriage. Lawrence’s use of the garment metaphor reflects his awareness of the masochistic importance of fetishizing, perhaps even specifically of Severin’s fetish for the specific furs with which Wanda adorns herself.[9] Yet that awareness turns into a savvy revision as we compare Severin’s reliance upon those garments to Will’s realization that they are simply symptomatic of the complicated relationship between the two spouses. Although identity, for Severin, is tied to adornments, for Will those adornments are simply masks that dissolve within marriage. The removed garment metaphor is a recurring one that attests to Lawrence’s interest in what this dissolution yields and enables him to genuinely locate his concerns in commonplace trivialities.

While not nearly in the same explicit, formal, or rigid vein as Sacher-Masoch’s contracts, Lawrence’s marriage contracts are represented as contracts that just as necessarily give birth to new individuals who are bound and subject to each other. Furthermore, the rebirth of Anna and Will within their marriage is a direct result of the institution of marriage as an entity and the

contract that it entails; the marriage contract *is* the primary form of the masochistic contract as it can be found in ordinary lives. As Tom Brangwen so inarticulately states in his toast to the couple, the definition of man and woman, of husband and wife, exists in and of marriage: "for a man to be a man, it takes a woman…and for a woman to be a woman it takes a man…therefore, we have marriage" (135–6).[10] The exchange of vows, for Lawrence, implies an exchange of identities, in which the real self can only be revealed within the marriage contract, just as the masochistic contract claims to reveal the inner selves of its participants. As Slavoj Žižek declares about the reality and primacy of the masochist, "there is more truth in the mask we wear, in the game we play, in the 'fiction' we obey and follow" (92). Marriage in *The Rainbow* functions as the stage on which these respectively hidden or undiscovered selves can be revealed. The formality of marriage and of the masochistic contract allows participants to shed their garments and claim a new, fully formed identity. Within the contracts, Lawrence locates the often painful and shocking transformation of individuality that productive relationships tend to demand. In these representations of marriage, readers can trace the engagement of issues of bondage and love, masochism and coupling. Ultimately, *The Rainbow* showcases a revision of the underlying principles that govern Sacher-Masoch's masochism, thereby illuminating Lawrence's own belief in less rigid, more fluid, and much more ordinary masochisms that exist in everyday institutions.

The Sacred and the Profane, the Pleasure and the Pain

Focusing more heavily on what he sees as the emotional victimization and torture experienced by *both* partners in any love-based relationship, Lawrence, like Sacher-Masoch is overtly engaged with the overlaps between pleasure and pain. Most obviously, that emotional torture appears in *The Rainbow* vis-à-vis the experience of a frustrating combination of opposing

and consuming emotions, described as bliss, joy, misery, and repulsion; it is within that realm of such binaries that Lawrence situates all important romantic relationships: "And love is a traveling, a motion, a speed of coming together. Love is the force of creation. But all force, spiritual or physical, has its polarity, its positive and its negative" ("Love" 33). This polarity manifests itself, for Lawrence's characters, in conflicting and competing emotions and impulses, and their apparently catastrophic consequences. The "gladness" that Will feels upon his possession of Anna is perpetually countered by his "hatred" of her; until Will accepts this problematic duality and its accompanying feelings of isolation, victimization, anger and hurt, as unavoidable, even natural, he cannot manage his role in their relationship.[11] Much more importantly, however, Will's experience is not an exclusively male one; because Anna, too, faces the mix of fear, sadness, bitterness, magnetism, and love, readers conclude that the masochistic complex exists in precisely the same form in women as in men—a reading that undercuts the charge of misogyny consistently leveled against Lawrence.

This understanding of the second Brangwen generation and Lawrence's political ideas about sexuality and marriage deviates tremendously from much of the criticism written about the novel. In *The Forked Flame,* H.M. Daleski delves into the intricacies of the first two generations of marriage, discussing the former first: "What Lawrence does, then, in his portrayal of the marriage [Tom and Lydia's] is to assert his own characteristic belief in the inevitability, even in the necessity, of conflict between man and wife…" (86). Daleski, here, writes of the singular nature of Tom and Lydia's marriage, that the "intensity of the struggle between Tom and Lydia *is due to the special nature of the demands he makes on her*" (86 emphasis added). Rather than approaching this idea that conflict is inevitable and necessary as the exception—an example with its roots in a unique set of circumstances—by extending its scope, we can see that Lawrence

truly views it as a rule, a natural part of human development and engagement. While Daleski's analysis of Tom and Lydia's marriage suggests that the type of conflict that we are reading as a foundational part of Anna and Will's marriage in the novel has its roots in earlier generations, Daleski does not make this connection, approaching Will and Anna from a completely different point of view.

According to Daleski, the relationship between Will and Anna is the result of their particular, specific character traits: Will's perpetual forced assertion that he is Anna's "master" and Anna's unyielding lack of respect for Will. It is useful, however, to follow Daleski's structural lead and approach Anna and Will with their predecessors in mind. Tom and Lydia's marriage, writes Daleski, "is the occasion for a limited but perceptible movement towards something like true male-female polarity" (85). Tom and Lydia's interactions are fraught with a kind of abstract and intelligible tension from their first meeting; words like "fascinated" and "frightened" describe Lydia's initial reactions to Tom's space whereas she inspires in Tom "a daze…another centre of consciousness" (35, 37). Their earliest engagements do, indeed, seem to suggest a kind of polarity of expression, but that polarity is not specifically gendered at all. Instead, Tom and Lydia incite in one another an internal polarity that represents their continuously shifting natures. Lawrence is explicit in this regard:

> Sometimes her vagueness, in which he was lost, made him angry, made him rage. But he held himself still as yet. She had no response, no being towards him. It puzzled and enraged him, but he submitted for a long time. Then, from the accumulated troubling of her ignoring him, gradually a fury broke out, destructive, and he wanted to go away, to escape her. (38)

On the surface, Lydia appears to be the sole antagonist in this scenario, yet Lawrence is clear that this particular situation is primarily about Tom and his own divided sense of self. The conflicted sets of reaction-based emotions, although they seem to be about the nature of the relationship itself, actually reveal much more about their individual selves. Daleski continues to read Tom and Lydia's relationship as a tumultuous one in need of the mutual recognition of "otherness" that makes the spouses virtually unknowable to one another. That analysis is problematic, though, as Daleski privileges the calm in their marriage over the conflict. By ultimately suggesting that "the rainbow symbol is used to suggest the nature of the relationship that is finally established between Tom and Lydia" (88), Daleski approaches the conflict as an obstacle to be overcome, rather than an end in itself. Further, Daleski believes that the ultimate peacefulness he sees in Tom and Lydia is a big part of Lawrence's overarching project: to "show[] how the opposed desires to preserve the self and to yield to the beloved can be reconciled" (88).

Reconciliation, though, does not seem to be at the celebratory core of any of the courtships in *The Rainbow*. Instead, Lawrence highlights the impossibility of true reconciliation in favor of the mutual recognition of a kind of uncompromising impasse, as it is firstly and most formally established with the first generation of the Brangwens. The descriptions of both Tom and Lydia consistently emphasize their inability to know one another. Indeed, Lydia's foreignness is utilized as a mechanism by which to differentiate the two: "Her impulse was strong against him, because he was not of her own sort" (53). Of course, being "not of her own sort" can apply to the gender difference between them. Yet, it is Lydia's status in the text, as foreign, that is consistently referred to in order to define much of her character, from her distant roots to her overall "vagueness" (37), further rupturing her union with Tom: "And he remained

wrathful and distinct from her, unchanged outwardly to her, but underneath a solid power of antagonism to her. Of which she became gradually aware. And it irritated her to be made aware of him as a separate power" (60). Lawrence does a number of notable things in the descriptions of their constantly shifting dynamics. The idea that Tom's emotions are defined "from" or "to" Lydia is a testament to the way that their marriage, or Lawrentian marriage in *The Rainbow*, necessarily demands a reconfiguration of self—something that Tom finds himself struggling with throughout the early scenes in the novel. Further, the idea that Lydia and Tom are "separate powers" truly prevents Tom and Lydia from reconciling their opposed desires, as Daleski suggests, and forces them instead to perpetually engage with those conflicting desires. That, of course, is an integral part of Lawrence's overarching project, a simultaneously critique and celebration of the persistent and perpetual clash of the characters in love.

Tom and Lydia's unrestrained relationship lays the foundation for Anna and Will's even more intense engagement with one another. Yet, Daleski does not adequately draw parallels between the two generations. While he identifies Tom's physical attachment to Lydia as the source of their rockiness, Daleski switches gears to suggest that Anna's aggression is the source of her marriage's rockiness. Ultimately, Daleski cites F.R. Leavis's reading of the conflict between Anna and Will: "The nature of the conflict should not, after all, be found defeatingly obscure. Anna, on the face of it, might seem to be the aggressor…She is the Magna Mater, the type-figure adverted to so much in *Women in Love* of a feminine dominance that must defeat the growth of any prosperous long-term relation between a man and a woman" (97). Daleski's main critique against Leavis is based upon his reading of Anna's naked dance, yet for our purposes, the idea that there is simply *an* aggressor is problematic; the balance between Will and Anna's

interactions—though the role of aggressor shifts constantly throughout the novel—is a testament to their evenness.

Further, like Leavis and Mark Spilka, who writes in *The Love Ethic of D.H. Lawrence* (1955) that "In the end she [Anna] defeats him [Will]" (98), Daleski, too, falls into that same one-dimensional trap, suggesting that Anna is at some point "victorious" (104). This gesture is particularly interesting considering Daleski's prior assertion that "the abandonment of the 'certain moral scheme' means that a character is judged not by social or ethical criteria but by the degree to which he is true to his deepest being" (77). Instead of following the assertion that Lawrence expects his characters to be assessed based upon an adherence to their inner truths, Daleski continues to judge them based upon a schema that exists outside of the characters. Moreover, his reading of the gender dynamic in the novel does not account for the nuances that make Anna and Will's relationship so intriguing and complicated: "…the disposition of the Brangwen men is essentially female. In consequence the Brangwen women are not fulfilled; their yearnings for the outside world are only vicariously satisfied. Instead of a living interchange with their husbands, instead of their husbands being the reckless voyagers into the unknown who come back to them and complete them…" (75). Rather than approaching the Brangwen men as feminine—a loaded and controversial gesture—it is useful to remember that Anna and Will are constantly shifting in their roles with relation to one another: both pick each other apart, antagonize one another, and then reunite explosively. That kind of reciprocal dynamic is the foundation of Lawrence's project in *The Rainbow*.

Daleski has a particularly vexed relationship with D.H. Lawrence, in general. Earlier in *The Forked Flame*, he attempts to trace "the most striking feature of Lawrence's *Weltanschauung.*…its dualism" (13). Interested in dualism, Daleski reads *The Rainbow*, however,

in ways that smooth out or compensate for duality: “But marriage, as Lawrence envisages it, is not merely a conjunction of ‘man-being’ and ‘woman-being’; it entails a radical clash of the two opposed modes of being. Where the conflict results in equipoise, there is true marriage and a basis for individual fulfillment” (75). Indeed marriage, for Lawrence, is filled with “radical” conflicts and clashes, yet it is not the peace between the clashes that provides personal fulfillment for the characters, but the conflicts themselves. Such clashes enable the constant revision of identity that Lawrence sees as integral to the give-and-take of marriage for Anna and Will. Daleski even alludes to this, citing a particularly telling letter from D.H. Lawrence to A.W. McLeod to begin his discussion of the novel:

> I think *the* one thing to do, is for men to have courage to draw nearer to women, expose themselves to them, and be altered by them: and for women to accept and admit men. That is the start—by bringing themselves together, men and women—revealing themselves each to the other, gaining great blind knowledge and suffering and joy…Because the source of all life and knowledge is in man and woman, and the source of all living is in the interchange and the meeting and mingling of these two: man-life and woman-life, man-knowledge and woman-knowledge, man-being and woman-being. (qtd. in *The Forked Flame* 74)

Daleski uses this passage to discuss the way that Lawrence isolates pure, unhindered moments of tranquility as the basis for the successful union of “man-being” and “woman-being.” However, Lawrence himself suggests that the union will bring “knowledge and suffering and joy,” choosing not to prioritize one experience over the other. By approaching these three equivalently, so to speak, Lawrence suggests that they are the relished consequences of his idealized unions. Rather than being the couple that is too tumultuous to approach as

representative of a celebrated marriage, Anna and Will, are, in fact, the couple that Lawrence places on the highest of realistic pedestals.

Much like Severin, Sacher-Masoch's protagonist who is perpetually "condemned" (238) by competing feelings of terror, shame, fear, love, attraction and hatred, both Will and Anna find themselves constantly torn between their feelings of extreme adulation and severe loathing toward their partners. At the mercy of the mistress that he himself creates, Severin craves the complex contradiction of such emotions coexisting. Initially fraught with that impossibility, both Will and Anna fear for their future, individually and as a couple. Yet, just as Severin finds himself over-stimulated and sexually satisfied—and, of course, deliberately dissatisfied—so too Will and Anna grow into their rocky feelings. They constantly torment one another and themselves, by reading into gestures, expressions, and circumstances. Lawrence uses bodily and religious language and imagery to capture the enormity of their coexisting animosity and adoration; seeing Anna cry, Will's "eyes glittered…as if with malignant desire" (152), upon which he was "possessed by the evil spirit, [which] tortured him and wracked him, and fought in him" (152). The interrelatedness of Will's glittering eyes and the cruelty that Anna sees in him *in conjunction with* the desire that Anna feels as a result of this insight are part-and-parcel of the masochistic complex as it exists for Lawrence in everyday life.

In case the reader misses Lawrence's deliberate highlighting of the ordinariness of that complex, he uses simple imagery that captures the cyclical give-and-take of day and night to represent precisely the same cycle that Anna and Will perpetuate: "So they remained as separate in the light, and in the thick darkness, married. He supported her daytime authority, kept it inviolable at last. And she, in all the darkness, belonged to him, to his close, insinuating, hypnotic familiarity" (214). For Lawrence, the ups and downs of Will and Anna's marriage are

as natural, and as inevitable, as the transition from day into night and back into day again. The constantly shifting power balance that allows Anna and Will to exist, and more importantly, to thrive, enables them to channel the inner turmoil that they experience on a daily basis into the fuel for their lustful and desirous relationship, virtually destroying the boundary that separates pleasure and pain.

While Lawrence locates these impassioned overlaps in contemporary characters, the more generalized history of the close relationship between pain and pleasure speaks of similar tendencies and experiences. Havelock Ellis writes: "It must further be remembered that in a mild degree of pain (with the associated emotions of shock, anxiety, disgust, contempt, etc.), whether witnessed in others or experienced in themselves, can for many people, *especially if neurotically disposed*, evoke a pleasurable psychic state *without being intense enough to stimulate actually sexual sensations*" (201 emphasis added). Although Ellis clearly highlights the small element of pain that enables a heightened experience of pleasure, his identification of the parties to which this is applicable as "neurotically disposed" and as void of "sexual sensations" marks those parties as deviant. Yet, referring to "savages," "primitive conditions," "animals," and, of course, the "Romantics" (202–3), Ellis reminds his readers of an historical trajectory of subjugation in love that is considered traditional, even normal: "Alike to suffer pain and to inflict pain is an incidental if not essential part of courtship" (204). Presuming that the ideal end result of courtship is pleasure, the "essential" role that pain plays within it removes the pain/pleasure complex from the realm of sexual perversion. Thus, even as he ascribes deviant baggage to masochism, the connection that Ellis draws between masochism and courtship encourages an approach to it that focuses on common experience.

The historical importance of male subjugation in courtship rituals led many sexual theorists or sexologists, like Ellis, to rely on the premise that masochistic tendencies manifest themselves in men; for Ellis it is the male who experiences these fundamental—expected, and almost necessary—intersections between pleasure and pain: "All love…is a kind of slavery. The lover is his mistress's servant; he must be ready to undertake all sorts of risks, to encounter many dangers, to fulfill many unpleasant, duties, in order to serve her and gain her favor" (203). Historically, then, men subject themselves to the women they choose, hoping, in return, for these women to choose them. Like Sacher-Masoch who, invoking the Biblical tale of Samson's downfall at the hand of Delilah the seductress, suggests that men "are always betrayed by the woman we love" (268), Ellis, too, understands pain in love as somehow a more natural experience for men. Sacher-Masoch and Ellis locate the masochistic fantasy as "more especially found in men" (203) because in women a certain degree of sexual subjection, the primary stage of masochism, may fairly be regarded as almost normal" (207). Lawrence, then, is particularly inventive in his characterization of Anna, Will, and their marriage as essentially balanced, pleasurable and painful, masculine and feminine.

During Anna and Will's early married days, this balanced complex manifests itself in the experience of conflicting emotions on behalf of *both* partners. The combination of hatred and compassion unquestionably turns into passion and desire. Upon the realization that his behavior has hurt Anna in some way, Will's "heart beat with strange throes of pain" (153), the result of his newfound consciousness of Anna's status as wife. Yet, she, controlled by sobs and bitter weeping, suddenly "cleaved to his body…and her mouth, soft and moist, received him" (154). Their sex life is dependent upon the hurt they can inflict on one another and the guilt they consequently feel within themselves; pain, guilt, frustration, and anger comprise the some of the

core emotions associated with masochism. Lawrence's descriptions of Anna and Will claim that pleasure and pain are no longer oppositional binaries but elements that create and necessitate one another. In order to be raised together sexually, Anna and Will must be beaten and broken down individually. Thus, they experience within their relationship what Lawrence calls the "fire of sex." In "Sex vs. Loveliness" (1928), Lawrence writes his theories of the oft-unacknowledged origins of sex: "While ever it lives, the fire of sex, which is the source of beauty and anger, burns in us beyond our understanding. Like actual fire, while it lives it will burn out fingers if we touch it carelessly. And so social man, who only wants to be 'safe,' hates the fire of sex" (54). For Lawrence, and his characters, the fire of sex, and of love, has its roots in anger. That the feelings of hatred and repulsion that Anna and Will experience are directly responsible for the passion in their sexual encounters is part of Lawrence's doctrine on love: they are inseparable, inevitable, and, most notably masochistic, enjoyable. Reaffirming the gender balance within this relationship, Lawrence reminds us that these feelings, which would otherwise prove problematic, actually suggest that Anna and Will are "very well matched" (161). The fire within Anna and Will embodies their sexuality and their fury, both individual and collective. Their love is stormy, rocky, and impassioned, and their consciousness of it, in fact, confirms their status as equals, as partners, as opponents, thus establishing the conflict-filled and successful union that leads critics astray.

As their relationship progresses and deepens, Lawrence turns the snippets of emotion that we see into an overarching narrative that speaks to the evolution of masochism in love: "They fought an unknown battle, unconsciously. Still they were in love with each other, the passion was there. But the passion was consumed in a battle. And the deep, fierce unnamed battle went on. Everything glowed intensely about them, the world had put off its clothes and was awful, with

new primal nakedness" (166). Though Anna and Will's lack of consciousness about this perpetual battle is mentioned, this passage recalls Will's earlier epiphany about the nature of marriage; the garment metaphor returns and readers are reassured of Lawrence's interest in the revelation of self that occurs within honest romantic relationships. Within this narrative, Anna and Will's love, anger, sexuality, and fire, attest to the way that Lawrence conceives of the potential "wholeness" of love. Far from the reconciliatory, seamless, and calm love that Lawrentian critics claim is his idea, "whole" love embraces its ruptures:

> Not all love between man and woman is whole. It may be gentle, the merging into oneness…there may be no separateness discovered, no singleness won, no unique otherness admitted. This is a half love, what is called sacred love…On the other hand, the love may be all a lovely battle of sensual gratification, the beautiful but deadly counterposing of male against female…this is the profane love, that ends in flamboyant and lacerating tragedy…there must be two in one, always two in one – the sweet love of communion and the fierce, proud love of sensual fulfillment, both together in one love. ("Love" 37)

Lawrence's belief in the necessary unity of otherwise conflicting emotions reflects his awareness of the ideas circulating in Freud's groundbreaking essay "On Universal Tendency to Debasement in Sphere of Love" (1912).[12] Freud locates the tendencies toward humiliation and debasement in men who experience "psychical impotence," or the "refusal by the executive organs of sexuality to carry out the sexual act, although before and after they may show themselves to be intact and capable of performing the act" (394–5). In his discussion of said tendencies, Freud highlights the dichotomy between two very different types of love: "The whole sphere of love…remains divided in the two directions personified in art as sacred and profane (or animal) love" (397).

Freud's terminology, as we can see, becomes Lawrence's lexicon, yet, Lawrence, once again removes this distinction from the sexually troubled, choosing instead to locate it in everyday life, without the consequence of impotence.

Herein lies Lawrence's rewriting of Freud, Sacher-Masoch, and other newly surfacing and circulating theories of masochism: love and masochism are not mutually exclusive, as Wanda and Severin suggest, but are two irreplaceable parts of the same inescapable entity. By repeating words like "battle," "fierce," and "separateness" across his own canon of works, Lawrence constructs a discourse that encompasses the elements of the masochistic complex that he locates within relationships. Lawrence's concept of whole love, then, is love that embraces its abusiveness and its pain along with its compassion and its sweetness; whole love is love that is conscious of and accepting of its masochistic elements. It is Lawrence's notion of whole love that readers uncover in Anna and Will's relationship in all of its glory and misery, all of its promise and futility.

Family Ties: Lifeless Masochism and the Brangwen Progeny?

In *The Rainbow*, Anna and Will obviously represent a remarkable ideal—a productive, passionate, powerful masochistic marriage, but not all of Lawrence's couples have such celebrated characterization. Anna and Will's eldest child, the daughter whom Will claims with "a great blazing passion of resentment and protest" (190), embodies some of the most striking aspects of her two fervent and fiery parents. Yet, such elements in the Ursula that we meet in *The Rainbow*—as opposed, of course, to the Ursula of *Women in Love*—prove to be in no way as enlightening and enlivening. In fact, by using some of the language similar to what once characterized the middle Brangwen's fruitfully tumultuous relationship, Lawrence encourages

readers to examine Ursula and Anton Skrebensky's relationship with her parents in mind. During their love affair, Ursula is "thrilled," "chilled, hardened," and "indomitable" while Anton, "his eyes gleaming with anger" is filled with "agony" (291, 297, 302, 293, 303). Although these descriptions in some way echo previous descriptions of Anna and Will, the resulting comparison of the two reveals Ursula and Anton's pairing as cold and lifeless, in contrast to the passionate coupling of Will and Anna. While Lawrence seems to suggest that although all masochistic relationships have the potential to empower those who willingly enter into them, unequally matched relationships, like Ursula and Anton's, simply die.

Importantly, the reader's engagement with Ursula is notably different than the reader's engagement with Anna or with Will. Following her character from birth, the reader meets Ursula first as an idea:

> Directly, it occurred to her [Anna] that she was with child. There was a great trembling of wonder and anticipation through her soul. She wanted a child. Not that she loved babies so much, though she was touched by all young things. But she wanted to bear children. And a certain hunger in her heart wanted to unite her husband with herself, in a child. (173)

From her realization that she is pregnant, Anna begins to establish a set of ideals regarding the power of a child to alter her relationship with the world. Accordingly, after her birth, readers become aware of this presentation of Ursula as the child who redefines her parents: "How he [Will] loved that little Ursula!—his heart had been sharply seared for her…It was he who had made her cradle, her little chair, her little stool, her high chair. It was he who would swing her up to the table or who would make for her a doll out of an old table-leg, whilst she watched him…" (212). Ursula's presence in his life changes Will's conception of himself drastically. Previously

defined by his wood-carvings, his fondness for the Church, or the intensity of his emotions toward his wife, suddenly Will is described in terms of his eldest daughter. Ursula transforms Will's sense of his place in the world just as she changes Anna's; thus, her existence simultaneously reveals and satiates different, previously undiscovered parts of her parents.

The reader's engagement with Ursula continues to be based upon an awareness of her depth of character, even as a child. Conflicting sentiments are continuously ascribed to the young girl: "How Ursula *hated* always to represent the little Brangwen club" (260). This hatred is deliberately complicated by her infatuation with the exoticism of her family:

> The child's heart beat fast as she listened to these things. She could not understand, but she seemed to feel far-off things. It gave her a deep, joyous thrill, to know she hailed from far off, from Poland, and that dark-bearded impressive man. Strange, her antecedents were, and she felt fate on either side of her terrible. Almost every day, Ursula saw her grandmother, and everytime, they talked together. (258)

The vagueness ascribed to Ursula, of course, harkens back to the vagueness ascribed to Lydia Lensky, enabling Lawrence to subtly establish a strong lineage of hazy, ambiguous females. While Lawrence intentionally unites these generations of women, he also sets up a strong and telling opposition between Ursula and Anna; following in her father's church-admiring footsteps, Ursula is described as taking a strong stance against her mother: "As she became adolescent, thirteen, fourteen, she set more and more against her mother's practical indifference. To Ursula, there was something callous, almost wicked in her mother's attitude. What did Anna Brangwen, in these years, care for God or Jesus or Angels?" (273) This opposition manifests itself in, ironically, the same basic idea that attracted her to her familial roots in the first place: "To her

Jesus was another world, He was not of this world" (273). Jesus, much like Ursula's roots, is "far off." Yet, as Mark Spilka points out, "she lives for a while in the passionate, visionary realm of the church. But gradually the world of fact begins to obtrude upon this realm: she objects to the emphasis upon sin, she finds fault with the humble side of Christianity, and she tries to find some weekday meaning for her religious passion" (*Love Ethic* 108).[13]

Obviously, then, throughout her childhood—even in her conception—Ursula is a figure fraught with contradiction, much like her parents. Part of what differentiates Ursula from Anna and Will is her entry into a more public domain. Beginning with her entry into adolescence, "gradually the cloud of self-responsibility gathered upon her. She became aware of herself, that she was a separate entity in the midst of an unseparated obscurity, that she must go somewhere, she must become something" (281). Experiencing pressure, the source of which unknown or unknowable, to become a part of a world outside of what she has known, Ursula decides that "she must do something" (355). The ambiguity that surrounds all of Ursula's forward movements in the novel, again, directly ties her to her grandmother. Indeed, it further sets the stage for Ursula's problematic entry in the public space of the education system. Prior to her new, albeit re-entrance into the system—moving from student to teacher—Ursula is filled with the most idealistic aspirations: "She dreamed how she would make the little, ugly children love her. She would be so *personal*…she would make everything personal and vivid, she would give herself, she would give, give, give all her great stores of wealth to her children, she would make them *so* happy, and they would prefer her to any teacher on the face of the earth" (365). Ursula's inclination to "give, give, give" herself to her students is a testament to the image that she has crafted of an ideal teacher: one that simultaneously demands generous self-sacrifice and simultaneous self-fulfillment.[14]

That ideal is soon dismissed when she enters a particularly challenging Standard Five class. Lawrence captures a series of especially humiliating moments for Ursula, in which, responding to forceful reprimands, "she stood and listened, her heart hard and cold" (392). Building up the tension that Ursula both struggles with internally and experiences in her dialogic engagements with fellow teachers, the narrator suggests that "this was drawing near a crisis" (392). Constantly frowned upon for her lenience and incompetence in the classroom by her peers and her superiors, Ursula, isolated in her experience, comes to a simultaneously empowering and dismal realization:

> Only in her soul a change took place. Never more, and never more would she give herself as individual to her class. Never would she, Ursula Brangwen, the girl she was, the person she was, come into contact with those boys. She would be Standard Five teacher, as far away personally from her class as if she had never set foot at St Philip's school. She would just obliterate them all, and keep herself apart…(393)

Significantly, Ursula locates the division that she sees suddenly as a necessary part of her position as "Standard Five teacher" in the process of subjection: "She, as teacher, must bring them all, as scholars, into subjection. And this she was going to do. All else she would forsake" (393). Ursula discards her previous notions of generosity in favor of an adherence to a classroom model of master-servant, perhaps, in fact, a conscious or unconscious attempt to mimic some version of the dominant-submissive dynamic that her parents experience. Yet, what seems to be an organic part of Will and Anna's engagements with one another is something that Ursula has to consciously pursue: "She did not want to be a person, to be herself any more, after such humiliation. She would assert herself for mastery, be only teacher. She was set now. She was

going to fight and subdue" (394). Setting her mind to a course of action contrary to her instincts, Ursula adapts herself—by, in fact, sacrificing herself—to the situation; although Spilka assumes that "she is forced to treat her students as objects rather than human beings, and to govern them through sheer force of disciplinary will" (109), Ursula's conscious decision to approach the classroom as a tyrant is precisely that: a conscious decision on her behalf. There is no external force at work coercing Ursula to become violent, rather, she identifies a problem and locates a solution, however unsettling that solution may be.

The shift in Ursula's character is not a gradual one. Almost immediately after making the resolution to alter her character, self-presentation, and attitude, Ursula faces a climactic challenge in the classroom, responding to an "insolently, aggrieved, comic" boy (395). Prompted by the boy's encroachment of her authority and his disruption of the lessons for his peers, Ursula beats the child:

> The boy cowered before her glowering, fixed eyes. But she advanced on him…she snatched her cane from her desk, and brought it down on him. He was writhing and kicking…and she loathed him, the hideous writhing thing that was nearly too much for her…but the pain of the strokes cut through his writhing, vicious, coward's courage, bit deeper, till at last, with a long whimper that became a yell, he went limp. (396)

This instance of public violence, with its undeniable sexual overtones, seems to pick up on the inevitability of dominance and submission within all aspects of life. Lynn Chancer points to precisely this same thing when she writes, "whether the pattern appears in the well-publicized realm of sexuality or in other instances of everyday life, whether between a particular teacher and student, or a worker and boss, or in other highly charged encounters between parties caught

in symbiotic enmeshments of power and powerlessness" (1). Attune to the various institutionalized expressions of disparities in and experiments with power dynamics, Chancer points repeatedly to the position of the teacher as ordinarily indicative of the "everyday life" with which she is concerned. While that particular dynamic might be a fairly ordinary part of everyday life according to Chancer and Lawrence, its foreign, inorganic nature *for* Ursula is a testament to the extremity of this particular example: "But she had paid a great price out of her own soul, to do this. It seemed as if a great flame had gone through her and burnt her sensitive tissue" (403). The insinuation that Ursula's initial plans to be "personal" are indicative of her true character simultaneously reminds readers that Ursula's newfound authority in the classroom is now a testament to a forever altered woman. Furthermore, Ursula pays a series of physical, mental, and emotional prices for this act of mastery. Right after the incident, she is "trembling violently…quite still, and weak…afraid, and strange" (398); the aftermath of the public beating alters Ursula almost entirely. In addition, it truly complicates Keith Sagar's assertion that "Ursula is the first 'free' soul' in the English novel" (59); despite the freedom inherent in what Sagar sees as "her desperate search for bearings" (59), Ursula's decision to adhere to what she perceives as an institutionalized paradigm of public mastery further suggests an adherence to the institution itself.[15]

While Ursula's violent performance is initially meant to help her establish unquestionable authority as a teacher, it instead unsettles her position in a variety of ways. The boy's mother comes to school suggesting that it is not "allowed for teachers to beat the children like that" (401). Ursula is irritated by and frustrated with the woman's appeals to the headmaster and his glib responses. Yet, even his indirect remonstrations do not serve to alter Ursula's course of action as an authoritarian, tyrannical teacher. The power dynamics that manifest themselves in

the classroom—the Ursula versus *everyone* else atmosphere—necessitate continuous demonstrative proof of Ursula's domination. Once that proof is established, Ursula finds herself consistently returning to such violent displays as an outward expression of authority, and, perhaps, an internal reminder of such authority: "when she was driven wild, she seized her cane, and slashed the boy who was insolent to her, over head and ears and hands. And at length they were afraid of her, she had them in order" (403). Although Ursula is able to maintain order in her classroom as a result of these demonstrations, she does not appear to experience the order herself. Instead, these beatings bring out a wild, uncontrollable side of Ursula that helps to differentiate her from her parents, who seem to experience much more balanced, equivalent conflict.

Interestingly, this climactic and violent moment within the text actually helps to explain the rather static dryness ascribed to her throughout her relationship with Anton. If there is some sexual release within these acts of classroom violence, then Ursula's most exciting moments in the text might very well be the moments in which she is "thrashing" and "driven wild" by her students (403). The "great flame" that "had gone through her" truly seems to suggest that underneath the performance is a strong passion, though the ambiguity of the impression also suggests that such passion may be unknowable. This image of a fire passing through Ursula, reminiscent of the heated passion ascribed to Will and Anna, is quite the opposite of the way that Ursula is described in relation to Anton. In their first sexualized interaction, Ursula's "hands felt destructive, like metal blades of destruction" (317). While the destructive aspects of Ursula's hands may mirror the destructive elements of her overall character, the hardness and coldness associated with metal is even more telling: "There was a fierce, white, cold passion in her heart…But still in her body was the subdued, cold, indomitable passion…She was cold and

unmoved as a pillar of salt" (318). Of course, the unmistakable reference to the Biblical story of Lot emphasizes the lack of vitality that Ursula experiences, as this allusion foreshadows the inevitable destruction of Ursula and Anton's relationship.

Even the passion that is ascribed to the two of them is stifled, undercut by the replacement of images associated with fire and heat with images associated with emptiness and cold: "If he could but net her brilliant, cold, salt-burning body in the soft iron of his own hands, net her, capture her, hold her down, how madly he would enjoy her" (319). Such conditional statements are consistently applied to Anton's unsatisfied position as suitor: "She was cold and hard and compact of brilliance as the moon itself, and beyond him as the moonlight was beyond him, never to be grasped or known. It he could only set a bond round her and compel her" (318). Anton's desire to envelop Ursula, though it may appear to echo some of the sentiments that Will conjures up regarding Anna earlier on in text, actually reinforces its own futility. Despite Frieda Lawrence's conclusion that Ursula's relationships with men, specifically Anton, fail as a result of the lack of a "bigger, universal connection" (211) and despite Daleski's notion that Ursula "sets out in the full pride of her female self in search of a maximum intensity which can only be achieved by challenging him to a corresponding assertion of his male being" (112), Ursula's relationship with Anton at the most basic level lacks the intensity, the inflamed passion, that overflows from Will toward Anna and vice versa. In this case, Daleski's reading revolves around a series of misguided referents: "She succeeds in being her *maximum female self*, but it is a sense of horror that she realizes the consequences" (112–3 emphasis added). The suggestion that there is a maximum gendered self—both Ursula's "maximum female self" and Anton's hypothetical "maximum…male being"—ignores Lawrence's desire to play with particularly gendered traits, often swapping them between partners; furthermore, taking the masochistic model in play by

Anna and Will into consideration, Lawrence's application of such a model to both men and women indicates that he is far more inclusive in terms of gender roles than Daleski is willing to admit.

This reading of Ursula deviates significantly from the majority of criticism about her generation of the Brangwens. Spilka begins his discussion of Ursula by declaring that she "fares better…than either of her parents" because "Lawrence makes it clear that the impetus toward fuller life is always passed along from parent to child" (*Love Ethic* 106). Spilka's assertion presumes that the rocky ebb and flow of Anna and Will's marriage is something to be avoided, rather than something to cultivate. Using this same principle as the foundation for his reading of Ursula, Keith Sagar suggests that:

> In the second generation values clashed and modified each other, ending in a compromise and withdrawal from the struggle. Ursula doggedly persists, veering away from that which her soul recoils, moving into unknown territory with no better guide than the principle of trial and error, a deep sense of responsibility for her own life, and an indestructible faith, at the very centre of her, surviving all disillusions…(60)

Again, readings of *The Rainbow* prioritize Ursula's experience as somehow more meaningful, more substantial, and more innovative than that of her parents. That reading is problematically reductive, as it virtually ignores the reality that Anna and Will, too, are persistent, are guided by the principle of trial and error, and, while the indestructible faith that Sagar locates in Ursula is fairly traditional in its definition, readers could certainly locate a type of faith in their own marital, masochistic complex as developing a foundational core in both Anna and Will.

Accordingly, the rebirth experienced by Anna and Will within the establishment of the marital, and masochistic contract, is for Ursula, wholly superficial. Upon her early interactions with Anton, she finds herself "thrilled with a new life. For the first time she was in love with a vision *of herself*; she saw as it were a fine little reflection of herself in his eyes" (291 emphasis added). While Anna and Will always measure themselves against one another, a tenet that many critics actually agree is a particular part of Lawrence's project, Ursula measures herself against herself, mistakenly using what she perceives as Anton's emotions as a gauge. Of course, that Ursula's immediate reaction to a budding relationship with Anton is, in a sense, narcissistic in its origins—truly, Ursula falls in love with the possibility of herself in love[16]—suggests that it will remain unfulfilled.[17] Fulfillment, in many ways, is at the center of James Twitchell's analysis, to which I have previously referred; viewing Ursula as the child of Will and Anna's "dark union" (26), Twitchell interprets Ursula's insatiability as a symptom of her inherent— actually inherited from Anna—vampirism. Such vampiric tendencies are consistently identified by several Lawrentian scholars as a telling marker of his attitudes towards his female protagonists and to women in general. Yet, as already established, an approach to these characters that only considers them parasitic in nature proves itself far too simplistic to be wholly applicable when considering the often complicated development of Lawrence's characters.

Vampire analogy aside, Twitchell more usefully draws our attention to Lawrence's notion of two existing categories of women in terms of their relations with men. Referring to the views expressed by Lawrence in a chapter from *Studies in Classical American Literature* entitled "Nathaniel Hawthorne and *The Scarlet Letter*" (1924), Twitchell cites Lawrence: "unless a woman is held, by man, safe within the bounds of belief, she becomes inevitably a destructive force. She can't help herself…But let a woman loose from the bounds and restraints of man's

fierce belief, in his gods and in himself, and she becomes a gentle devil" (27). We can see the relationship between Anna and Will as one in which Will helps turn Anna into a "gentle devil"—or, what earlier analyses in this paper have revealed, one in which their own diabolic inclinations are always matched, often tempered, and thoroughly enjoyed—whereas Ursula, in her relationship with Anton, is a more "destructive force," precisely because Anton neither balances her out nor incites in her an empowering passion. Their relationship plateaus before the couple can reach the stages of mutual fervor that Anna and Will experience almost daily; this unsatisfying static trajectory reveals Anton's inability to give himself to a woman—"he kissed her, but she knew he could not touch her…his heart was hollow" (321)—and, more so, Ursula's inability to genuinely give herself to Anton—"her soul was empty and finished" (321). Although Twitchell sees Anton as under Ursula's lamouric spell, her lack of satiation from "devouring" him suggests that it is not Ursula's "complete mastery" over Anton that leads to the downfall of their relationship, but a more fundamental emptiness that their troubled interactions yield within each of them. The type of masochism that Anna and Will embody is, for Lawrence, a healthy acquiescence to inner (and even outer) demons that produces sexual and emotional sparks between two people; the type of masochism that Ursula and Anton embody, however, is more traditional in its rigid hierarchies and ultimately cold and stifling as a result. Obviously, Lawrence's visionary approach to masochism is emphasized by the ultimately unfulfilling nature of, in some ways, the more traditional relationship in the novel.

The relationships that comprise the core of *The Rainbow* suggest that good and evil, or other powerful and conflicting binaries exist within all of us. Lawrence takes one step further in his understanding of "human nature" by connecting that nature to the nature of others that who outside traditional social realms—the pervert, the sexual deviant, the animal[18]—in order to

highlight the existence of a telling historical masochistic mythology. We can see Lawrence reacting to the contemporary introduction of literature about masochism and the onslaught of clinical theories about masochism that sought to defined masochism as a deviation from social norms, choosing instead to highlight its pivotal role in the development and enactment of those norms. Marriage, as a foundational institution that perpetuates societal expectations and mandates, provides Lawrence with a rather conventional, even conventionally boring, space in which to experiment with truly life-altering theories about sexuality, identity, and personal relationships. The result of this experiment is, of course, Lawrence's treatise on the ever-present existence of masochistic tendencies within the sphere of true love. Anna and Will are, without a doubt, perfectly matched in their love, passion, hatred, anxiety, independence, and dependence; their joint experience of unstable circumstances, emotions, and perceptions—that which consistently troubles critics interested in a monolithic theory of the novel—is what establishes within them Lawrence's intriguing realistic ideal of marital partnership.

Notes

1. Krafft-Ebing, in his initial definition of masochism, refers explicitly to its namesake: “I feel justified in calling this sexual anomaly ‘Masochism,’ because the author Sacher-Masoch frequently made this perversion, which up to his time was quite unknown to the scientific world as such, the substratum of his writings” (160).Other similar definitions were surfacing near the same time, though Krafft-Ebing’s appeared in German in 1912 and English in 1922. Ellis, too, writes that masochism is “sexual emotion associated with the desire to be physically subjugated and morally humiliated” (198).

2. Critics who investigate the relationships that appear in Lawrence’s fiction tend to want to create a unified portrait of Lawrence that can be read into his characters and their interactions with one another. Interestingly, descriptions of Ursula’s lesbian teacher and her arguably gay uncle are used to reveal Lawrence’s homophobia while the gladiatorial scene in *Women in Love* is used to support readings of Lawrence’s appreciation for homoerotic, even homosexual love. Yet, those readings are always exclusive and totalizing, and as a result, ineffective; they require their respective critics to ignore, overlook or dismiss textual evidence that complicates their readings.

3. Twitchell’s analysis of female vampiric tendencies in Lawrence’s novels would actually benefit from gesturing toward Sacher-Masoch’s characterizations of the quintessential mistress, her power, and her victim’s desires; obviously, Lawrence has appropriated much of that in his novels. In *Sons and Lovers*, we may approach Miriam as Mrs. Morel does, in wholly vampiric and parasitic terms: “She [Miriam] wants to absorb him. She wants to raw him out and absorb him till there is nothing left of him, even for himself. He will never be a man on his own feet – she will suck him up” (230); Sacher-Mascoh describes Wanda, the torturess in *Venus in Furs* in

precisely the same terms—"she clung to my lie, drawing my soul from my body" (197)—constantly appropriating the very revealing term that critics have picked upon in Lawrence's fiction: "devour." From *Sons and Lovers* to *Women in Love*, Lawrence moves from a set of masochistic qualities to sets of destructively masochistic relationships. Gerald and Gudrun represent, in many ways, the penultimate masochistic relationship as defined by Sacher-Masoch and echoed by Deleuze: masochistic tendencies are successfully beaten out of the "victim" until sadistic tendencies arise. Gudrun, initially compelled in her relationship by the tumultuous heat and abuse that she receives from Gerald, becomes the sadistic heroine. She acknowledges that to Loerke when she writes of Gerald's death: "we have killed him."

4. Deleuze breaks down the oft-connected terms "sadism" and "masochism"—"we are questioning the very concept of an entity known as sadomasochism" (13)—by asserting the marked difference between those considered to be the founders of such philosophies; Deleuze uncovers fundamental oppositions or distinctions between Sade and Sacher-Masoch, their methodologies, their language, their relation to the law, their relation to their "victims" or "counterparts" all in order to suggest that Sacher-Masoch is the more nuanced and interesting figure, despite the prevalence of criticism about and attention paid to Sade. Further, Deleuze takes apart contemporary misconceptions of sadism and masochism as stemming from the same impulses or as stemming from a turning about of one set of impulses.

5. Moreover, while Langbaum is doing something critically useful and exciting when he utilizes a language of domination and exploitation, his assessment of Lawrence's attitudes toward sexuality, that "sexuality must be purchased at the price of obliterated consciousness and obliterated sense of the partner's otherness" does not account for the heightened sense of

consciousness that Lawrence's characters often experience precisely at the climactic moment when they clash with one another.

6. As the introduction to this dissertation suggested, Sacher-Masoch sees masochists as men, or rather men as masochists, for a precise reason: "Each of us ends up like Samson. We are always betrayed by the woman we love, whether she wears a sable cloak or a linen smock" (268). Further, in Ellis's chapter on "Algolagnia (Sadism and Masochism)," he, like Sacher-Masoch, traces a historical lineage of male subjugation in courtship rituals and romantic relationships. Yet, Freud, in "A Child is Being Beaten" (1919) locates the tendencies toward masochistic behavior within women, predominantly; he writes of the emphasis on incestuous love in genital development between daughter and father (166-7). Lawrence's inclusion of both male and female masochists—or rather equivalently masochistic males and females—is yet another testament to his dedication to widening the social spectrum in which masochism can be located.

7. Sacher-Masoch emphasizes the persuasion necessary on Severin's behalf to convince Wanda to move beyond the position of generous lover to the position of icy, cruel mistress. Wanda's authority stems from the masochistic contract while Severin's power stems from his initiation of the masochistic complex and contract into which both he and Wanda will enter.

8. Severin as victim is difficult to distance from Sacher-Masoch as masochist. In an essay entitled, "The Masochistic Contract," Victor N. Smirnoff writes about the conflation between fact and fiction that appears in *Venus in Furs*; perhaps, more adequately, he means that boundary between Sacher-Masoch's biographical history and Severin's experiences is often a blurry one, if it exists at all. Moreover, the appendices that appear as a part of *Venus in Furs* are about Sacher-Masoch's childhood, love affairs, marriages and memories. It is virtually impossible, then, to

conceive of either partner as "passive"; rather, they are wholly active participants in their mutually fulfilling roles.

9. Although Lawrence's familiarity with the textual body of Sacher-Masoch's work is unknown (and that Freud's "Fetishism" is *first* published in 1927) other theories about the development of fetishes and the sexual import of those fetishes were circulating during the first several decades of the twentieth century. Ellis and Krafft-Ebing both publish about the "fetich" prior to or during Lawrence's composition of *The Rainbow*.

10. With the current political debates about Proposition 8 and the issue of gay marriage, this quote seems discouragingly traditional in its definition of marriage. This approach to defining marriage and gender roles therein, though, must be placed into Lawrence's particular context; by reading Lawrence as constructing a masochistic complex that removes gender differences from playing a specified role within it, his approach toward marriage, while heteronormative in its appearance, is still quite groundbreaking—and, I would venture to say queer, given its gender neutrality.

11. Will's "adultery" is the perfect example of the necessity of this acceptance. It is only after he realizes the lack of fulfillment generated by the relationships he could have with other women—sexual, emotional, superficial, or otherwise—that Will wholeheartedly embraces the shifting power dynamic within his relationship with Anna.

12. Lawrence's disdain for psychoanalysis in general, and Freud in particular, is well-chronicled. In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, he warns of the ubiquity of analysts: "They have crept in among us as healers and physicians; growing bolder, they have asserted their authority as scientists; two more minutes and they will appear as apostles" (10-11).

13. While Spilka's retelling of Ursula's attachment to and deviation from religiosity, he does not explain the roots of that attachment: "From her father, she has received her first intimation of religious mystery, and of the dark sensual underworld where Brangwen reigns so potently" (108). Yes, Ursula's attachment to the Church is, in some way, an attachment to her father—especially as its serves to distance Ursula from her mother; yet, the suggestion that Will is solely associated with "dark" sensuality is a grave misreading of his marriage.

14. Readers, here ought to think about the ways in which this image, for Ursula, is fraught with echoes of masochistic tendencies. The idea that Ursula has to give entirely of herself to her students in order to achieve, in her mind, an idyllic, contented status is yet another version of Lawrence's everyday masochisms.

15. Further, its imagery participates in a psychoanalytical discourse about dominance. In Freud's "A Child is Being Beaten," he mentions the scenario of children being beaten by an authority figure, such as a teacher, as one of the foundations of later fantasies about beatings.

16. Contrary to the struggle of selfhood that Tom experiences in his marriage to Lydia, Ursula's engagement with Anton seems significantly more surface-driven.

17. For a detailed description of how Lawrence sees the narcissism of women manifest itself corporeally and sexually, refer to the discussion between Connie and Mellors about clitoral orgasms, sexually selfish women, and "lesbian" sexuality. See Lawrence, D.H. *Lady Chatterley's Lover*.

18. Torgovnick uses Ellis for a comparative reading of D.H. Lawrence's use of animal imagery in relation to descriptions and/or analyses of human sexuality.

5. Ménage-a-Masochism: *Quartet*'s Modernist Triangle

Jean Rhys's experimentation with masochism in *Quartet* (1928) presents readers with a model seemingly more complicated than those already discussed. Although *Villette*'s Lucy Snowe found herself amidst a detached and mostly theoretical love triangle—Dr. John, Ginevra and Lucy, herself—*Quartet*'s Marya Zelli lives within a literal, physical, daily love triangle.[1] *Quartet*, in its title, implies the existence of a foursome, yet the triangulated affair that Rhys sets up between the Heidler's and Marya is clearly the novel's central focus. Left virtually widowed by the imprisonment of her husband, Marya is initially a victim of circumstance; then, due to the apparent kindness of strangers, she is cast and casts herself as a pawn in some version of marital love conquest. Marya finds herself at the whims of Lois and H.J. Heidler, who offer to take her in and take responsibility for her. Despite the rather obvious presentation of Marya's exploitation—as she is taken in and apparently taken advantage of—she actually finds tremendous agency in the choice to stay with the Heidlers and the degradation that ensues. Her relationships with both husband and wife individually, and the couple together have confused critics and readers alike. Despite the ordinariness of such a triangulation—husband, wife, mistress—there is little critical attention paid to the inherent masochism that surfaces in such dynamics. While many scholars might cite the inevitable amputation and the ultimate impossibility of such a relationship, few pay deliberate attention to the nuances that make it actively satisfying for all parties involved.

Given the representation of Marya's rather dire circumstances, the allure of reading her as a passive victim in the unfolding of the narrative is strong. A future on her own, without a husband, looks quite bleak for Marya and, thus, readers are apt to view the Heidlers as preying on her vulnerability. Yet, such a reading is sharply countered by the infrastructure and style of

the novel itself. It is by virtue of Marya's continuous decision to stay a part of the newly triangulated Heidler partnership and of her interpretive claims about other characters' opinions and emotions that she actively seeks out authoritative agency within *Quartet*. Ultimately, readers are left with an awareness of the inevitability of masochism, its pervasiveness within the threesome, its existence as necessary for Marya, and its unique ability to empower. Further, though Marya's situation is initially complicated by Mr. Heidler's sexual advances and her own conflicting, heightened desires, this relationship is further complicated by Mrs. Heidler's complicity in and encouragement of it. Perhaps predictably, Lois Heidler's enjoyment of this affair often troubles critics, yet it is her position relative to Marya and Heidler that encourages a reading of *Quartet* as Rhys's reshaping of masochistic engagements beyond Marya's seemingly overt masochism, providing an alternative but still empowering model of ordinary masochisms.

While Jean Rhys is perhaps most well-known for *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Rhys critic Thomas F. Staley reminds readers of the formative position of *Quartet,* her first published novel:

> The importance of *Quartet* in the Rhys canon is difficult to overemphasize, for it reveals the discovery and initial development of that original voice and tone which was to characterize and define her fiction throughout the 1930s…it does record the beginning of what was to become Rhys's distinctive style…initiates most of the major themes preoccupying Rhys's later fiction. (36)

Although Staley dedicates a substantial amount of critical space to *Quartet*, it is most often approached as a marginal text in the Rhys canon. Regarded as important solely because of its position as first, it is also strangely excused for occupying that same position, with critics like Staley discussing its "faults." Full of, as Peter Wolfe suggests "agonized, half-articulated emotions" (66), the novel seems to invite fairly monolithic scholarship. At times, the

autobiographical elements of the text yield predictable readings as Helen Nebeker points out that "in Heidler, evoking the ghost of Ford Madox Ford from her own past, Rhys creates an image of Victorian-male-perversion personified and, through him, offers appalling insight into less generally known aspects of the Victorian Zeitgeist" (6). Rhys's own love triangle—complete with a *Quartet*-esque invitation to participate in Ford's partnership with Stella Bowen—allows Nebeker to discuss Rhys's reliance on and ties to Victorian imagery and ideals; it also, however, often functions as a univocal approach to the text, at times trumping the demand for more critically informed readings. In spite of the variety of frameworks applied to the novel—providing geographical relevance, commentary and insight on superficiality, and representations of female masochism—few pieces of scholarship, especially feminist-inflected approaches, escape an approach to *Quartet* that focuses on female victimization. Marya is continuously treated by scholars, like Mary Lou Emery, as "a weak and self-destructive woman" (113), or, like Peter Piazza, as "the same woman" in a "downward spiral" (125). Such readings betray a sustained reliance upon interpretations of Mr. Heidler as dominant and Marya as submissive, a one-dimensional assumption that has proven problematic all throughout this dissertation. In this case, yet again, misinterpretations of masochism in general and Marya's masochism specifically form the basis for much of the scholarship on the novel. Such readings, though, speak to the ways in which Lois and Marya's dynamic rests on a presumption about the relationship between masochism and victimhood that is subtly but vitally undermined in *Quartet*.

The Attraction of Repulsion

Marya's vagueness and ambiguity are the prime characteristics that define her, at least according to critics who locate such vagueness in her initial casting in the novel, lacking

"solidity…the necessary fixed background" (121). This introduction to Marya allows "her existence" to be continuously read as it is initially defined, as "haphazard" (121). As a result, critics read Marya as actively without a set of solid, substantial characteristics; rather, she is treated as "rather vague and aimless" (Staley 38). Such aimlessness, writes Staley, prevents Marya from assuming "postures requiring decisiveness and direction" (39). Staley, like others who have written on the novel, approaches Marya with a pitying eye, using the early chapters of the novel, to establish Marya as "helpless" (Staley 39). Importantly, the haphazard nature of Marya's existence is presented as a deliberate contrast to her husband Stephan's violent and thus unpredictable "inconsistencies" (121). However oddly their marriage is shaped, Marya is defined by this opposition. Because Marya is presented as continuously giving way to such inconsistencies, scholars feel justified in undermining the substance of her presence in the novel. Such a limited approach to Marya prematurely impedes her movement, agency, and vitality within the text.

Marya's engagement with her husband, though, also provides readers with a fuller portrait of her eccentricities, and ultimately unifying the entire cast of the novel for whom contradiction is a defining feature. While she is with Stephan—and significantly, the violence used to introduce him—Marya is "strangely peaceful" and "happy, petted, charming" (127). These "magical words" (Thomas 127) suggest that Marya's "desire for Stephan is essentially narcissistic. She is seduced by an image of herself as 'happy, petted, charming' (what Stephan promises her she will be), no longer 'lonely' and 'frightened of her loneliness' (*Quartet* 15)…" (79). Moreover, the repetition of this description further articulates the seeming contradiction in the coexistence of Marya's happy peacefulness and Stephan's inconsistent violence as a substantial part of her life. Yet, Stephan is not simply the product of violent inconsistencies;

rather, he is "secretive and a liar" as well as "a very gentle and expert lover" (130). The tension between the foundational characteristics ascribed to Stephan is paralleled by those attributed to Marya who, in relation to Stephan, is "the petted, cherished child, the desired mistress, the worshipped, perfumed goddess" (130).[2] Readers might stumble over these lists of characteristics as they seem at odds with other descriptions of Marya from the early chapters in the novel. Yet, the apparent impossibility of this conglomeration of characteristics is actually at the heart of Rhys's overall project: an emphasis on the inevitability and necessity of conflict within oneself, the usefulness of which, when dealing with and relating to others, cannot be undercut. Accordingly, Marya's approach to her downwardly spiraling circumstances suggests a similar adherence to contradiction: "This is a beautiful muddle I'm in" (134). Finding the beauty in the muddle is the foundation of Marya's masochism, which is continuously cultivated by virtue of her circumstances throughout the duration of the novel. While Rhys's women are usually cast together as representative of a very specific type—often based upon a characterization of Rhys, herself—Marya's seemingly paradoxical nature is a significantly defining feature for her.

In *The Rhys Woman* (1990), Paula Le Gallez attempts to avoid the "myth that the personality of the 'Rhys woman' is one of innocence [that] seems to have become assimilated by generations of critics..." (22) by choosing to view Marya as a character with a bit more agency in the novel. Although innocence is not synonymous with inactivity, the Rhys woman is constantly framed as naively and aimlessly floating throughout the confines of the novels, moving at the instigation of those more powerful and substantial than she. Marya, however, does not easily fit into this all-encompassing paradigm, regardless of how often it is applied to her. Her apparent listlessness is consistently yet subtly countered by the implicit authority given to her vis-à-vis the

presentation of other characters. Such elusive mechanisms actually attest to Marya's agency in constructing her own circumstances and strongly defy traditional, almost pitying readings of her.

Of course, Rhys is not direct in claiming such authority for Marya, whose apparently inactive presence has its roots in her personal history—and, as biographers and scholars have established, Rhys's own history—as a chorus girl: "Gradually passivity replaced her early adventurousness. She learned, after long and painstaking effort, to talk like a chorus girl, to dress like a chorus girl and to think like a chorus girl—up to a point. Beyond that point she remained apart, lonely, frightened of her loneliness, resenting it passionately" (126). This peek into Marya's prior life suggests that the passivity that is consistently associated with her is not inherent but learned. The importance of Marya's earlier life cannot be overshadowed, as it emphasizes the slow encroachment of such foreign passivity. With "long and painstaking effort," Marya becomes an ideal representation of a passive woman who, the narrative implies, will be desirable as a result. Yet, by highlighting the effort that Marya puts forth and the strength of her resentment, Rhys suggests that this passivity is not, in fact, passive at all; rather, it is a deliberate and active performance. Further, despite the insinuation that such a performance is done at the behest of male audiences and the difficulty in locating the source of the charade, Marya is fully responsible for it. As Rhys describes her own experience in "Chorus Girls," a chapter from *Smile Please: An Unfinished Autobiography* (1975), readers are obviously encouraged to draw parallels between her own experience and that of Marya's: "Going from room to room in this cold dark country, England, I never knew what it was that spurred me on and gave me an absolute certainty that there would be something else for me before long" (90). The listlessness emphasized in Rhys's own description of her past echoes *Quartet*'s presentation of its leading lady on the surface.[3] Marya's passionate resentment, though, reminds readers that her inactive stance in the

novel is simply a stance that she chooses circumstantially. Rather than an intrinsic element of the "nature" that is constantly ascribed to her throughout the novel, Marya's haphazard presentation of herself has within it far more conscious commentary about relationship dynamics and womanhood. Marya's more complicated identity, however inconvenient it proves to be for critics, is a substantial expression of the depth of masochism.

Moreover, as Rhys reminds readers of Marya's flimsiness, she also distinctly contrasts that with the hardiness of the Heidlers, to whom she is constantly compared:

> They were fresh, sturdy people. Mr. Heidler, indeed, was so very sturdy that it was difficult to imagine him suffering from a nervous breakdown of any kind whatever. He looked as if nothing could break him down…His shoulders were tremendous, his nose arrogant, his hands short, broad, and so plump that the knuckles were dimpled…His eyes were light blue and intelligent, but with a curious underlying expression of obtuseness—even of brutality. (123)

Marya, then, "a blonde girl, not very tall, slender-waisted" (119), is completely overwhelmed by H.J. Heidler, who booms with authority, both physical and theoretical, as his "tremendous" and "broad" body overshadows and intimidates Marya's small frame. Lois Heidler, too, is described in terms that dominate Marya: "A strong dark, woman, her body would be duskily solid like her face" (124).[4] Readers are thus encouraged to consider this presentation of the Heidlers' physicality as an indicator of what they perpetually and wholly possess, and what, by contrast, Marya lacks. As critics read this lack on Marya's behalf as a detriment, so too, should they read these early descriptions of the Heidlers as the presentation of a potential remedy: a filling of the void, so to speak. Importantly, also, the suggestion of the Heidlers as some sort of rigid remedy is bolstered by Marya's observation that Heidler "is a bit of a brute sometimes" (124). In fact,

Marya's earlier enjoyment of Stephan suggests that Heidler's brutishness does not, in any way, diminish his attractiveness to Marya. The slow unfolding of Marya's early reactions to H.J.—her observations and readings of his physical bearing, personal character, and social behavior—further emphasize Marya's awareness of and interest in him: "Not at all an amiable looking person. But nevertheless not without an understanding, for every time that her glass was empty he refilled it. She began to feel miraculously reassured, happy, and secure. Her thoughts were vague and pleasant, her misery distant as the sound of the rain" (141). The metaphor of her empty glass being consistently and necessarily filled by Heidler is a testament to his role in her life. Besides the overt sexual imagery association with the detail here, Heidler is presented as possessing the capacity to address all of Marya's needs and desires. Accordingly, Heidler and his consuming, brute presence come to represent the potential onset of happiness as Marya's anticipation of such contentment sustains her momentarily.[5]

Indeed, at the close of Marya's first substantial encounter with the Heidlers, the intricacies of her character are emphasized in precisely this light: "For she was reckless, lazy, a vagabond by nature, and for the first time in her life she was very near to being happy" (125). The repetition of this characterization of Marya's "nature" has enabled critics to write her into a passive corner; yet, Marya's recklessness and laziness do not necessarily equal passivity. Indeed, Marya proves to be a particularly active agent in the unfolding of the sexual and romantic triangle in the novel, a testament to Rhys's interest in the type of active masochism that this dissertation hinges upon. The active masochism that Marya experiences interestingly applies to Lois Heidler as well even though she is barely a peripheral figure in the criticism of the novel, notable primarily for the amount of negative critical attention she receives. Rhys, however, is quite deliberate about Lois's problematically empowered position in the novel—a position that

complicates an all-inclusive reading of Rhys's listless, "inexplicably bohemian" women (Naipaul 58).[6] Ultimately, the details of the text, including Rhys's characterization and presentation of Lois, Marya's own complicated sense of self and desire and the way Marya presents herself narratively, and H.J.'s shifting demands, encourage a broader and more enlightened representation of masochism. Further, given the context of Rhys's construction of and the dissemination of the novel, this representation of masochism is, in many ways, the most self-aware and the most overt experimentation present. Ultimately, then, such a reading provides a fundamental glitch in the logic of critics who perceive Marya—and often the entirety of Rhys's cast of women, including Lois—as passive, powerless victim.

Three is a Magic Number

The triangulation of relations in this novel is particularly important given the titular formation of the novel's primary relations as a foursome. While Rhys obviously chronicles the lives and trajectories of the intersecting pairs, the Marya-Heidlers trio is at the core of the emotional and narrative crises in *Quartet*. Yet, critical responses to the text focus on the duality inherent in the four main players: the obvious, though problematic, comparisons between Stephan and Mr. Heidler and Marya and Mrs. Heidler. Physically, the couples stand in stark opposition; the characteristics that Rhys hides under their oft-elaborate superficial façades, though, betray much more telling similarities. Notably, the novel's representation of this love triangle is constantly changing shape and direction. The desires, regrets, power struggles, lusts, passions of the characters are very deliberately cast and recast in varying directions. Take, for example, Marya's trajectory throughout the narrative: from start to end, Marya is circumstantially woman, mistress, child, heartbreaker, married, single, and heartbroken. Initially,

Marya's coupled self is made singular by Stephan's imprisonment. Her early engagements with the Heidler's encourage her alignment with Lois while further engagements with the couple tear that alignment apart. Marya's previous bond with Lois is replaced by a presumptive bitter rivalry. Although critics often read Marya as a typical Rhys masochist—powerless and traumatized—the unfolding of the narrative reveals that Marya's masochism is intimately tied to Lois's. Through the tempestuous shifting relations in *Quartet*'s triangle—and the emphasis on Marya's relations with and to Lois—Rhys explores the intricacies of masochism and the various manifestations and expressions of masochistic tendencies as they find their outlets.

Writing during the 1920s, Rhys—and, tellingly, her audience—is clearly aware of the circulating theories about masochism, both in sexological and psychoanalytical terms. Given the context, such theoretical influences are clear in Rhys's formation of and approach to Marya and her masochism. Thus, Mary Lou Emery identifies Rhys's awareness of "the debate over the 'nature' of female sexuality and the concept of female masochism opened wide during the 1920s" (117). With the expansion of public discourses about masochism, and the cultural approach to such ideas as "analytical dogma" (Emery 117), both Rhys and her readers are unable to escape the identification and classification of masochism. The assertion that Rhys is clearly influenced by psychoanalytical definitions of and approaches to masochism allows Emery to read Marya as the prototypical female masochist:

> …the institution of marriage still regulates the sexual lives of women. It constructs socially a feminine identity that then conveniently, if illogically, fits a psychological diagnosis of pathological yet normal female masochism The Heidlers' marriage imprisons Marya as brutally as the Santé imprisons Stephan…Jean Rhys initiated her narrative experiments in an exploration and

> critique of feminine masochism as engendered through modern European marriage. (120–2)

Emery links masochism and marriage, approaching a heteronormative institution as responsible for theoretically non-normative tendencies. Despite involving such a controversial leap, Emery's reading of Marya still abides by psychoanalytical definitions of masochists as victims. The comparison of Marya's "imprisonment" with Stephan's, though, is a complicated one. Stephan's imprisonment is forced and enforced, whereas Marya's circumstances are significantly more ambiguous. Even though Stephan's position in the Santé is monitored and regulated externally, Marya is responsible, at least partially, for her own participation in the Heidler triangle. Indeed, the novel seems to react against the notion of a singular female masochism.

Accordingly, Patricia Moran's most recent approach to the novel makes explicit the more innovative masochistic elements that Rhys utilizes as a means of defining her heroines. Moran's discussion of masochism extends far beyond a basic, and clearly misdirected, assumption about mastery. Identifying a trend significantly more important than the repetitive figure of the listless woman, Moran writes that "…masochism functions for the Rhys character as a complex response to psychic trauma" (116). Marya's desire to be "known and recognized" is clear from the onset of the novel. As even the earliest descriptions of Marya suggest, the looseness ascribed to Marya searches for the substantiation of recognition; indeed, Marya's early self is clearly looking for someone or something to define herself against. Such substance, while it might be temporarily located in Stephan's "inconsistencies," is far more prominent in the rigidity of the Heidlers. Therefore, readers, however, are encouraged to be suspicious about the truth of the recognition that she receives. The "petted, cherished" Marya appears to be *a* Marya rather than *the Marya*; that is, the descriptions of Marya relative to Stephan's treatment of her are indicative

of one possible version of Marya. The recognition of a true self, Rhys—and, consequently Moran—suggest, is only possible through the embracing of masochism and its consequential empowerment. Thus, masochism becomes the only viable way that Marya can cultivate her own sense of self.

Masochism enables the formal recognition of the power dynamics that are often subsumed by and hidden within "nicer" relationships; such nicer engagements, though, simply disguise and muddle the same sets of power dynamics that are in play in more clearly delineated and constructed relations. Power relations play a pivotal yet divisive role in *Quartet* as they often surface under the guise of financial stability and are magnified by questions of financial insecurity.[7] Marya, in this regard much like Rhys's other women, looks to the secure and stable man—regardless of, or, more tellingly, because of his brutishness—as a means of protection, survival, and fulfillment. Staley claims that, "the Hiedlers attribute higher motives to themselves and are initially half-convinced that they want to protect Marya, but the real truth is they want Marya as a bed companion for Heidler—Lois to keep him from straying permanently, moved by some romantic gesture in his lust, and Heidler himself, not so much to protect Marya, but to feel the warmth of her small and supple body next to him" (40). Despite Staley's separation of protection and desire, they seem to coexist quite overtly for the Heidlers. Even Lois's explanation of their willingness to take in Marya enforces Heidlers compulsion to showcase his strength—both financial and otherwise: "H.J.'s always rescuing some young genius or the other…May's the one we've pulled out of a hole since we've been in Montparnesse" (148). Lois uses Heidler's compulsion to rescue as a means of enticing Marya; readers, however, understand that this impulse reveals and perpetuates his status as protector, as dominator, as conqueror, as father—a presumed object of desire for a financially strapped, unqualified young woman.[8]

As H.J. is the epitome of financial security in *Quartet*, Lois is presumed to be the prime beneficiary. Thus, the Heidlers consistently occupy a space of enviable comfort, and the narrator's comparison of Lois to Marya is often one based upon economics: "Her adequately becoming and expensive hat was well pulled down over her eyes. Her beige coat was well cut" (177). Lois, as she dons the symbols of her financial security, is drawn as practically the opposite of worn, disheveled Marya. Thus, Elgin Mellown asserts the importance of the divide that takes shape in the comparison of the two women: "She regarded the law as the instrument of the 'haves' against the 'have nots' and was well acquainted with every run of that long and dismal ladder by which the respectable citizen descends towards degradation. It was not her fault that she knew these things, and the cynicism they engendered had an unanswerable logic in it" (166–7). Mellown uses the gap in finances as a way of approaching the Rhys woman's descent into abasement. Even the cinematic version of *Quartet* emphasizes this chasm in economic circumstances when Marya thinks to herself: "Women like Lois, who've always had money, just don't understand what it's like for someone like me." The narrative itself suggests that "someone like" Marya, with her chorus girl background, is completely unprepared and unqualified for actual work to secure her own financial security. Accordingly, her previous experience entertaining men dictates the terms of her subsequent experience as a mistress. Marya's progressing position relative to Heidler is simply an inevitability given her circumstances.[9] The masochism that she cultivates in her position relative to the couple is ultimately her own means of empowerment.

The Other Other Woman

Although H.J.'s original allure might lie in his finances, Lois, too, has her own distinct appeal; in their earliest encounters, Heidler is, for both women, indicative of another privileged state of being—accessible only to a man. Despite Lois's apparent financial security and comfort within her marriage, readers are constantly reminded that it is Heidler who is responsible for and most privy to the experiences of that comfort. Therefore, Lois and Marya could occupy similar positions relative to Heidler. After Lois confesses to Marya that Heidler, "isn't always awfully nice to" to her (149), the narrator takes note: "They sat side by side on the divan and wept together. Marya wondered how she could ever had thought Lois hard. This soft creature, this fellow-woman, hurt and bewildered by life even as she was" (149). Marya's initially cautious reaction to Lois is replaced, in this intimate moment, with a surprising recognition of likeness. An overarching gesture toward gendered powerlessness unites the subsequently apparent rivals, as their temporarily powerless positions marginalize Heidler. Both women have chosen H.J. for his security and the brutishness that comes with it, actively pursuing lives that are different but momentarily parallel. It is through the circumstantial recognition of typical female trajectories—as they are embodied by both Marya and Lois—that Marya and Lois develop a telling intimacy.

A fleeting moment, one that "had come and gone" (154), this singular occasion plays a significant role in Marya's entanglement with the couple.[10] Despite Staley's gesture toward the indirectness of Lois's seduction, suggesting that "Lois, in a sense, has seduced her, but with so few options Marya is willing" (40), Lois's seduction is calculated, active, and effective.[11] Marya is as seduced by the show of Lois's togetherness and the circumstantial appearance of vulnerability as she is seduced by Heidler's sexual aggression and financial security. Of course, that seduction suggests an implicit queerness within the relationship between the two women;

without question, the intensity of emotions that surface between Lois and Marya, however shifting and extreme they may be, reflect their desire for each other and their desire to be each other. Marya is simultaneously attracted to both Lois and Heidler, both of whom occupy positions absolutely necessary to the cultivation of Marya's masochism in a triangulated affair. When Marya asks to leave the situation—the performance of unhappiness, at most—it is Lois with whom she pleads, rather than H.J., a clear testament to Lois's power and authority within the threesome. Moreover, it is Lois Stephan later perceives as his main rival, framing his criticisms of the couple by his reading of Lois as "absolutely primitive…cruel…very hypocritical" (206). It is Lois who threatens Stephan's position as Marya's lover, a vital juncture in the presentation of Heidler as dominant in all of his interactions. Indeed, Stephan's reading of Lois echoes Marya's later retroactive reading of Lois as a master manipulator, and virtually undercuts the sincerity of their interaction. This instance, though, overtly marks Marya's attraction to Lois—an integral and often overlooked element of the text.

Lois's intriguing position here allows Rhys to echo, in some ways, Havelock Ellis's writings on love, which speak in potentially telling ways about the gender delineations of courtship. In "Analysis of the Sexual Impulse" (1908), Ellis approaches courtship as indicative of the violence in sexual and romantic engagements: "Courtship is a play, a game; even its combats are often, to a large extent, mock-combats; but the process behind it is one of terrible earnestness, and the play may at any moment become deadly" (110). While critics are apt to pick up on H.J. as the active agent in courtship, Ellis's description of the role of the courter usefully applies to Lois, as well. From Lois's gesture of emotional intimacy to her "caressingly" physical encounters with Marya (146), Lois courts Marya in direct and effective ways. Despite Joseph Wisenfarth's suggestion that "Marya is an exception in requiring Lois's help in getting into

Heidler's bed" (74), it is not Marya who seeks out Lois's advice or guidance to seduce Heidler, but rather Lois who uses her position in order to actively encourage the development of Marya's intimacies with H.J. and herself.[12]

Thus, the game of courtship that Ellis speaks of is readily identifiable in this presentation of Marya's unfolding involvement with the Heidlers. After one of Marya's breakdowns in response to the problematic position that she is in, H.J. responds: 'But that's not playing the game, is it?...Not any sort of game" (171). Revealing the triangulation that has encompassed Marya is enough to anger her: "'What game?' answered Marya fiercely. 'Your game? Lois's game? Why should I play Lois's game? Yes, that is just it, it's all a game I can't play, that I don't know how to play'" (172). Marya's anger is deliberately misdirected here, as she fails to implicate herself in the game being discussed, further cultivating the presentation of herself as inarticulately helpless. H.J. is probably at his most honest in this moment—providing Marya with a fundamental truth about romantic entanglements that Havelock Ellis, too, identifies. In this encounter with H.J., Marya cannot seem to figure out whose game she is a part of, and what role she plays within that game. Ellis, however, reads the roles within the game itself as very clearly broken down into specific gendered categories: "We thus see that there are here two separate groups of feelings: one, in the masculine line, which delights in displaying force and often inflicts pain or the simulacrum of pain; the other, in the feminine line, which delights in submitting to that force, and even finds pleasure in a slight amount of pain, or the idea of pain, when associated with the experiences of love" (113). Ellis, like other sexologists and sexual theorists, divides behavior according to stereotypical gender traits; the male, the conqueror, is always in possession of power and authority while the female, the recipient, enjoys the effects of his abuse. The triangulation of the Heidler's affair with Marya obviously complicates the

dynamic that Ellis sets up, initially by adding a third party but more importantly by ascribing the "masculine" line to a female character who already embodies the "female" line; Lois, who does appear to "delight in submitting" to H.J. also "delights in displaying force" toward Marya. Because of the parallel experiences shared by Marya and Lois—including the clear parallels in their physical, emotional, and mental engagement with H.J.—Lois's satisfaction in her marriage is contingent upon similar pain. Although Marya's position relative to H.J. is most often the subject of critical inquiry, Lois occupies a similarly intriguing subject position in the text—using her own masochistic experience within her marriage to H.J. as a means of initiating Marya into the fold.

In his treatment of such gendered sexual impulses, Ellis suggests that this delineation is natural. Utilizing a reading of courtship rites and rituals among mammals, Ellis establishes what he perceives as the rules of courtship: "This association between love and pain still persists even among the most normal civilized men and women possessing well-developed sexual impulses. The masculine tendency to delight in domination, the feminine tendency to delight in submission, still maintain the ancient traditions when the male animal pursued the female" (111–2). Despite some of his intentions, Ellis's conception of the "delight in submission" helps to construct a sexological approach to masochism that identifies the perversion in men and men alone; what Ellis identifies as "the impulse to inflict pain"—an intrinsic part of male sexual behavior—"is brought into courtship, and at the same time rendered a pleasurable idea to the female" (110–1). [13] Ellis makes a vital distinction, though, between the pleasure/pain complex and the presumed passivity of the female:

> Courtship resembles very closely, indeed, a drama or game; and the aggressiveness of the male, the coyness of the female, are alike unconsciously

> assumed in order to bring about in the most effectual manner the ultimate union of the sexes. The seeming reluctance of the female is not intended to inhibit sexual activity either in the male or in herself, but to increase it in both. The passivity of the female, therefore, is not a real, but only an apparent, passivity. (113)

This "apparent" passivity of the female encourages Deleuze's subsequent elaboration upon the connection between apparent passivity and latent activity. Deleuze suggests that "we are dealing…with a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of schemes" (20). The ability of the "victim" to "educate, persuade, and conclude" suggests that "victim" is entirely the wrong word.[14] As most critics read Marya as *Quartet*'s leading masochist, it is imperative to note that both Lois and Marya ought to be approached in light of the empowering masochism has been a clear theoretical building block of this dissertation. The active role that both women occupy in terms of the development and fostering of their masochistic positions virtually nullifies any reading of *Quartet* as "based upon…the typical scenario of a woman's victimization" (Maurel 10). Characterizing either woman as a victim negates all possibilities of agency and empowerment, a vital part of the novel overall.[15]

Despite the notable similarities in their experiences, Lois and Marya are in markedly different positions. Lois's access to resources that Marya cannot imagine manifest primarily in her seamless attire and self-presentation are repetitively contrasted with Marya's chaotic and undone self. Lois's portrayal as the text progresses is marked by a rigidity specific to her: "Obviously of the species wife. There she was: formidable, very formidable, an instrument made, exactly sharpened for one purpose. She didn't analyse; she didn't react violently; she didn't go in for absurd generosities. Her motto was: 'I don't think women ought to make nuisances of

themselves'" (177). Lois, "of the species wife," is initially ascribed a tremendous amount of influence, only temporarily undercut by the insinuation that she is simply "made…for one purpose." That purpose, ambiguous at best, is reminiscent of the singular trajectory available to Marya throughout *Quartet*. Even though such a description is immediately contrasted to Marya, both women are primarily given "one purpose." Importantly, the language used to describe Marya's feelings—"haggard, tortured by jealousy, burnt up by longing" (177)—is the same as the language previously used by H.J. to explain his desire for Marya: "…I'm dying with love for you, burnt up with it, tortured with it" (160). Rhys refuses to conform to a set of gendered ideals, even when considering the link between torture and desire. This moment encourages reader to reconfigure the triangle in the novel; prior allegiances between Lois and Marya are replaced by an overlap in the experiences of H.J. and Marya. Moreover, Marya later ascribes her torment to both H.J. and Lois: "You've smashed me up, you two" (197)—a testament to Lois's position relative to Marya. The interconnectedness between the three parties hinges upon a set of unexpectedly shared experiences; repetitive linguistic overlaps suggest that Lois, Marya, and H.J. each experience and experiment with masochism as a means of self-identification and fulfillment.

As a result of this complicated engagement with gender roles, readers should approach Lois and Marya as more than simple rivals for H.J.'s affection and attention. Even as he declares his feelings for Marya, H.J. associates Lois with a tangential permissiveness as opposed to a passionate jealousy: "She's gone away to leave us together – to give me a chance to talk to you, d'you see? She knows that I'm dying with love for you, burnt up with it, tortured with it. That's why she's gone off" (160). As H.J. asserts the prioritization of his own desires, he cannot escape his ties to Lois. In fact, H.J. moves into the background of the narrative as Rhys dedicates much more of the novel to the women's engagement with each other. The obvious removal of Heidler

from most of the action of the novel suggests that Rhys is far more interested in the form and substance of the relationship that is developing between the two women. The consistent critical approach to Marya that defines her as a victim and bases that definition of her relationship with H.J., then, neglects to take into account the actual complex substance of the relationship between Marya and Lois. The rivalry established between the two, though, is one that is based primarily on precedent, conjecture and speculation rather than substantive declarations:

> She twisted her hands in her lap thinking: Oh, no, my girl, you won't go away. You'll stay here where I can keep an eye on you. It won't last long…it can't last long. I've always let him alone and given him what he wanted and it's never failed me. It won't fail me now. He'll get tired of her as soon as she gives in. Pretty! She's revolting. You can see when you look at her that she's been chewed up. (167)

Throughout the novel, readers are set up to follow Marya—her insecurities, anxieties, breakdowns, and revelations. As a result, this inside glimpse into Lois's mentality is a fuzzy one, at best. This indirect approach to Lois undercuts the predictable and justifiable set of reactions ascribed to her, as she continues to distance the reader from insight into Lois's genuine thought process: "('Come, come,' answered Lois's eyes. 'As woman to woman, do you suppose I believe that?')" (167). Lois's eyes answer Marya, and consequently require an act of interpretation in the text and on behalf of its readers; rather than presenting Lois's reaction as solid and easily identifiable, the narrative speaks directly to the uncertainty of interpretation in this case. Placing a substantial part of this engagement in parenthesis allows Rhys to further attest to the impossibility of knowing—with any degree of certainty—what Lois is actually thinking.

Instead, the importance of "knowledge" is deliberately overshadowing by the power of suggestion. Marya, though distanced from the third person narration, is often the source of the conjecture about the emotional insights of the other characters. Prior to the introduction of Lois's telling eyes, Marya thinks, "This is perfectly useless. She doesn't believe a word I'm saying. She hates me. She's going to try to down me. Whatever I do, she'll hate me and try to down me" (166). This "insight" into Lois's mentality is entirely a projection of Marya's own insecurities regarding her own position. Although Marya assumes that Lois is going to "down" her, the narrative unreliability of such an assertion suggests that Marya is fully responsible for her own theoretical "downing." Importantly, Marya also uses this word when projecting onto Lois's thoughts about her own situation: "Lois sat with an invulnerable expression on her dark face. It was as if she were saying: 'You can't down me. My roots go very deep'" (178). By ascribing the same language to Lois's thoughts, Marya unites herself with Lois as "two members of a harem" (180). Yet, by prioritizing the depth of Lois's roots, Marya hits herself where she is most vulnerable: her uncertain, insubstantial foundation.

Indeed, Marya continues this by suggesting that Lois treats her as a child: "When Lois did speak to her it was with a strained politeness which at moments was cringing—as if she said: I must keep her in a good temper" (180). Marya ascribes such thoughts to Lois as a means of abusing herself by proxy. Even as Marya appears to bequeath power and authority to Lois, she still actively maintains control of this presentation of Lois's thoughts. Whereas Herbert Gorman writes in his review of the novel that "Mrs. Heidler…is drawn with such maliciousness by Miss Rhys that the suspicion persists that she hated and, sometimes, feared the character" (7), Gorman—and many of Rhys's more modern critics—neglect to account for the way in which Marya has a heavy hand in the formation of this description. Instead of setting up the appropriate

opposition between Marya and Lois, Gorman pits Rhys against Lois, a clear pairing based upon autobiographical interchangeability. Yet, it is Marya who is given the interpretive power to dictate much of Lois's presentation in the text. Marya uses her projections of Lois's thoughts, emotions, and motivations a way of bolstering and validating her own masochism; it is not simply enough to allow the other characters to abuse her so she ascribes abusive thoughts to them as a way of ensuring the perpetuation of that abuse.

Perhaps counter-intuitively, this projection actually allocates a tremendous amount of agency to Marya. She virtually erases the possibility that readers might access other characters' thoughts firsthand. There is a vast difference between the surface narration and Marya's implicit control of that narration's construction. At no point in the novel does the narrator reveal herself to be Marya. Instead, narrative control momentarily shifts to Marya so that her interpretation of Lois's and H.J.'s behavior is the reader's only point of entry: "'They're talking about me,' Marya told herself. 'They're sitting there talking about me. Those two. I can't stick this'" (180). While Lois is heard criticizing an unidentified woman, Marya presumes that she is the subject of such ambiguous negativity. As Marya involves herself in the altercation, she further assumes "Besides, however reasonably or coherently she talked, they wouldn't understand, either of them. If she said: 'You're torturing me, you're mocking me, you're driving me mad,' they wouldn't understand" (181). Again, Marya's thoughts necessarily ascribe an impenetrable power to the couple without allowing them the opportunity to prove otherwise; Marya uses her narrative authority to punish herself, a clear extension of her own masochism and the power it yields for her.

In very deliberate ways, the subtlety of Marya's acquisition of power and authority hinges upon social expectations. As Cairn explains to Marya, "Of course she hates you…What

do you expect? She'd be a very unnatural woman if she didn't hate you" (175). Cairn's use of the word "unnatural" here is particularly revealing; the cultivation and maintenance of a rivalry between the two women is necessary to preserve social order within the novel. As Cairn's rhetorical question implies, Lois simply must hate Marya because her presence must be perceived as a threat to the sanctity of Lois's marriage to H.J. The necessarily presumed rivalry between Lois and Marya allows readers the comfort of relying on traditional notions of marriage and adultery, rather than paying attention to the ways in which the novel actively complicates such notions. While any kindness on Lois's behalf is presented as unnatural, her willingness to integrate Marya into her marriage, her home, her life, is insinuated to be, by contrast, perfectly natural—a critically controversial claim to make about the definition and maintenance of heterosexual marriage.

Although it seems to be a peripheral concern of the novel, questions of sexual and emotional normalcy actually underscore much of *Quartet* and, importantly, much of Ellis's work on the truth of love: "The relation of love to pain is one of the most difficult problems, and yet one of the most fundamental, in the whole range of sexual psychology. Why is it that love inflicts, and even seeks to inflict, pain? Why is it that love suffers pain, and even seeks to suffer it?" (110) Ellis's attempt to "naturalize" some of the masochist's linkage of pain and pleasure is particularly important for Marya, Lois, and H.J, yet the primary scholarly focus is always on Marya's suffering. [16] Nebeker is unwilling to acknowledge the possibility that both women could either be active in their situations or be attaining pleasure from their respective circumstances: "Clearly, both Marya and Lois unconsciously mask their dependence and sexual abasement under the name of 'love,' preserving their self-respect which is more important to them than the opinions of others concerning their 'fallen' state" (8). Notably, Lois and Marya are significantly

more active participants in their realities than Nebeker—and many other critics—are willing to acknowledge, stuck, perhaps, in archaic associations between masochism, passivity and victimization.[17]

A testament to Rhys's commitment to a more open portrayal of masochism, the rhetoric of the text shifts to a consistent embrace of unhappiness on behalf of virtually all of the characters. When H.J. refuses to entertain Marya's threat of leaving, she accuses him of being "the cruelest devil in the world" (179) yet H.J.'s response demands that Marya recognize that he is "as unhappy" (179). Shortly thereafter, Marya "hit him as hard as she could," Lois "began to talk in a caressing voice," and H.J. "pushed her so that she staggered back against the wall…buried his face in his arms again and began to sob" (181). All three characters are allocated a measure of unhappiness that is crucial for the development of their identities and the satiation of their desires. Such engagements between H.J. and Marya reveal the satisfaction inherent in such fraught and tense exchanges: "His eyes were clear, cool and hard, but something in the depths of them flickered and shifted. She thought 'He'd take any advantage he could – fair or unfair. Caddish he is.' Then as she stared back at him she felt a great longing to put her head on his knees and shut her eyes…To give in and have a little peace. The unutterably sweet peace of giving in" (183).[18] Marya is constantly torn between putting up a fight against H.J.'s advances and giving in to her desire for him. Importantly, though, Marya gets great pleasure from the tension between these two impulses and the strain that it puts on her emotional and physical self—a testament to the cultivation of her masochistic tendencies within this relationship with the Heidlers.

While Marya's masochism is the subject of many critical explorations of the text, that masochism is read as indicative of unresolved problems and a deformed approach to love. Even

Moran, who credits the couple, rather than simply Heidler, for Marya's sexual and emotional integration, reads their success as a result of Marya's misguided interpretations of the situation: "Marya intuits that something is not quite straightforward about their dealings with her, but she is gradually drawn into their schemes as they in turn awaken her masochistic desires. Significantly, when Lois tries to persuade Marya to join the household and then to satisfy Heidler sexually, Marya begins to long for a kind of pleasure she imagines as pain" (130). The claim that the Heidler's invitation to Marya is responsible for allowing her masochistic tendencies to surface does not account for the ways in which earlier descriptions of Marya—and her initial evaluations of the characters—reveal those desires as barely disguised, if hidden at all. The complicated nature of such desires taints Marya's engagement with Lois—and, of course, with H.J.—with constant, almost overwhelming conflict from this point onward; whether the root of that conflict is Marya's interactions with Lois, her feelings of regret and foolishness, or H.J.'s reminders of her own degraded status, Marya becomes entirely subject to the overwhelming intensity of such discord. Notably, the vexed nature of Marya's reactions to the couple heightens rather than diminishes her interest in them and the intensifying stakes of their relationship continue to enable Marya to access power.

Love, Trauma, and the Victim Question

Critics of the novel have consistently attempted to trace the existence of some early traumatic experience as a means of understanding Rhys's reliance on this type of female protagonist; Moran writes, "Rhys's novels similarly depict self-destructive and self-punishing female protagonists who seem caught up in repetitious and compulsive patterns of behavior that point back to traumatic experience in their various pasts, experiences that remain fragmentary

and only partially articulated, and hence, unprocessed" (117). The assumption that Marya's masochism must have its roots in some extensively traumatic moment in her life is a problematic one to make, yet Moran is not alone in suggesting that masochism is the logical consequence of an amputated sexual progression.[19] Further, Moran identifies a pattern of problematically judging Marya's complicity in her own unfolding throughout the novel: "Many readers express frustration with Marya's seeming acquiescence to her intensifying degradation" (135). The reading of masochism as inherently passive or inevitably victimizing is far too reductive to account for the nuances that Rhys applies to the main trio at play in the novel.

Rather than present Marya in a way that bolsters an understanding of masochism as lack, the narrative enables Marya to acknowledge the impossibility of individual wholeness. Tellingly, Marya consciously rejects the idea of an unformed, incomplete version of herself, as "she tried—and failed—to imagine herself as a mannequin" (157). This rejection is Marya's fundamental rejection of passivity; the mannequin—unable to actively participate or find agency in any relationship—proves an irrelevant reference. This need for agency is further emphasized by the clarity with which Marya describes her own desires: "And her longing for joy, for any joy, for any pleasure was a mad thing in her heart. It was sharp like pain and she clenched her teeth. It was like some splendid caged animal roused and fighting to get out. It was an unborn child jumping, leaping, kicking at her side" (162). This description of Marya emphasizes the coexistence and mutual dependence, of pleasure and pain. Defining and redefining herself relative to Lois and H.J., Marya relishes the torturous position that she occupies. Accordingly, the caged animal, an image applicable to all members of Rhys's foursome—Lois, Heidler, and Marya in their threesome, Stephan in prison—evokes the intensity of the masochistic enjoyment of such ordinary imprisonments.

Love is, for Rhys and most of the other novelists in this dissertation, the primary—almost foundational—form of daily imprisonment[20]; while it may be a kind of ubiquitous prison, though, Rhys is careful to point out that individual experiences with love vary greatly. One of the most heavily referenced passages from the text, the description of H.J.'s attitudes toward love and women emphasizes his existence as a very particular type of man:

> He wasn't a good lover, of course. He didn't really like woman. She had known that as soon as he touched her. His hands were inexpert, clumsy at caresses; his mouth was hard when he kissed. No, not a lover of women, he could say what he liked.
>
> He despised love. He thought of it grossly, to amuse himself, and then with ferocious contempt. Not that that mattered. He might be right. On the other hand, he might just possibly be wrong. But it didn't really matter much.
>
> What mattered was that, despising, almost disliking, love, he was forcing her to be nothing but the little woman who lived in the Hôtel du Bosphore for the express purpose of being made love to. (190)

H.J.'s presumed hatred of love encourages critics to read him as the ultimate sadist; Moran all but deems him a clinical sadist when she locates the source of his interest in Marya in his ability to unsettle her: "Heidler does not want Marya when she is no longer capable of fighting against his domination of her, for it is her struggle against and eventual submission to his mastery that excites him" (135). [21] Likewise, Anne B. Simpson suggests, "Marya is from first to last the object of his desires; her own desires are never acknowledged and her welfare is irrelevant" (81).[22] The infrastructure of the Heidler's entanglement with Marya often suggests that H.J. operates with the sole aim of satiating his desires, thus perpetuating this idea that he refuses to

acknowledge the desires of his wife or his mistress. As such, Peter Wolfe reads Rhys as adhering to a set of common gender associations: “The standard decrees that women exist sexually; they are sexual creature, and they are to be both used and judged sexually. Whereas Heidler prizes her mystery, he also wants to penetrate it and thus violate it” (76). On the surface, in fact, H.J. does seem to have the world of the women revolving around his regulations and commands. However, this reading of Heidler reinforces a victimizing approach to Marya and Lois that eliminates the possibility of a positive masochistic experience for either woman. Even after this long description of H.J.’s amorous philosophies, Marya, “miserable weakling that she was, found herself trying to live up to his idea of her” (190). The emphasis on the chronic misery that sustains Marya is never made more explicit than in the lines that follow: “She lived up to it. And she had her reward” (190). Indeed, her reward is the “torture” (191) that envelops her, “the endless repetition of that sort of thing” between H.J. and Marya (191). The masochistic complex that Marya and H.J. construct ultimately proves itself to “rewarding” for Marya.

Of course, the seemingly problematic portrayal of love within the novel is not simply presented as a part of H.J.’s attitude toward women. Rather, love becomes a larger-than-life idea that occupies the rest of the cast, with its emphasis on torment, torture, abuse, and scarring:

> If this was love – this perpetual aching longing, this wound that bled persistently and very slowly. And the devouring hope. And the fear. That was the worst. The fear she lived with – that the little she had would be taken from her.
>
> Love was a terrible thing. You poisoned it and stabbed at it and knocked it down into the mud – well down – and it got up and staggered on, bleeding and muddy and awful. (193)

Feminist critics of the novel, who are often troubled by this representation of femininity read Marya's development over the course of the novel as indicative of Rhys's ideas about gender roles; Coral Ann Howells approaches Marya as the epitome of helplessness and degradation: "Marya offers herself as a victim in her fantasy of dread, presenting an image of helpless destitution in order to claim rescue and protection" (46). The suggestion that Marya's is a "female victim fantasy" (Howells 45) betrays a critical prioritization of H.J.'s position over Marya's. Moran makes the distinction between Stephan's treatment and H.J.'s treatment of Marya in terms that reinforce Marya's role as defined by whichever man is more present in her life: "Marya responds to Heidler in part because he, like Stephan, accepts her dependency. But whereas Stephan overlooks Marya's prior sexual experiences, Heidler relishes reminding Marya of her degradation" (132). Degradation, for Rhys and for Marya, takes many psychological forms in the novel—Lois's countless reminders of Marya's rank relative to her own, H.J.'s conflicting treatment of her, Stephan's patronizing tone—but Rhys makes certain that readers are aware of the physical manifestations of those forms: "Her body ached. He was so heavy. He crushed her. He bore her down" (191). It is clear from the descriptions of H.J. as a lover that Marya foregoes sexual satisfaction—is the presumed result of Stephan's skills as "a very gentle and expert lover" (130)—in favor of the agony of sex with Heidler. Stephan's tender sexual expertise is trumped by the fulfillment that Marya experiences at the hand of a man with whom sex is violence (191). As Rhys repeats the phrases that she deems most indicative of the temperament of the characters, so too she repeats, "But he crushed her. He bore her down" (191); such repetition highlights the power that Marya willingly places in H.J.'s hands and the satisfaction that she attains by virtue of the abuse of that power.

This repetition, a signature element of Rhys's style, is part of what Maren Linett identifies as Rhys's aesthetic of fragmentation.[23] In "'New Words, New Everything': Fragmentation in Trauma in Jean Rhys" (2005), Linett isolates this type of stylistic fragmentation, perhaps indicative of "the psychological damage [modernist fragmentation] conveys," as "evidence of a subversive stance, either in Rhys or her character" (437). Linett continues to read the relationship between powerlessness and fragmentation as a means of further emphasizing the power hierarchies at play in the women's lives: "An alternative critical response to Rhys's characters' powerlessness has been to acknowledge but contextualize it, viewing it as a result of their thoroughgoing social oppression" (437). Yet, Marya's particular type of fragmentation seems most evident when readers are made aware of the contradictory nature of her desires—both vocalized and internalized. When Marya pleads with H.J., the degree of her subjection is made explicit: "'I love you, I love you, I love you. Oh, please be nice to me. Oh, please, say something nice to me. I love you.' She was quivering and abject in his arms, like some unfortunate dog abasing itself before its master" (199). Obviously, this scene conjures up discourses associated with masochism here in order to highlight Marya at her most open, and, perhaps, most complicated. Although her words ask for H.J. to be "nice" to her, the intensity of her reactions to his mean side suggests that her true desire is to remain "quivering and abject in his arms."

Marya works to nurture her own masochistic desires, separating them from her fraught entanglement with H.J.: "her obsession gripped her, arid, torturing, gigantic, possessing her as utterly as the longing for water possesses someone who is dying of thirst" (208). Marya's obsession, on the surface, is her relationship with Heidler; however, when she is sent away to

"rest," Marya writes a letter that suggests that her obsession is the pleasure she yields from her most fraught and tenuous engagements:

> Dear Heidler,
>
> I am horribly unhappy….It's as if all the blood in my body is being drained, very slowly, all the time, all the blood in my heart…Please be patient with me. But I want to go back to Paris; I shouldn't have come down here…And now I know that I'm nothing at all. Nothing. Nothing. But I did love you. If I were dying, that would be the last thing I would say, that I loved you. That's one of the things that torments me... (214–5)

A self-declared "letter of rupture," this note to Heidler embodies all of the apparent contradictions that make up masochistic Marya—a simultaneous desire to be possessed and to be freed, to have her torment acknowledged and sustained, to have her position as lover validated and undercut. The contradictions, too, are reinforced as Marya's separation from the Heidlers takes its toll on her: "She was trying to climb out of the blackness up an interminable ladder. She was very small, as small as a fly, yet so heavy, so weighted down that it was impossible to hoist herself to the next rung. The weight on her was terrible, the vastness of space round her was terrible. She was going to fall. She was falling. The breath left her body" (219). Despite the apparent misery of these circumstances, and the images of impossibility that accompany them, Marya is unwilling to distance herself even theoretically from the Heidlers. Upon Stephan's insinuation that he would harm Heidler, Marya, in "delicious relief" bursts, "You think I'd let you touch him? I love him" (232). Ultimately, it is Marya's attachment to the Heidlers and the promise of masochistic satisfaction that they represent that trump all other possibilities for her.

This desire on Marya's behalf is further magnified when Stephan is released from prison and Marya is presented with two options: accompanying Stephan to his hotel or returning with

the Heidler's to their home; her momentary choice—to uphold the threesome—is a direct testament to that trio's ability to entertain and satiate her masochistic tendencies. Even though Marya tells Stephan, "I'm unhappy. Help me, Stephan, do help me" (229), she actually uses Stephan as the means to vocalize the extent of her desires: "It wasn't that that I wanted to tell you. Because really, you see, it doesn't matter. I wanted to beg you to be good to me, to be kind to me. Because I'm so unhappy that I think I'm going to die of it. My heart is broken. Something in me is broken. I feel…I don't know…" (231). Again, though Marya's words suggest that she wants goodness and kindness—an antidote for the pain that she suffered at the hands of the Heidlers—she actively rejects Stephan's affectionate gestures: "But when he tried to take her in his arms she shrank away. 'No, don't touch me, she said. 'Don't kiss me. That isn't what I want'" (231). This rejection of Stephan is an active rejection of gentle sex in favor of rough physical and emotional torment. Yet, Stephan's "inconsistencies" surface and he reacts violently to the "vile words" that Marya screamed at him: "He caught her by the shoulders and swung her sideways with all his force. As she fell, she struck her forehead against the edge of the table, crumpled up and lay still" (233). Reminiscent of the scene in which H.J. pushes Lois "so that she staggered back against the wall" (181), this moment allows Stephan's potential for abuse to surface. Yet, far from the masochism that, for Marya, is fostered and fulfilled by her relationship with H.J., this scene yields no satisfaction for her. This exercise of Stephan's power has nothing to do with Marya's own interests or desires and is simply a testament to his frustration with her at the time. Therefore, Stephan's destructive power at this moment is a reminder that the masochist is in control of her own masochism and its fulfillment; Marya constructs the position of authority that H.J. occupies relative to her. Contrary to critics who assert that H.J. is only concerned with his own desires, Marya's reaction to Stephan, here, insinuates a more

complicated and mutual intimacy between her and H.J. Stephan exists outside of Marya's masochistic complex and thus, his behavior in this instance does not and cannot satiate Marya's desires. As H.J. articulates in the film, "It is not I who seek them out. It is they who find me." Although this sentiment might simply be an attempt to shirk responsibility for Marya—and his previous and presumably future mistresses—it also speaks accurately to Marya's need for *a* Heidler. Even though the novel ends on uncertain terms, with an unconscious Marya, a departing Stephan, and the absent Heidlers, Marya is not necessarily let off the hook. Readers are left wondering whether she returns to H.J. and Lois or whether she moves on to a different manifestation of similar characteristics.

In "The Interval" (1973), Rhys writes: "When my first love affair came to an end I wrote this poem: 'I didn't know / I didn't know / I didn't know.' Then I settled down to be miserable" (92). This lack of knowledge and its causal linkage to impending misery seems applicable to many of Rhys's women. While Marya may not consciously connect her "beautiful muddles" with her own masochistic tendencies, contemporary readers of *Quartet* certainly could. Therefore, she becomes an exploratory linkage between personal fulfillment and masochistic engagements. Marya perpetuates a situation—with active and deliberate aid from the other two participants—that, at its core, is a reminder of her lack and degradation. Such positioning is so satisfying for Marya that she drastically alters the presentation of other characters' consciousnesses in order to maintain her abasement. Her ability to construct and craft the portrayals of H.J. and Lois is a fundamentally empowering gesture. Marya's masochism, an integral element of the foundation of *Quartet*, sustains her, allows her to build relationships necessary to her survival, and grants her a tremendous amount of individual authority. Rhys's

text presents readers with an empowering, albeit complicated representation of masochism as power.

Such a vital presentation of masochism ought to enable masochism to defend itself against the social taboos and deviant designations that contemporary scholars of the subject often highlight; yet, masochism, perhaps peculiarly, has yet to actively claim its position as a necessary part of ordinary relations. The connection that Robert Tobin makes between masochism and the "real world" provides us with one viable explanation: "Perhaps masochism has not cohered as an identity the way that homosexuality has precisely because it is too telling, it reveals too much about power in our society. If masochism were to become an open and visible identity, it would be too uncomfortable for society to see how much it revealed about identity structures in general" (51). The way in which masochism has been consistently approached as perversion, even after the decriminalization of many of its sexological counterpoints, is a testament to its potential power. To explicitly relocate masochism within the realm of the everyday would force us all to face the power structures, delineations, and struggles that are easier left ignored.

Ultimately, this dissertation relies on a claim made by Slavoj Žižek about the nature of truth for the masochist that is absolutely imperative to my consideration of masochism: "there is more truth in the mask we wear, in the game we play, in the 'fiction' we obey and follow, than in what is concealed beneath the mask. The very kernel of the masochist's being is externalized in the staged game" (92). The masochists in this dissertation find themselves cultivating their own masochistic tendencies in order to cope with and thrive within ordinary sets of circumstances and relationships. The scope of the relationships represented in *Villette, A Drama in Muslin*, *The Rainbow*, and *Quartet*, is a testament to the novelists' reject of masochism as aberration,

promoting a far more active embrace of everyday masochisms. Furthermore, the evolution of these representations—from Lucy Snowe's trial and error, to Cecilia's engagement with queer desire and religious subjectivity, to Will and Anna's passionate and mutually masochistic marriage, to Marya's developing sense of self and authority through masochism—allows readers to trace the lineage of the literary masochist in terms that move from subtle, implicit engagements to overt, telling portrayals. While masochism is often broached as a perversion even today, Brontë, Moore, Lawrence, and Rhys have all taken steps for it to come out of a private, institutionalized closet and, perhaps one day, into a welcoming public embrace.

Notes

1. Moreover, the triangulations present within *Villette* are overshadowed by the duos that comprise them. Accordingly, the Dr. John, Ginevra, Lucy triangle is easily and fluidly broken down into three duos—Lucy and Dr. John, Dr. John, and Ginevra, and Lucy and Ginevra. The type of triangulation at play in *Quartet*, by comparison, is significantly more overt.

2. Further, Le Gallez writes of the unexpected dynamic between the married pair: "Thus, Marya's feelings of 'melancholy pleasure' are thwarted by her husband's opposition, and we are given a clearer insight into the incompatibility of the pair. Where Marya sees delight, Stephan sees only sordidness. However, such inequality in the marriage does not in this case, make for tragedy or pathos" (29). Le Gallez suggests that the apparent opposition established between Marya and Stephan actually has the potential to escape a tragic end, a nod to the potential fulfillment of Marya's own masochism.

3. It is virtually impossible to find mention of the novel that does infer its autobiographical status.

4. The solidity ascribed to both Mr. and Mrs. Heidler is specifically removed from Marya, as readers are reminded: "[her existence] lacked, as it were, solidity" (121).

5. Rhys's own attraction to Ford Madox Ford is captured in the descriptions of Heidler that surface throughout the novel. Joseph Wiesenfarth writes that "The Jean Rhys who plays Marya Zelli in *Quartet* and who indicts Ford Madox Ford as Hugh Heidler in the novel was, outside the world of fiction, anything but a sexual innocent when she met Ford" (70). Further, the brutishness of Heidler—inspired by the brutishness of Ford—is reminiscent of early presentations of fascism in Europe as overwhelming, powerful and, interestingly, stable.

6. The presentation of Marya and Lois fundamentally problematizes Elgin Mellown's 1972 reading of Rhys's "woman": "This archetypal woman never finds a man who will faithfully continue to muffle her needs…she must allow herself to be taken by another man who is, as always, older and, as always, a brute. Instinctively knowing that her man will desert her, the woman increasingly debases herself in a desperate attempt to hold on to him, the inevitable result being that her abandoned position increases his revulsion. The Rhys woman may be a mistress in name, but in fact she is always a victim of love because she is at the mercy of her uncontrollable desires" (464). Hinting at Rhys's presentation of the nuances of female sexual and emotional identity, Mellown still falls into the trap of reading Marya as one of many, little more than a prototype of unfortunate romantic and sexual decision-making. His reliance on ideas about debasement, victimhood, and revulsion might touch upon some of the elements traditionally, but often mistakenly, associated with masochism.

7. Elizabeth Abel, in "Women and Schizophrenia: The Fiction of Jean Rhys" (1979), explains: "Power is distributed unevenly in Rhys's world. The significant men in her novels have jobs, money, and consequently the power to appropriate women and discard them. The women, by contrast, are economically powerless, portrayed only as shop girls, chorus girls, or wives who buy security with subservience. For Rhys's women finding a man is a question of economic survival as well as of emotional fulfillment, and these interlocking needs reduce women to children for whom dependence is an obstacle to self-assertion. Men, who in Rhys's fiction are invariably older than the women they befriend, become parental figures through the authority accompanying economic strength" (170). Abel locates a pattern of relations that marks Rhys's texts and their respective heroines in the power dynamics at play. Abel's discussion of the women in Rhys's novels is based upon her reading of psychological trauma—both spoken and

unspoken: “Rhys’s heroines are not insane: they fall rather into the category sometimes referred to as ambulatory schizophrenia and sometimes as the schizoid (as opposed to the schizophrenic) state. They are disturbed in fairly distinctive ways…” (156-7). Yet, that reading problematically places Marya in a misinformed opposition: “Marya has to choose between surrendering completely to the values of the Heidlers and fighting to preserve herself at the cost of H.J.’s love” (171).

8. Helen Nebeker, whose work on Rhys focuses on the relationship between the Rhys heroine and her struggle for love, suggests that Heidler, “the protector and subsequent exploiter” (5), by virtue of his economic liberty, presents Marya with the more livable of the following alternatives: “dullness, poverty, abasement” (5).8 Rhys, according to Nebeker, locates power in financial security; Marya’s desperate position is precisely the result of economic hardship and a misplaced desire for love. Accordingly, when Stephan is imprisoned and Marya is without options, she is forced to turn to the most visible representations of power and wealth around her; as Thomas Staley highlights, Marya’s “helpless situation inevitably draws her to the Heidlers (39). Yet, Staley locates Marya’s helplessness in her “need for comfort and any kind of reassurance” (39), which problematically undercuts the direness of Marya’s finances.8 While comfort might be a part of Marya’s desires, her need is presented—both by the narrator and by the Heidler’s—as initially based upon a presumed inability to survive.

9. H.J. in the film version of *Quartet* suggests, “Someone else will have you if I don’t. You’re that sort.” Part of his strategy for courting Marya, Heidler makes the explicit assertion that Marya is desirable and loose. That point is further exploited in the film when Marya’s attempt at finding a “legitimate” job to sustain herself lands her in the midst of a pornographic photo shoot. Unable to find her “costume,” Marya sees the other naked, or near-naked actors,

and runs off. Moreover, Lois plays upon the relationship between Mary and her presumed promiscuity when she asks H.J. whether he'd like to offer his guest room—Marya's current space—to the pasty-clad dancers.

10. Almost immediately after this "moment of soft intimacy" (154), Marya's critical eye is once again tuned to Lois's complexity: "Lois was extremely intelligent…And, in spite of all this, or because of it, she gave a definite impression of being insensitive to the point of stupidity—or was it insensitive to the point of cruelty?" (154). Perpetually ascribed to both Lois and H.J., cruelty is at the heart of the allure of this triangulation for Marya, anticipated by the reader's awareness of her previous contentment with Stephan.

11. Despite H.J.'s declaration in the film, that "Lois simply doesn't come into this at all between you and me," Lois plays a vital position in the relationship between Marya and Heidler.

12. Importantly, the cinematic version of the text expands upon this positioning. H.J., upon considering his affair with Marya, asks Lois, "Do you think I'm mad?" Lois's response, a gentle caress of his head, leads to one of the most passionate kisses between the two in the entire film. The insinuation here is that H.J.'s affair—and the subsequent troublesome and difficult positions that H.J. and Lois are put in as a result of it—is a catalyst for their own sexual relationship.

13. Ellis continues: "We have to admit that a certain pleasure in manifesting his power over a woman by inflicting pain upon her is an outcome and survival of the primitive process of courtship, and an almost or quite normal constituent of the sexual impulse in man. But it must be at once added that in the normal well-balanced and well-conditioned man this constituent of the sexual impulse, when present is always held in check. When the normal man inflicts, or feels the impulse to inflict, some degree of physical pain on the woman he loves he can scarcely be said to be moved by cruelty. He feel, more or less obscurely, that the pain he inflicts, or desires to inflict

is really a part of his love, and that, moreover, it is not really resented by the woman on whom it is exercised" (112).

14. Victim, however, is the implicit and explicit choice of critics approaching the novel—a testament to the legacy of outmoded definitions of masochism.

15 . Moreover, Maurel's suggestion that "*Quartet* carefully delineates conventional identifications of woman as objects and even examines women's own contribution to their entrapment in the shape of romantic fantasies of falling in love and of self-abandonment to male mastery" (25) undercuts the agency ascribed to both Marya and Lois within the realm of their relationships.

16. Anne B. Simpson, for instance, reads Marya as consistently chasing the impossibility of emotional fulfillment: "The image of a personified Love knocked 'well down' suggests Marya's need to bury a part of her experience as far out of sight as possible; its power as a psychic presence is captured in the image of its enfeebled and bloodied but nevertheless insistent continuation" (80). Although Simpson reads Marya as developmentally stunted, the result of some sort of prior trauma, her awareness of Marya's compulsion to stay in a situation, defined for Marya by love, is insightful. Such masochistic tendencies surface in Lois, as well.

17. Moreover, despite Elgin Mellown's desire to read the connection between suffering and "Rhys's women" as ubiquitous and untouchable—"They know that they are alive because they suffer and because money passes through their hands. The respectable world views such women as commodities to be bought and as hostages who must pay their way" (464)—Lois's own experiences within the novel complicate any approach to "such women."

18. Again, Marya uses her ability to place words and thoughts in other characters' mouths and minds as a way of ensuring her position in the text.

19. In *Territories of the Psyche: The Fiction of Jean Rhys* (2005), Anne B. Simpson suggests, too, that the unarticulated trauma is a familial one: "Marya becomes trapped in a web of desire for a surrogate father and rivalry with a maternal figure, both of whom solicit as well as repel her entry into their domestic melodrama. However, the erotics of the three participants screen another pain to which the text bears witness, that of Marya's infantile longing, as it is commingled with envy, toward a constructed vision of withholding motherhood" (65). Thus, as we have already established, the association between masochism and victimization is particularly loaded and problematic one, at best.

20. While the previous chapter suggested that D.H. Lawrence ties masochism to marriage, and this dissertation makes clear that sexologists, like Ellis, tie pain to love, Rhys approaches the connection between love and masochism as inevitable and necessary.

21. Moran reads Marya's trajectory: "She becomes more and more obsessed with Heidler, but her increasing acquiescence to her degrading circumstances seems to have an obverse effect on him, and he begins to withdraw" (129). While Moran is correct in identifying H.J.'s withdrawal from Marya, her understanding of the root of that withdrawal barely hints at the relationship between Marya's acquiescence and Heidler's disinterest. As Moran seems inclined to read Heidler as the sadist, her reading of the fizzling of his attachment to Marya ought to reflect Deleuze's assertion that "a genuine sadist could never tolerate a masochistic victim" (40). Because the sadist's pleasure arises from his victim's pain, and notably not his victim's pleasure-from-pain, a masochist's enjoyment would prevent the sadist from full enjoyment of his position. Therefore, the idea that H.J. loses his interest in Marya because she begins to enjoy her degraded position has its roots in Deleuze's reading of Sade.

22. Similarly, Paula le Gallez writes, “Heidler’s selfishness is exposed in his own utterances. His refusal to see anyone’s point of view but his own, and his arrogant dismissal of Marya’s declaration of love for him, are both self-inflicted wounds which damage his integrity in our eyes” (47).

23. Like other critics interested in the relationship between psychological trauma and Jean Rhys, Linett dedicates the majority of this piece to her readings of *Voyage in the Dark* (1934), G*ood Morning, Midnight* (1936), or *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), mentioning *Quartet* merely to recognize its importance as Rhys’s first novel, and thus her literary foray into such issues.

Afterword

This coda is about appearances. In many ways, it is centered on the gap between representation and reality. I began this dissertation by pausing to consider the implications of Anita Phillips's great claim about the nature of masochism, that it "has signally failed to defend itself as a human tendency, resisting reclamation, generalization, the movements of empowerment and integration that have transformed and enlarged views across the century…is still defined as a perversion, and masochists share their dubious distinction with a mixed bag of companions, from necrophiliacs to beast festishists" (7). Despite the work of Charlotte Brontë, George Moore, D.H. Lawrence, Jean Rhys—providing readers with alternative and affirmative representations of masochism as a reaction against clinical diagnoses—the twentieth-century has yet to turn the corner on the question of masochism. This epilogue, a brief exploration of Ian McEwan's *The Comfort of Strangers* (1981), is a testament to two significant sentiments: first, that even in seemingly overt descriptions of sadistic behavior, one could and should locate the authority and power of the masochist; secondly, that more modern representations of sadism and masochism—that may be based on some of this dissertation's proactive representations of said tendencies—attest to the veracity of Phillips's assertion that masochism is still relegated to the sphere of the perverse.

The constantly shifting threesomes of Rhys's *Quartet* virtually beg to be put into conversation with the foursome turned trio in *The Comfort of Strangers.* More than fifty years after Rhys's first novel, McEwan's novella presents readers with a significantly darker and more explicit representation of masochism than its implicit predecessor. Compared to the emotional masochism experienced by Marya and the Heidler's, McEwan's tale focuses on more extreme manifestations of such impulses. Colin and Mary—a couple whose seven year relationship seems

to have hit an inevitable plateau and who have no "intention to marry" (124)[1]—vacation in Venice and "accidentally" stumble upon the kindness of Robert and Caroline who reside there. While Robert and Caroline's circumstances arouse suspicion in the couple and readers alike, they still seem to possess a type of unuttered, and, perhaps, unutterable allure for Colin and Mary. Robert's story of his own abusive childhood and Caroline's retelling of her violent marriage catalyze the missing spark in Colin and Mary's sex life. Robert and Caroline's complicated marriage encourages Colin and Mary to muse on their own dark fantasies and reconnect to one another sexually. Ultimately, the trap laid by Robert and Caroline positions Colin as a surrogate for Caroline, enabling Robert to live out his fantasy of killing someone *and* Caroline to live out her fantasy of being killed.

The Comfort of Strangers is a uniquely challenging read. Although Colin and Mary's relationship is initially fairly commonplace, a number of elements within the novel trouble critics: the amputated ending wherein Mary is unable to truly contemplate the implications of Colin's death, Colin and Mary's inexplicably inevitable path back to Robert and Caroline's, and, most overtly, the increased intensity of Colin and Mary's sexual encounters after realizing the violent nature of Caroline and Robert's. Judith Seaboyer, therefore, grounds her close reading of *The Comfort of Strangers* in the assertion that the text is "about the failure to read and negotiate, to reread and renegotiate, and revision the culture for which Venice stands as a kind of museum" (960). While Seaboyer's analysis may convince readers that this renegotiation does, in fact, have Venice and all that its labyrinthine structure stands for at its roots, my interest in McEwan's text lies in its representation of the failure to read and negotiate the type of reactionary masochism presented by its literary predecessors.[2] Robert and Caroline, in spite of the apparent extremity of their violent marriage, seem to represent little more than slightly exaggerated "prescribed roles"

(Seaboyer 959) dictated by nineteenth-century and twentieth-century sexological textbooks. Robert's extremely aggressive sexuality and Caroline's exaggerated female masochism are, in many ways, indicative of the case studies from which they may very well have arisen. On the surface, then, Robert and Caroline function as a look backward at the clinical history of sadism and masochism. A closer reading of the couple, though, testifies to the almost unspeakable reality that Caroline is the dominant party in their relationship, a subject wholly neglected by the few critics of the novella. While Caroline dictates the terms of the couple's engagement, masochism in *The Comfort of Strangers* is wholly catastrophic—a far cry from the positive, ordinary representations of the masochisms in this dissertation. Thus, although Seaboyer decries "McEwan's gothic 'tale' as 'a waking dream of corruption, imprisonment, mutilation, and death" (960), it is ultimately a testament to the impossibility of the ordinariness of masochism that authors like Charlotte Brontë, George Moore, D.H. Lawrence and Jean Rhys celebrated. Further, McEwan's text, while it suggests the impossibility of returning to these positive representations of masochism, relies on such markers of Gothic fiction as the strangeness of strangers and thus, depends on the tropes associated with some of the literature in this dissertation.

Ultimately, the masochistic fulfillment and satisfaction of Victorian and modernist literary figures is overshadowed by what McEwan portrays as the inevitability of destruction. The commonness of the masochisms discussed in this dissertation, the active reaction of the novelists against the prescriptive prioritization of "normal" sexuality, is replaced by a return to the excessive fantasies of the case studies—the impetus for diagnosing masochism as a perversion in the first place. The ideas about gender that Robert espouses during the couples' early engagements, harkens back to "lost" gender roles and identities. While his sweeping declarations may trouble contemporary readers, they simply echo earlier theories: "My father

and his father understood themselves clearly. They were men, and they were proud of their sex. Women understood them too…There was no confusion…And even though they hate themselves for it, women long to be ruled by men" (71–2). Robert philosophizes about the primacy of heterosexuality, using a lexicon remarkably similar to the early sexologists. He nostalgically romanticizes a time when gender roles in their most extreme and oppositional forms dictated the confines of heteronormativity: men were men and, as a result, women were women. Even Colin, who is primarily portrayed as a mild-tempered pushover chimes in, "women did as they were told" (71). Robert's more vehement approach is presented to readers as borderline absurd, and, though Colin's ambivalent agreement temporarily complicates that presentation, Robert's ideas betray his charade of dominance; his obsession with legitimizing his nostalgic frame of former, clearly delineated gender roles and power dynamics, speaks to his fundamental insecurity. Initially, readers are given the opportunity to groups the characters as Richard Bradford instructs, by breaking the two couples down in terms of their political approaches to gender identity:

> The foursome seems at first to be an exercise by McEwan in exposing the mindset of leftish, thirty-something Britain as a fabric of complacencies. Robert, for examples, perceives feminism as an opportunity for fat and ugly women to take revenge on their better-looking counterparts who have, for several millennia, been enjoying the atavistic attentions of powerful handsome men such as Robert, and Caroline seems fully satisfied with his thesis. Mary, a biddable card-carrying feminist, is lost for words but the fact that her sex life with Colin is suddenly rejuvenated indicates the effectiveness of Robert's notion of animalistic anti-intellectualism, albeit secondhand. (18)

Highlighting the seamlessness of political opinions between Caroline and Robert as opposed to the more disparate ideological approaches of Colin and Mary, Bradford speaks of the allure, within the text, of Robert's outdated notions. Further, Bradford's pun—that Caroline "seems *fully satisfied* with" Robert's thesis—speaks to one of the divisive characterizations of the couples; while Caroline and Robert seem of the same mind, Colin and Mary cannot seem to be on the same page at all during their trip to Venice. It is only when they adjust their intimacies in the apparent afterglow of their encounters with Robert and Caroline that Colin and Mary share a set of telling viewpoints.

While these early encounters between the two couples do not seem to explicitly incorporate sexual violence into the conversation, they nonetheless inspire Mary and Colin to confess the darkest fantasies that they can generate. Colin and Mary, whose desire for each other, as Bert Cardullo suggests, is "awakened" in Venice (375), cannot escape the thrill of the insinuation of possible annihilation. Mary reveals "her intention of hiring a surgeon to amputate Colin's arms and legs…and use him exclusively for sex" (81) while Colin "invent[s] for Mary a large, intricate machine, made of steel…[that would] fuck her, not just for hours or weeks, but for years, on and on, for the rest of her life, till she was dead and on even after that" (81–2). The sharing of such fantasies reveals much about Colin, Mary, and their relationship. Both images sexualize the other party at the expense of his/her sense of self. Yet, Colin would create a surrogate to continuously and eternally have sex with Mary, while she would reconstruct *his* body, eliminating the parts that could be used for other purposes. Colin removes himself from the fantasy, objectifying Mary by proxy; Mary dehumanizes Colin entirely—a gesture that subtly foreshadows Robert and Caroline's subsequent choice of Colin as their ideal victim. Such fantasies enable Cardullo to reference this moment in the text as evidence of the "paradoxical"

relationship between this couple, with their "benign sadomasochism" (374) and Caroline and Robert's "dark, pure perversity" (Seaboyer 961). Obviously, critics place the two couples on opposite ends of a spectrum of sexual fantasy that has the designation "benign" as its pivotal point of distinction.

The definition and presentation of varying degrees of harm is one of the questions posited at the novel's center; while the texts I have previously worked with have, at their centers, questions about the relationship between emotional masochism and personal or partner-based fulfillment, McEwan's text focuses on the intersection between the hypothetical and the actual. It is the apparent safety of Colin and Mary's dark fantasizing that is directly contrasted with the seemingly unspeakable reality that Caroline and Robert live on a day-to-day basis. McEwan presents readers with the contrast between Colin and Mary, who find pleasure in the exploration of their theoretical fantasies—which remain fantasies for the couple precisely because of their exaggerated, hypothetical nature—and Robert and Caroline, who must physically live them. The transition from the imaginary to the real becomes the distinction that enables one couple to enter the apparent realm of abuse and criminality while the other is predominantly shielded from public and private blame. Yet, part of the challenge of McEwan's text is the implicit presumption that, even prior to the staging of an actual murder, Robert is already marked as a criminal.

Thus, when Caroline reiterates the physical reality of her marriage to Mary, readers' suspicions about her status as "victim" are addressed:

> Robert started to hurt me when we made love… Robert began to really hurt me. He used a whip. He beat me with his fists as he made love to me. I was terrified, but the terror and the pleasure were all one. Instead of saying loving things into my ear, he whispered pure hatred, and though I was sick with humiliation, I was

> thrilled to the point of passing out…My body was covered with bruises, cuts, welts. Three of my ribs were cracked. Robert knocked out one of my teeth. (110–111)

Robert, and his desire to "kill" Caroline as they "made love" (111), are presented as the logical escalation of his desire for control. While Robert's treatment of Caroline is clearly an exertion of his own power, his inability to control himself is more accurately a testament to his powerlessness within the situation. The increasing severity of the means to satisfy his sexual appetites suggests that he is subject to his own desires rather than in control of them. Caroline's explanation seems to parallel his own, betraying its apparent, inherent paradox; that contradiction—the increased sense of pleasure she experiences based upon the escalation of pain—pointed to by sexologists, psychoanalysts and literary critics alike, is one of the basic tenets of masochism. Yet, Caroline's narrative is underscored by the acknowledgement of inevitability, as pain becomes the logical expression of her sexual desire, attraction, and fulfillment: "It's not the pain itself, it's the fact of the pain, of being helpless before it, and being reduced to nothing by it. It's pain in a particular context, being punished and therefore being guilty. We both liked what was happening. I was ashamed of myself, and before I knew it, my shame too was a source of pleasure…I wanted it more and more" (110). Incorporating the images and lexicon associated with sexological and psychoanalytical case studies of masochism, Caroline describes the evolution of her masochistic tendencies. Because the explanation is evenhanded and nonchalant, the unfolding of sexual violence within her marriage proves quite difficult to parse. Further, because the agency is primarily ascribed to Robert—regardless of whether the tendencies are Caroline's, they are presented as being cultivated and brought to the

surface as a direct result of Robert's desires—Caroline's authority and personal agency is undercut, at least on the surface.

While Caroline's explanation of the situation provides a virtually seamless account of the initiation and maintenance of violence, there are subtle incongruities underneath her logic that provide readers with insight into a much subtler account of the violence. In her retelling of its origins, Caroline suggests that their marriage is fairly typical up until a point when "something started to happen" (110). Even though Caroline implicitly concludes that the fertility problems with Robert's sperm catalyze his fury—a commentary, of course, on Robert's performance of and struggle with masculinity—Caroline's deliberate inability to really point to an active agent here speaks to the way in which the definitions of sadism and masochism in this novel are far more blurred than they initially appear. For most of the text, McEwan seems clear in his presentation of the two characters: Robert, the initiator and executor of the beatings, is the sadist, and Caroline, the willing and satisfied recipient of said beatings, is the masochist. Indeed, Caroline uses the phrase "Robert began" as a way of transitioning from the ambiguous "something" that started to happen into the more explicit details of their sexual encounters (110). Although the deliberately constructed urge is to assume that Robert is fully in control—and then, of course, fully culpable—for the sexual scenario that unfolds, readers ought to pause during Caroline's account to pose the following question: Is Robert enacting his own sadistic fantasy, or is Robert assuming a position of authority in order to enact Caroline's masochistic fantasy? Providing a potential response to the question, Seaboyer suggests that "McEwan draws attention to the deadly persistence of sadomasochism within the late-twentieth-century western sexual imagination" (964). Robert and Caroline embody a culturally indicative, sexually gratifying

voyeuristic interest in violence and annihilation; accordingly, for Seaboyer, and many readers as well, they are the epitome of the extreme sadomasochistic couple.

In spite of the apparent sadomasochistic conglomeration that McEwan presents readers with the theoretical framework of this dissertation suggests that such a relationship is an impossible one. Deleuze's—and subsequently Slavoj Žižek's—assertions that the active agency and empowerment of the masochist prevents him/her from desiring a true sadist to enact his/her masochistic fantasies underscore all of the readings in this project. Thus, in order for their marriage to be as mutually fulfilling as it seems to be for both partners (however problematic that might be for readers), one side of the sadistic-masochistic pairing simply has to give; either Robert is *not* the complete sadist or Caroline is *not* the complete masochist, an interpretive call that depends entirely on the intricate representation of each character. The theoretically informed reader can attest to the ways in which Caroline's masochism dictates the terms of her marital engagements with Robert; even though he presents himself as the dominant sadist, McEwan's sparse descriptions of Caroline and her own brief narrative moments subtly assert her unexpected dominance. Even in his presentation of a falsely labeled sadomasochistic relationship, Caroline's authority is a testament to what Leo Bersani describes as "the primacy of masochism" (95).[3]

The elaborate explanation of Robert's childhood is an attempt, however flawed, to explain the psychological background of a sadist. As his father's favorite child—and only male child—Robert was used as a surrogate disciplinarian during his youth; when asked whether his sisters should be reprimanded for their various misdeeds, Robert would readily and excitedly acquiesce to his father's unspoken desire to punish. Just as Robert embraces the authority meant to mimic his father's, so, too, he adopts the desires that he associates with that authority. Thus, his position as disciplinarian-by-proxy is presented as a vital truth in the development of his

adolescent and adult psyche. Indeed, Robert was such an integral part of the punishment that he was forced—or invited—to witness the beating of his sisters with a leather belt. Though Robert does not seem particularly aware of the erotic implications of his own narrative, the voyeuristic relationship that he cultivates with the abuse of his sisters provides readers with an explanation for his fascination with punishment and his sexual compulsion to reenact various disciplinary scenarios.

While the connection between this beating fantasy and a fairly nonthreatening obsession with whipping is easily established, the narrative suggests that the excessive nature of Robert's cruelty warrants further explanation. His own punishment at the hands of his sisters, when they are finally able to orchestrate and execute their revenge for his misplaced despotism, is far more humiliating than the "three very hard strokes" that each girl receives on her "backside" at his behest (34). First enticed by an arrangement of sweets normally forbidden in the house and by his sisters' feigned skepticism at his ability to finish the array of goods before him, Robert eagerly devours the treats. Notably, his sisters challenge him on grounds that criticize his masculinity: "Only a *man* could finish two glasses of lemonade" (34). Preying on what they identify as the cause of his disciplinary betrayal, Robert's sisters undermine his ability to live up to his father's manliness. The site of the revenge—his father's prized study—again reiterates the way in which Robert's attempt at mimicking what he perceives as his father's most masculine behaviors and attitudes is what his sisters rightly perceive as the site of his vulnerability and weakness. As the ploy unfolds, his sisters tie him up to his father's desk chair and subsequently force him to down some ambiguous "oil," clearly meant to act as a laxative (34). When his father comes home, of course, he finds Robert's explosive shit covering virtually his entire office and severely beats him for several days thereafter.

Whether Robert is being punished for desecrating a sacred space or proving that he is too weak, and therefore feminine to control his body, his desires, or his opponents is analytically left open for readers. Yet, just as Robert's sisters blamed Robert for the enactment of their punishment although it was their father who wielded the belt, Robert, too, blames his sisters for his utter humiliation and the unforgivable defacement of his father's study. Thus, what might have been Robert's initial whipping fantasy turns into a seemingly hateful, cruel, and abusive approach to Caroline, on the surface, a clear surrogate for his sisters. Accordingly, Seaboyer reads adult Robert's sadism as a consistent reenactment of his own "fail[ure] to measure up to his paternal inheritance, for proving to be no better than a weak-willed girl" (976–7). In Seaboyer's explanation, then, Robert punishes Caroline as he would punish his sisters and as he was punished himself. Seaboyer explains: "Constructed by castration and lack, he rigidly, as it were, maintains an active, sadistic position while unconsciously being drawn toward that of the passive masochist" (980). This explanation reflects a reliance on a Freudian approach to sadism and masochism, which links the two "perversions" in the same person; such a reading, however convincing, still relies upon a problematic misinterpretation of the relationship between masochism and sadism. Furthermore, Seaboyer relies on the presentation of Robert's fantasies as the dominant fantasies; even if he can be both sadistic and masochistic within the confines of his marriage, Seaboyer first privileges his sadism as his dominant tendency and subsequently views Robert as dictating the terms of the expression of his sadism. Caroline, then, is given a secondary position and is all but eliminated from Seaboyer's analysis of the novella. Such a reading overlooks the nuances of Caroline's masochism and the way that she actively constructs the situations in which it can be satisfied.

Further, while Caroline might act as a surrogate for Robert's sisters, they exist as a conglomeration, wherein Caroline is ascribed her own independent identity. Countless times during his retelling of this decisive moment in his childhood, Robert lumps his four sisters together as one unit; indeed, only two of his sisters are ever named in this narrative. Instead, Robert prioritizes, whether he wants to or not, their interchangeability and anonymity. Thus, his sisters are presented to readers as this powerful and faceless entity—the first indication that Robert, in spite of this tale of a now-powerful man recounting his once-weak childhood, is actually wholly subject to the authority he implicitly gives his sisters. Readers, then, are invited to realize that Robert's narrative sets him up as a submissive, always inevitably subject to the will of the women around him.

Despite the overwhelming narrative attention paid to Robert's background, interestingly, Caroline is ascribed virtually no personal history. Her own explanation, that her childhood was "happy and dull" and the compassionate portrayal that Robert nostalgically rehashes of their youthful introduction are practically all of the insights that readers are provided with regarding her adolescence (110). In many ways, the lack of depth provided for Caroline seems to testify to the way that McEwan relies upon sexological and psychoanalytical doctrines of gender difference when delineating between the two characters. As such, Robert's tendencies warrant a detailed psychological profile so as to understand the way in which fairly expected sexual aggression evolves into excess, while Caroline's masochism is a more typical representation of the way in which female sexuality is shaped around the sexuality of the dominant male. As a result, Robert is allowed the privilege of reflective and reflexive self-narration, while Caroline's voice is virtually limited to the circumstances that surround Robert. Yet, there is something fundamentally unsatisfying about yielding to such an obvious reading of the two. In fact, the

implications of Caroline's sparse personal history, rather than a means of erasing the self, actually speak to the way in which she has actively constructed virtually all of the terms of her marriage.

Because Caroline has such a limited voice in the novella and because it is easy, comfortable, and validating to read her as the "victim," readers, in many ways, prioritize her view of her situation. Caroline explains that prior to her marriage, she "knew nothing about sex…hadn't had any sexual feelings at all" (109). By painting Caroline in such an innocent light, McEwan again seems to suggest that Robert's sexuality dictates the terms of their collective sexual behavior within the marriage. On the surface, his desire is to harm, abuse, scar, and crush; and, on the surface, then, her desire, based entirely on his, is to be harmed, abused, scarred, and crushed as a result. Indeed, that is precisely the relationship that Caroline's deliberately crafted narrative provides. However, that narrative problematically removes all power from Caroline. Instead, it suggests that her sexuality is contingent upon her husband's and, thus, Caroline will always be the passive recipient of whatever Robert tosses her way. Caroline seems, then, to be consistently and continuously dependent on Robert's autonomous self, lacking any gestures of selfhood and agency. While that explanation might be palatable given the narrative of their sex life and the culturally pervasive attitudes about sadism and masochism, it does not line up with the way in which the two are cast throughout the novella overall.

Even Colin and Mary's conversation about Caroline's "victimized status" in the marriage seems to suggest that she occupies a complicated and unexpected position:

> "She's a kind of prisoner," Colin said, and then, more certainly, "She *is* a prisoner."
>
> "I know," Mary said…

> …Colin said, "Perhaps he beats her up." Mary nodded. "And yet…"…"and yet she seemed to be quite…" He trailed away vaguely.
>
> "Quite content?" Mary said sourly. "Everyone knows how much women enjoy being beaten up."
>
> "Don't be so bloody self-righteous." Colin's vehemence surprised them both. "What I was going to say was that…she seemed to be, well, thriving on something."
>
> "Oh yes," Mary said. "Pain." (91)

Mary's overt feminism manifests itself in aggressive ways throughout the novel; her inability to understand how Robert and Caroline's marriage could possibly work *without* Caroline being the victim reflects serious contemporary concerns about abusive relationships. Both Mary and Colin, though, attempt to read and diagnose the reality that Caroline lives on a day-to-day basis. Mary's interpretation, based upon the assertion that women could never enjoy being beaten up, establishes the gendered hierarchy that matches the reader's: Robert is in charge and Caroline is submissive. Colin's access to more nuanced, though perhaps less palatable insights is evident in his passionate frustration with Mary's inability to conceive of Caroline's satisfaction. Mary's more comfortable position, though, is validated in this exchange as she immediately dismisses Colin's vague recognition of Caroline's complicated position as chauvinistic. This exchange, though, in its immediate reach outward to readers is vital in McEwan's presentation of masochism in the novella.

Of course, this moment is not the first instance in which McEwan breaks from the idea that Caroline is wholly objectified within the confines of her marriage to Robert; throughout the text, he reiterations Caroline's role as the vehicle by which Robert can reenact the traumas of his

own childhood, the humiliation he experienced as a youngster. While Caroline's narrative of their sexual encounters suggests that she practically demands his dominance, readers ought to see that Robert relies on Caroline for even more. Caroline is the only established entity by which Robert defines himself in the text. The personal narratives of Robert's childhood—the way in which Robert constantly defines himself in opposition to his sisters and in allegiance with his mother—set the stage for Caroline as the all-inclusive representation of both sentiments. Caroline is clearly punished as his sisters continue to deserve to be punished: "I have never forgiven my sisters" (38). Robert's apparent compulsion to repeat and intensify the punishments is a testament to the severity and desirability of his own humiliated subject position and the reaction it inspired in him. Further, he unrealistically worships his "tall and very beautiful" mother, full of "eloquence…perfection" (38), as the "only one" who talked to, cared for, and sympathized with him, at least prior to Caroline's appearance. This alignment explains the apparently contradictory pedestal that Caroline is placed upon even as she is almost destroyed nightly in his embrace (38). Clearly, it is only through Robert's engagements with Caroline and the way in which she helps him articulate his own position that Robert has any adult sense of identity at all.

Even the way in which Robert theorizes about the status of the world is indicative of his reliance upon Caroline—or women, in general—for the acknowledgement of his authority: "It is men who have shaped the world. So women's minds are shaped by men. From earliest childhood, the world they see is made by men. Now the women lie to themselves and there is confusion and unhappiness everywhere" (72). Although the text is littered with Robert's exaggerated philosophies about gender roles and gender rules, Robert cannot approach the subject of male authority, autonomy, and power without making reference to the relative position

of women. These repetitive tirades consistently suggest that Robert is dominated by the women in his life—both theoretical and actual. Indeed, his definition of masculinity is consistently contingent upon a derogatory presentation of femininity. While on the surface Robert speaks of women's need for and reliance upon men, he presents the relationship between gendered in far more codependent ways. Thus, the theoretical men in question simply cannot exist without their theoretical women, just as Robert simply cannot exist without Caroline.

Because of the violence of their marriage and the assumption that such violence is always enacted because of Robert's desires, it is almost impossible for readers to digest the idea that Robert actually needs Caroline. Somewhat akin to the typical abusive husband, Robert should find Caroline interchangeable and almost anonymous. Yet, he does not and cannot. At perhaps the only palatable sentimental moment between the couple in the text, Robert explains that during their first meeting as youngsters Caroline rescues him from the humiliating gestures of his sisters. Instead of joining them in their laughter, Caroline "turned to smile" at Robert, declaring his vulnerability—still sleeping with his mother—"really awfully sweet" (39). At this moment, Caroline's positive attention drastically alters the sisters' deliberately hurtful construction of Robert as weak, effeminate victim. It is her ability to redeem Robert that he falls in love with; and, predictably, it is this ability that prevents Caroline from being replaced by any other willing woman.

The key to the conclusion of the novel is Caroline's "triumphant" confession to Mary that "If you are in love with someone, you would even be prepared to let them kill you, if necessary" (62). Of course, Mary responds to the sentiment rather than the semantics: "And presumably you'd be prepared to kill the person you're 'in love' with" (62). Though Caroline's personal story is hidden from readers, McEwan constantly grants her words a ferocity and aggressiveness

that are indicative of her implicit dominance. Indeed, while Caroline's statement about killing seems to present her again as a victim, the "you" in the sentence is in full control over her future; instead of clearly outlining the expected power dynamics with a statement that could read, "If someone loves you, it is okay if they want to kill you," it is Caroline, presented as submissively responding to someone else's dominant abuse, who is in full control of the unfolding violence. The novella itself suggests over and over again that she dictates the terms of their marriage even at her most physically weakened; the reluctance on behalf of readers to believe this is a testament to cultural attitudes about victimization, abuse, and the stigma associated with a seemingly impossible masochistic subject position.

Thus, readers are confounded by the novel's conclusion. While Robert's fantasies cannot exist outside of Caroline's, again reminding readers of his subjection, her fantasies directly involve a step outward to include a third—or fourth—party. In order to acquire such persons, Caroline reveals herself as a master manipulator, a quality that has proven pivotal in all of the masochists discussed in this dissertation. To reiterate Žižek's thesis on masochism, "it is the servant, therefore, who writes the screenplay" (92). It is Caroline who dictates the terms of her marriage to Robert and it is Caroline who orchestrates Colin's murder. Caroline's intentionally ambiguous declaration, "I can't get out" (75), to Colin earlier on in the text reinforces a traditional fairy-tale image of a damsel in distress, with positioning Colin and Mary's ill-fated return as the novel's rescuing prince. The quiet declaration appeases the already piqued concerns of Colin, Mary, and readers alike. When Caroline "admits" this, the unsettling charade of her masochism is uncloaked. Instead of a doting wife who relishes in the intense pain and torment of her sexual relations with her husband, Caroline presents herself in a much more palatable way—as an abused housewife. Preying on still prevalent cultural attitudes that prioritize the image of

an abused woman in need of rescue over the image of a masochistic woman in a painful state of ecstasy, Caroline makes it impossible for Colin and Mary not to return.[4]

Yet, the end of the novel undercuts the ease and comfort of this reading. When readers realize the plan that Caroline and Robert have for Colin and Mary, it is clear that the Caroline's former pleas were a ruse. With no actual desire to get out and no intention of ever leaving Robert, Caroline manipulated Colin and Mary by presenting herself as someone else entirely—a victim. Caroline uses the prioritized position of "victim" implicitly in her retelling of her marriage:

> Robert confessed one night that there was only one thing he really wanted. He wanted to kill me, as we made love. He was absolutely serious…But the idea kept coming back. Because of that possibility hanging over us, we made love like never before…He got into bed and took me from behind. He whispered he was going to kill me, but he'd said that many times before…I blacked out with the pain, but even before I went I remember thinking: it's going to happen. I can't go back on it now. Of course, I wanted to be destroyed. (111)

Actualizing the conversation that Colin and Mary had about her situation earlier, Caroline's narrative here directly appeals to suspicions that her charade very deliberately arouses. Again, Caroline's narrative suggests that her desires are contingent upon Robert's. Because he wants to kill her, she wants to be killed. Yet, the fact remains that he does not really want to and, importantly, cannot kill Caroline. In her physically impaired state, she could be easily eliminated. The explanation of both of their desires here are completely misplaced. Robert may want to kill, yes, but his desire is to kill a surrogate for Caroline; as all of his fantasies are wholly contingent upon her, to kill Caroline would eradicate the source of desire and pleasure rather

than intensify it. Further, it would involve a complete break from the position of performative dominance that Caroline has so carefully carved out for him—an impossibility considering that it is Caroline who runs the show. Indeed, it is through her masochistic tendencies that Caroline's sense of self is substantiated; masochism necessitates the assertion of the self under the guise of its annihilation. So, too, Caroline theoretically wants to be destroyed—the presumed logical end of the masochist, as Krafft-Ebing suggested from his earliest case studies of the subject—but only by proxy.

Colin is the means through which Robert and Caroline can stage their most destructive fantasy. Thus, Colin functions as a surrogate not just for Caroline, but also for Robert. The couple chooses a consistently objectified male, previously the subject of various gazes that, at times, feminize him.[5] Readers are reminded that even Mary in her explanation of her fantasy turns Colin into an object. Caroline constructs and transforms Colin into an alternative version of herself, thus still maintaining control of her desires and revealing herself as wholly in control of her marital decisions. That Colin is actually a man suggests that he also functions as a pseudo-Robert, reminding readers of Robert's compulsion to reenact his childhood trauma. Importantly, Colin's position as surrogate for Caroline is made far more explicit than his position as surrogate for Robert, thus further testifying to the power and authority of Caroline's desires and position.

Accordingly, the couple's obsession with Colin turns into an eroticized murder. With one deliberate gesture on Caroline's behalf, Colin *becomes* Caroline: "she collected blood from her lower lip onto her forefinger and daubed it on Colin's lips. He did not resist her…Caroline transferred more of her blood on the end of her finger till Colin's lips were completely and accurately rouged. Then Robert, pressing his forearm against the top of Colin's chest, kissed him deeply on the mouth, and as he did so, Caroline ran her hand over Robert's back" (121). The

smearing of the blood infantilizes and feminizes Colin. It is Caroline who drugs Mary, who reveals the intentions of the couple, who determines Colin's fate as surrogate for herself. Thus, her approach to Colin allows Robert and Caroline to live out what are presented as their deepest fantasies.

The quick escalation of violence at the end of the novella leave readers attempting to decipher the convoluted relationships presented in the novella. Bradford provides one possible explanation for the discomfort that readers experience: "At no point is there an indication that McEwan is prompting the reader to interpret the events as allegorical, symbolic enactments of victimhood, evil or any other generality or abstract" (19). Thus, violence is violence. The mutual, though almost oppositional, forms of worship that Robert and Caroline bestow upon each other are not, and cannot, speak metonymically or allegorically. Yet, they ultimately help uncover a void; the reactionary masochisms in this dissertation—the attempts by novelists to reclaim masochism as an ordinary and necessary part of daily life—are trumped by a destructive turn outward.

Caroline and Robert escape after Colin's murder and Mary is left to rehash the story, address the suspicions of local authorities, and justify her and Colin's decision to keep returning to Robert and Caroline. When Mary attempts to consolidate her drugged memories of Colin's murder and their overall trip to Venice, the narrator explains: "Mary shrugged. The words 'victim,' 'assailant,' 'the crime itself' meant nothing, corresponded to nothing at all" (125). This statement, in many ways, holds the key both to the novella and to its position in this dissertation. *The Comfort of Strangers* obviously has a victim and an assailant, though those two previously clearly delineated positions become virtually interchangeable and, thus, the security of the distinction is compromised. While Colin, murdered by the end of the novel, is the overt victim,

there questions of power and culpability remains unanswered. Thus, readers are left in the realm of an unsettling and vicious masochism. Even though the narrative subtly prioritizes Caroline's fantasies in the construction and representation of her marriage, the ultimate note of the text is devastating in its apparent inevitability. The ordinary masochisms previously outlined in this dissertation are trumped by the deliberate incorporation of destructive violence. *The Comfort of Strangers*, in many ways, explains masochism's seeming inability to recuperate itself from categories of deviance from which other previously stigmatized tendencies have removed themselves. Masochism, then, is still desperately in need of defending, though not for lack of intensity, desire, or innovation on behalf of Brontë, Moore, Lawrence, and Rhys.

Notes

1. The status of Colin and Mary's relationship reappears throughout the text as an obstacle to Mary's presentation of herself. After she and Colin's body are found, readers are told that her treatment by officials is contingent upon the clarity of her relationship status: "Once her marital status had been clarified, and the fact that her children were several hundred miles away, and especially once she had insisted in response to repeated questions, that it had never been her intention to marry Colin, she was treated with courtesy and suspicion. She became more clearly a source of information and less an object for their concern" (124).

2. Judith Seaboyer highlights the specific importance of Venice in McEwan's text: "McEwan's Venice serves as a metaphorical map against which to read and interpret not only western history and culture but also our modernist and postmodernist understanding of the psyche, and at the same time it is a figure for ancient narratives of the labyrinth, that impenetrable space which resists mapping or topographical survey" (961). Seaboyer reads Venice as possessing a "seductive otherness…a figure for death and for the feminine body" (961). Notably, Richard E. Zeitkowitz, in "Writing a Feminine Paris in Jean Rhys's *Quartet*" (2005), emphasizes the importance of Rhys's Paris in similar terms: "Vagueness—a lack of clearly defined boundaries—is the most prominent characteristic of Marya's Paris" (3). The "vagueness" of Paris—a clear tie to "impenetrable space" of Venice—allows Marya to engage with her own construction of self and place"…in *Quartet*, Rhys does not merely 'translate' Marya's internalized experience of Paris; rather, she articulates the process by which Marya *constructs* her own Paris—one at odds with the ordered, stable, masculine city that oppresses her" (1). Similarly, Seaboyer claims that "the Venetian stage is an ideal site…the dark, pure perversity of Robert and Caroline's relationship is the over expression of that which, repressed,

structures the somewhat dishonest, somewhat dull, occasionally passionate, largely comfortable normalcy of Colin and Mary's" (961).

3. In *Homos*, Leo Bersani relies on the broad term "S/M" which breaks down the boundary between sadism and masochism. Yet, he still accedes to "primacy of masochism" and the "appeal of powerlessness" within said "S/M" relationship (95), thereby revealing the Deleuzian roots of his argument

4. Of course, the assertion that Caroline enjoys herself in her marriage is a difficult one to make and to digest. In other circumstances, her situation would be classified as abuse and Robert would be rightfully and appropriately criminalized and punished. Yet, the narrative itself relies on the slippery space between abuse and masochism, though they clearly surface in distinct circumstances. .

5. There are various points throughout the text in which Colin is objectified as feminized; it is his body, rather than Mary's that is the subject of public and private musings. Colin's body is the center of narrative spectacle, from descriptions of him on the beach, to the way in which Robert and Caroline obsess over the photographs of his features.

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