

5-2018

## Intimacies of Power: Eroticized Violence and Gendered Sexuality in Transgressive Art 1890s— #MeToo

Julia Louisa Smith  
*Purdue University*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open\\_access\\_dissertations](https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open_access_dissertations)

---

### Recommended Citation

Smith, Julia Louisa, "Intimacies of Power: Eroticized Violence and Gendered Sexuality in Transgressive Art 1890s— #MeToo" (2018). *Open Access Dissertations*. 1831.  
[https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open\\_access\\_dissertations/1831](https://docs.lib.purdue.edu/open_access_dissertations/1831)

This document has been made available through Purdue e-Pubs, a service of the Purdue University Libraries.  
Please contact [epubs@purdue.edu](mailto:epubs@purdue.edu) for additional information.

**INTIMACIES OF POWER: EROTICIZED VIOLENCE & GENDERED  
SEXUALITY IN TRANSGRESSIVE ART; 1890S— #METOO**

by

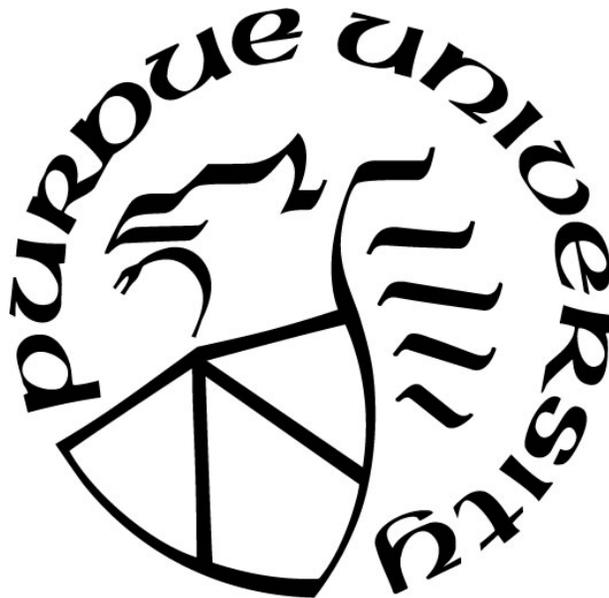
**Julia Louisa Smith**

**A Dissertation**

*Submitted to the Faculty of Purdue University*

*In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of*

**Doctor of Philosophy**



Department of English

West Lafayette, Indiana

May 2018

**THE PURDUE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL  
STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE APPROVAL**

Dr. Arkady Plotnitsky

Department of English

Dr. Dan Smith

Department of Philosophy

Dr. T.J. Boisseau

Department of Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies

Dr. Sandor Goodhart

Department of English

**Approved by:**

Dr. Nush Powell

Head of the Graduate Program

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: FEMALE FANTASIES OF MALE DOMINATION .....	1
1.1 Preamble .....	1
1.2 Obscene Art: Literary Philosophies of Eroticized Violence.....	8
1.3 Eroticized Violence: Male Masochism and Male Sadism .....	14
1.4 The Story of <i>O</i> : Female Masochism and Eroticized Masculinity.....	23
1.5 Authorizing Female Sadism.....	29
CHAPTER 2. DEFENDING A PRICK: THE MARQUIS DE SADE AND THE MYTH OF THE CULTURAL MARTYR IN WESTERN MASCULINITY.....	42
2.1 De Sade’s Tragedy .....	42
2.2 Sade’s Aesthetic Influence on Modern Masculinity.....	46
2.3 Male Masochism and Power: Strategies of Castration .....	51
2.4 Pornological Literature: Sadism and Masochism as Objects of Cultural Analysis .....	54
2.5 Pornology: Problems with Masculinity and Power .....	59
CHAPTER 3. “A FEMALE DE SADE” THE STORY OF <i>THE STORY OF O</i> .....	67
3.1 Subversion as Perversion: Female Masochism in <i>Historie d’O</i> .....	67
3.2 Eroticized Anxieties: Aury’s Seduction and the Love Contract.....	80
3.3 Dying For It: Female Eroticism and Masculine Domination.....	87
CHAPTER 4. CULTURAL AESTHETICS OF FEMALE SEXUAL SADISM .....	99
4.1 Pornographic Details: The Female Fantasy of Male Domination .....	99
4.2 Reage’s Jouissance: A Cultural Formation of Female-Authored Sadism .....	104
4.3 Female Sadism in Other Forms.....	112
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	116
WORK CITED.....	119

## ABSTRACT

Author: Smith, Julia, L. PhD

Institution: Purdue University

Degree Received: May 2018

Title: Intimacies of Power: Eroticized Violence and Gendered Sexuality in Transgressive Art  
1890s— #MeToo

Major Professor: Arkady Plotnitsky

This dissertation seeks to understand eroticized violence by analyzing sadism and masochism as models of modern masculinity and power. I look at the literature and theory of male sexual sadism and masochism as “artefacts of art” as metaphors of male subjectivity expressed across vast and interdisciplinary cultural fields of cultural expression (Bersani, *Freudian Body* 5). Best understood as an aesthetic formation, masochism shows how cultural formations of subjectivity and sexualized violence are a modern form of power that operates by means of subversion and can tolerate its own castration. As a metaphor of modern masculinity, de Sade’s sadism shows how sadism is banal, naturalized, and based in an endless vacillation between arrogance and a guilty conscious. Both of these forms of male power and erotic masculinity show an anti-romantic vision of heterosexual coupling lacking in mutuality and based in domination and totality. In male sadism and masochism, the female-other is a conceptual object of potential subjectivity whose existence serves to substantiate the authority of the unified male subject. Female sexual sadism conflates love with cruelty as a method of self-annihilation and self-discovery; her goal is to become an unrecognizable other that mirrors and perverts the operations of masculine eroticism aimed at female domination. Uncovering female sexual sadism as a cultural form of female-authored sexuality, I seek to articulate how masculine domination becomes erotic in the female imagination by conflating love and cruelty in romantic ideals of heterosexual love in Western culture by locating the principle of difference and division between sexes.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION: FEMALE FANTASIES OF MALE DOMINATION

*Think about it: is O used by René and Sir Stephan, or does she in fact use them, and all that weighty, solemn organization of a castle they keep, all those irons and chains and obligatory debauchery, to fulfill her own dream—that is, her own destruction and death? And in some surreptitious way, isn't she in charge of them? Doesn't she bend them to her will? And the fact is, she does get what she wants in the end: they kill her off, in three lines...Bear in mind, it's only a dream."*

*(Dominique Aury, "Confessions of O: Conversations with Pauline Réage," 140).*

### 1.1 Preamble

The idea that sadism and masochism are complimentary, that one enjoys inflicting pain and one enjoys having pain inflicted upon them reveals how a nexus of gendered dynamics in sexuality have developed over time. In conventional terms, sadism is imagined as a psychopathic criminal attitude; a masculine aggression towards the self and the external world, and masochism suggests a weaker navigation of power as powerlessness, both humiliating and feminized. These naïve attributes of sexuality maintain assumptions regarding power, gender, and female sexuality deny the role of masculine eroticism as a form of violence and power among many cultural formations including literature, art, and psychoanalysis and film. Popular culture and politics are always affirming and disaffirming the apparent blindness of mainstream cultural politics to show how women's bodies have different needs and complexities that are rarely met. Between religious conservatism and gendered sexuality in the most mainstream representation, it is becoming clear that women's phenomenological knowledge and authorship must be spoken in terms of female pain and suffering. With the #MeToo moment in 2017, women's experiences of

sexual assault and harassment were spoken in self-authorized vignettes over social media acting as testimony and witness to their past abuses. The rise of female-lead political activism and widespread media traction is making room for capitalist consumption of female authored testimonies of suffering, shame and fear. Whatever effects this may have on our cultural and political landscape is unclear, but the fact remains that as women move for increased visibility and autonomy, silent histories of trauma and abuse are becoming part of the political mechanisms of feminist discourse.

Sadism and masochism are conceptual frameworks of male sexuality and masculine domination. The importance of literary analysis in historicizing masculine frameworks of gendered sexual expression as cultural formations of sadism and masochism is at hand. It is these forms of cultural representation and political strategies of power instantiate and denies awareness of how cultural capital comes to be disturbed asymmetrically in gendered sexuality. Masculine domination is a normative framework of gendered sexuality. It implies an aggressiveness and destructive quality to our intimate vulnerabilities and fears as a sexualized other that transcends romance and reproductive knowledge of human sexual development. It is in literature that the nuances of gendered sexual experience as pleasure in pain can be shown by the complex uses of language that make humiliation, cruelty, and domination an eroticized and desexualized image of masculine power.

Deviant in their violation of social norms and extreme in their depictions of eroticized domination, the authors of male masochism and sadism, Sacher Von Masoch and The Marquis de Sade, combine sexuality and violence in very different ways. The inner experience of the other is absent in the libertine's psychic landscape. Beneath his extreme sexual depravity his aim is to perpetuate endless violence in alignment with the law of the father, and monotonous use of

reason. In Sade's erotic universe, *jouissance* is reached in transgression; the annihilation of the other by means of demonstrative reason and excessive stylized violence rather than in communion or shared experience with the other. For Masoch, *jouissance* in transgressive violence is achieved by means of a contract with an ideal mistress whom he persuades into dominating and humiliating him in particular fetishized gestures, scenes, and poses, a masochistic scenario. The masochistic male seems to be subordinate, but at a deeper level he successfully supplants his own desires onto the female other so that he can fantasize that his desire belongs to his female torturer. With Masoch, it is clear that Severin, his masochistic hero, and Wanda his ideal mistress, struggle to define female autonomy, Wanda sometimes feels self-conscious about her role and fears she has actually hurt Severin. It is in these moments that Severin's desire for punishment crescendo, and his reply is to ask that Wanda continue to beat him if it is her desire. Hence the trouble with both masochism and sadism is in the denial of the female-other by creative and impenetrable means, and using faulty reasoning that women are unaware of their lust for pain. Due to assumption female weakness as inferiority for the benefit of male sexual authority as paternal law and as the subject denied of power in need of autonomy, the female body is reduced to flesh as consciousness; a potential subject that can be denied by many different means, that can even tolerate their own castrations at the expense of the female subjectivity. In masochism and sadism, female autonomy and desire is determined in a framework of masculinize desire.

Looking at a genealogical history of sadism and masochism points to the many political and philosophical blind spots that maintain basic asymmetries of power in gendered sexuality and political conversations about equality. First, the assumption that masochism and sadism are perversions suggests that the experience of pain with pleasure as something desirable is

abnormal instead of a fact of human experience and history and rarely theorized as actual desires based in real experience. The common misunderstanding that sadism and masochism are negative attributes and are rarely troubled and met with resistance to rigorous academic clarity because of the shame and fear that is reflected back on us when we are asked to engage seriously. However, by not having these conversations, we cannot move forward on the ways that feminized knowledge or female social attributes become a source of empowerment rather than weakness, i.e. emotional labor, the threat of physical assault, the assumption of male superiority and dominance as a fear of abandonment or violence. To pretend that the psychic reality of women as sexually inferior to men and devalued in physical and continuous ways does not prevent autonomy, self-motivation, or sense of social worth, is the difficult paradigm that must shift, even if all genders were mandated equal pay, which is not to say that it would not be a step in a more assertive direction toward a paradigm shift in our uses of language and understanding of gender. It is because the secrets of sexualized domination are kept secret, even from ourselves, that masculinized violence maintains its eroticism and social appeal.

Strategies of mediating sexual harassment, such as spreading the word about male abusers in word of mouth networks, are also becoming topics of interest, and in conjunction with women's vulnerability and pain being used as a political tool, so are the strategies that women have used to protect themselves and each other in the face of little social support for many "acceptable" forms of sexism in public and private. The threat of revealing sexualized male abuse as we know is often worse than the crime, where the punishment, shame, and degradation of public confession almost always increased for the one who has been victimized. There are dangerous blind spots in our theoretical and philosophical knowledge of women's experiences that are erupting in the expression and authorship of sexualized abuses. In order to seek social

bonds and relationships outside of domination and abuse, we must explode our notions of what sexuality is beyond the level of individuality, preferences, and desires, to see how sexuality produces particular ways that we manipulate power and how our intimacies with power are not always of our choosing. In looking at transgressive authorship from male and female authors we can be better equipped to explore confrontations with power, knowledge, sexuality, and the perverse desire for violence and pain as a source of pleasure.

The bind of gender and sexuality with eroticized domination is also apparent in masochism and sadism. Take for example, the cross identification that must happen with a female spectator who imagines herself as the male hero and female erotic interest in romance narratives and pornographic representation; the female spectator lies somewhere between the eroticized female image and the masculine spectator whose carnal desires she can acknowledge and identify but never fully participate in. In this subjective bind, the female subject is defined somewhere between her total identification with the sexed other, and her psychic identification with the perverse male subject. Unable to participate in the sadomasochistic pleasures of the male subject (who can identify with the drama of castration and omnipotence without having to take the inner experience of the other into account), women must find their own way of accepting male sadism and masochism as facts of representation and power. Women's sexual domination comes in many forms, from science and medicine, to female trafficking, marriage, and media. These histories are well studied and historically validated across fields and disciplines. I argue that coming to know a phenomenology of a female authorship is to produce better language to increase mutuality and decrease abuse and exploitation. Reaching beyond sexuality, we must confront the basic formation of sexed bodies as a subject object division and

we encourage the speaking subject to define their intimacies with power as experiential relations of violence with sexuality and gender

It is difficult to know what to say knowing that my subject is taboo, and my position as the author of a taboo subject it feels necessary to incorporate my own history of what I always believed, a rallied against as an idea, female masochism. I always inherently knew it was wrong. Among friends, fantasies of male domination range from the “vanilla” to the “explicit” but the themes remain the same. Knowing that gender is culturally constructed, female masochism as an idea needed to be disrupted, the obvious hypocrisy of claiming that women like to be domination because of male domination, and that fantasies of masculine domination are further proof that women like it, seemed like a key idea that needed to be demystified for me. In gender studies, I felt that many of the issues pontificated over about essentialism and representation were easily clarified in the very idea of female masochism

After I read Gilles Deleuze’s *Coldness and Cruelty*, I discovered the literary relevance of Sacher Von Masoch and the Marquis de Sade who Deleuze argued wrote “pornologies.” Their work represented entire philosophies of man nature and culture. It is crucial that these are literary works because it is through literature that obscene works transcended toward higher, philosophical principles significant not only because their names attribute to the formalization of pleasure and pain in human sexuality and vice versa, but that their complexities are best understood in literature.

*Distinction* “6”):

... the dominant class constitutes a relatively autonomous space whose structure is defined by distribution of economic and cultural capital among its members, each class fraction being characterized by a certain configuration of this distribution to which there corresponds a certain lifestyle, through the mediation of the habitus; that, the second, the distribution of these two types of capital among the fractions is symmetrically and inversely structured; and that, third, the

different inherited asset structures, together with social trajectory, command the habitus and the systematic choices it produces in all areas of specific practice, of which choices that commonly regarded as aesthetic are one dimension—then, these structures should be found in the space of lifestyles, i.e., in the different systems of properties in which the different systems of dispositions express themselves (260).

By looking to the original authors of sadism, masochism, and female sadomasochism I intend to maintain an awareness of the social class and the economic relativity to cultural capital and class distinctions and social domination. De Sade, as we will see is a great example of the upper class turning against itself with violence and self-annihilation in the form of rebellious masculinity; a destructive sexual violence between man (politics, and female), nature (female), and the (male) self.

In this dissertation, I attempt to account for female sadism as a cultural aesthetic; an *ars erotica* of female sexuality that is left out of productive dialogue in mainstream academic and social discourse. Foucault writes that our discourse on sexuality the, *scientific sexualis*, that provided the general categories for sexual pathologies in the late 1800's overshadowed the *ars erotica* of pre-platonic greeks, where sexuality, art, and self-expression are integrated into religious ritual. The significance of our modern theories of human sexual development reflects what Bataille calls a loss of sacred erotic transgression before Plato's thought divided 'divinity' from 'purity' and the profane with impurity wherein, "the divine becomes rational and moral and relegates the malefic sacred to the sphere of the profane" (*Theory of Religion* 318). I argue that the boundaries of knowledge that hold sway over sexuality, and how the structure of desire changes in meaning depending on social relationships and subject positions are instantiated in gendered heterosexuality and masculine domination. Furthermore, these boundaries can be productively explored in transgressive literature.

## 1.2 Obscene Art: Literary Philosophies of Eroticized Violence

*“Eroticism is imaginary: it is a shot of imagination fired at the exterior world, and that shot is people themselves, arriving at their images, arriving at themselves”*  
(Paz, *“An Erotic Beyond: Sade”* 19).

Transgressive art is the most acute version of representation that navigates power as a product of our imaginary relationship to sexual domination and sexual development. Take for example, the role that the surrealist movement played in aestheticizing de Sade’s humanity as a metaphor of modern masculinity. De Sade was resurrected in culture and theorized by French philosophy (namely that of Lacan and Bataille) as a cultural martyr, redeemed by his desire to be punished. Translating and interpreting art is a process of desubjectification and reintegration with the self and other, and methods of viewing themes of obscenity, violence, and sexuality are often blinded by unconscious blocks to validate our sense of virtue, morality, and reason. In the case of de Sade, the cruel logic of male violence and sexual domination and the actual harm that de Sade espouses, against nature, women, and himself, is acknowledged yet his perverse masculine eroticism is ennobled as an emblem of an even virtuous masculinity.

De Sade’s eroticism, notoriously known as sadism later understood by the sexologists and Freudian psychoanalysis as the perverse (masculine) desire to inflict pain should first be understood as the masculine eroticism of the libertine that de Sade personified in his writing. The libertine that de Sade was, however, is a much more complicated figure that crystallized a conventional view of masculinity complimentary with sadism. As an aspect of the perversity of man and nature, some even argue that Sade acted as a precursor to Freud and the rise of sexology and medicine that pathologized masculinity as having a sexualized cruelty either by nature, or because of society. The

misogyny of much fin-de-siècle art and literature—the portrayal of women as monster, vampires, or abominable criminals and of men as their victims—was in many ways a male fantasy of female potency (and of male impotence) which linked cultural dissolution and decay to female power (Dean 59). Unlike masochism, male sadism is more of a formal configuration than a masochistic scenario or fantasy despite its likewise abundance of description. More repetitious and authoritarian, de Sade is aligned with thanatos repetitive compulsion with the desire to master and gain phallic power (in de Sade’s case in order to create endless, incestuous violence), From this limited vantage, our view point in looking out at the constraining functions and possibilities in aesthetic forms of masochistic elaboration and sadistic delusion, masculinity is presented with an impossible bind of violence and aggression in sexuality where violence is desexualized and eroticism feminized.

Works of obscene literature that explore boundaries of human sexuality are defined among critical theorists and cultural studies as literary pornographies. Because of their artistic and cultural relevance, these higher forms of pornography are considered literary because they explore human sexuality rather than exploit images of explicit sex acts for immediate gratification. Conventional pornography exploits our sexual realities by reducing the “expectations and frustrations” of our lived experiences of sexuality by exploiting its subject, while that the highest level, “is an exploration of human sexuality...its moral and psychic implications” (Michelson 24). Susan Sontag says that obscene literature moves toward, “the boundaries of transgression” where sexual pleasure is attached to the points of transgression rather than pleasure alone (“The Pornographic Imagination” 62). In truly obscene works according to Sontag are those, “Only dealing

with that specific and sharpest inflection of the themes of lust, “the obscene” do. It’s towards the gratifications of death, succeeding and surpassing those of eros, that every truly obscene quest ends” (60). In light of the most intensified representations of literary pornography, are Georges Bataille’s *Histoire d’oeil* in 1928, inherently linked with the pornologies of Masoch and de Sade, and Pauline Réage’s *Historie d’O*. Although Aury makes no claims to be influenced by them, despite the similarity in title and themes of perverse sexuality that Deleuze describes as the convergence of violence and sexuality in language, “for sheer explicitness about sexual organs and acts is not necessarily obscene; it only becomes so when delivered in a particular tone, when it has acquired a moral resonance” (Sontag 58) that elevate works literary pornography to what Deleuze terms pornologies.

Deleuze opens his first chapter of *Coldness and Cruelty*, “The Language of Sade and Masoch” by asking, “What are the uses of literature by questioning how violence and sexuality meet in Sade and Masoch.” To answer, he references Bataille’s argument that de Sade’s language is that of the victim, because only a victim can describe torture, and the torturer “uses the hypocritical language of established power and order” (17). In Masoch and Sade, Deleuze looks to the language to determine:

“Sade’s attitude is diametrically opposed to that of the torturer. When Sade writes he refuses to cheat, but he attributes his own attitude to people who in real life could only have been silent and uses them to make self-contradictory statements to other people” (17)

In this example, we see how language is split in pornological language: while Sade imagines a scene of torture dramatized by the sadistic character of the libertine, his attitude is projected onto people who would never use the language that he has them vocalize. According to Deleuze,

Masoch and de Sade use different frameworks of the law and morality to instantiate and dramatize eroticized violence in the excessive use of words that “compel the body to repeat the movements they suggest” (18). For example, Masoch’s contracts “formalize and verbalize the behavior of their partners. Everything must be stated, promised, announced, and carefully described before being accomplished” in Sade, “language itself is used as a demonstration of violence...acts of violence inflicted on the victims are a mere reflection of a higher form of violence to which the demonstration testifies” (18, 19). As pornologies, the dialectical techniques revealed in their language, defined by the abundant use of imperative and descriptions, roles, and role reversals are key ways to understand how masculine desiring has been integrated into the cultural imagination.

In *Ways of Seeing*, Berger describes how biological mechanisms frame our visual field of perception and reality as limited biologically, yet infinite in cultural meaning. Our symbolic relationship to the things that we perceive and understand in our field of vision command my analysis of gender and violence as an opposition between a subject and object, especially in the mode of viewing art. Walter Benjamin’s “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” considers objects that appear in our field of perception are meant to show, “something that is absent” that in kind, creates a physical and emotional affect that conditions our perception of what a work of art means and, in that way, what what is “real” about it. In seeing the artists work, we engage in the sense that we are looking through the eyes of the artist as they once saw, identifying with the artist themselves by embodying a visual perception from a different time, that, in turn reflexively, (*my usage*) though subconsciously, considers how they were seen. The work of art, in accordance with its longevity and reproduction over time, is increasingly objectified to signify the present as it is now, and its historical connection is felt as a

reproduction of meaning rather than absence felt by the artist and shared by the viewer. The subjective vision of the artist and their dynamics of vision at a moment in history become mystified rather than clarified and the assumptions we hold prevent us from seeing the work as an absence “to explain how, either metaphorically or literally, ‘you see things,’ and an attempt to discover ‘how he sees things’ (Berger 9). According to Berger, our increasing sense of individuality over history converges with an increasing sense and application of meaning onto original works, that merely justify, “the role of the ruling classes” who “invent history” in order to justify their privilege (Berger 11). In this vacillation between original art object as absence, and its appearance and reproduction as object over time, is at the heart of this project.

Once the viewer steps into this plane of perceptual vision, reciprocity is deliberately being withheld by the sadomasochistic deadlock that is created when the conscious viewer steps into a field of absence to render an image in their minds eye. Artistic creations that make sex and violence explicit are dismissed dogmatically by mainstream political attitudes. When the original work is represented in reproduction, it no longer erases historical difference between the viewer and the original art object; as a representation, the subject unconsciously shifts a to critically different perception of the object. In the first frame of the original, the art object insinuates in the viewer into a sense of immediacy to a different historical time, when perceptions of the same things that existed in the content of the painting, are felt to be both familiar and different. The lens between the conscious viewer and the original art object shifts between historicity and immediacy so that the viewer is drawn into the representation in a more vulnerable way, that does not seek to objectify the object but feel it’s historical immediacy, “depiction of cultural meaning. In facing a reproduced of an art object, the perception of that object is not as essentially linked to the artist or the time it was created, but suggests a continuum to newness outside of

historical specificity whereas the original work, creates an immediacy with the past, “original paintings are silent and still in a sense that information never is” (Berger 31).

Sado-masochistic literature<sup>1</sup> construes an effect in the viewer that dulls and traps the relationship between the subject/viewer and object/absence of the artistic creator or original image relationship to the things that it sees as absence needed to be filled. To create meaning the viewer enters into a field of realization and feedback from the vantage point of that absence to the image to have meaning or value. In viewing a work of art the viewer steps into an absence and fill it with their limited perception of reality and things, that reflexivity returns the outside gaze. Guy Debord calls the “society of spectacle” and what WJT Mitchell calls the “pictorial turn” where visual representation intensifies as scientific methods to study anxiety and human psychosexual development leading to Freud and his discovery of the unconscious and the Oedipal complex.

“In whatever art form, pornography documents both man’s neurotic and archetypical concern with sexuality. The neurotic (not to be confused with pathological) engagement with pornography is the private confrontation of the individual psyche with its sexual needs. The larger cultural engagement with pornography is the public confrontation with the archetypical – and usually subliminal – sexual impulses. Pornography then, for better or worse, is the imaginative record of man’s sexual will.” (Peter Michelson, *An Apology for Pornography* 22).

*Histoire d’O* by Pauline Réage is a story of female subjectivity; its entry onto the literary and cultural scene when the novella was published in postwar France is an event that disrupts cultural assumptions that female sexuality is submissive. *O* led the formation of the Samoist leatherdyke faction of 70s feminist subculture (named after the female-operated version of lesbian sadomasochism in *O*). Led by poststructuralist thinkers Gayle Rubin and Pat Califia, who propose that consensual sadomasochism is a significant reconfiguration of power, whose

---

<sup>1</sup> Works that convey sexuality and violence as erotic in language using exaggerated forms of domination

works undermine binary models of understanding power, gender and violence, namely that that power is bad and powerlessness is worse.

Tracing interplays between the subject and the object other/image/description and the violence that returns to the absence/object paradigm molded the role of love in philosophy as a discipline although the views are mostly weak and, as I argue later, mirrors judicial violence and actual corporeal mortification. In these ways, philosophy and cultural theory take on violence as sexed and gendered, and speak for mankind, and provide sufficient evidence to claim that the inferiority of women remain unquestioned in our best and most honest literary criticism of transgressive art and the role of sexuality. Like de Sade and Masoch, Réage theorizes a gendered manipulation of power against the grain of, and in collusion with gendered sexual domination.

Although the term “female sexual sadism” is not a coherent or singular cultural formation that isolates it as a condition or coherent identity, I argue an aesthetic of female sexual sadism, often simply labeled as female masochism, must be given a phenomenological reality in literature and cultural representation as de Sade and Masoch are known for their particular aims and aesthetics in their art. I hope to uncover the way that male sexual domination relies on the concept that love and cruelty is a sensually arousing experience that is generated in an imaginative working out of the psychic conflict between arousal using an expansive range of emotional and physical mortification that occurs in sadomasochistic language and its attendant cultural formations.

### 1.3 Eroticized Violence: Male Masochism and Male Sadism

*“Rare is the man who has not dreamed of possessing Justine. But, so far as I know, no woman has ever dreamed of being Justine”*  
*(Jean Paulhan, “Happiness in Slavery” XXV)*

Among the influential figures for the surrealists who exalted Sade as a, “hero, martyr, and victim...a pure image of heroism made more heroic by his oppression” was the rise in literary and cultural critics in the 1930’s that largely considered de Sade, “significant less for his sadism than for having written about it” (166). De Sade transcended from a depraved criminal and representation of human (masculine) depravity to a revolutionary hero from the early to mid-twentieth century especially in European schools of thought, particularly France. He was also considered by some as man of indomitable cold reason, whose suffering endeared him to those seeking truth in their analytical endeavors of human depravity, perverse sexuality, and the “nature” of man.

The complex technological civilizations created by ‘mankind’ employ strategies of economic and social competition where the accumulation of symbolic capital is a male domain. In the last century, female employment and women in high earning positions have increasingly accommodated the presence and influence of women, despite structural and social inequality between genders. Bourdieu summarizes the sexual relation as one that both appears and enacts a social relation of domination “which links sexuality with power” where “the worst humiliation for a man is to be turned into a woman” (*Masculine Domination* 22). For women, the accumulation of capital is fraught with conflicting signifiers of identity that go against the gendered language of female subjectivity. As Bourdieu notes, “as is always the case in relation of domination, the practices and representations of the two sexes are in no way symmetrical...the sexual act itself is seen by men as a form of domination, appropriation, ‘possession’” (*Masculine Domination* 21). On the one hand, male domination is an expressive form of power that purports to the nature of male superiority as a biological imperative: men have the strength and ability to

hunt, and above all, reason. According to Bataille, the history of human civilization depends of the creation of taboos that underlie social discipline, deeming the flesh and the carnal against rationality and moral good. By maintaining objective foundations of difference as natural rather than the work of social construction, sexual difference is maintained as a vital principle of social division and the legitimizes domination as a rule that governs relations between the sexes.

The naturalization of difference and division as a theoretical framework and practical construction of gender is a social product with real effects. Take for example, social practices that deem what behaviors, moves, gestures, and attitudes are appropriate to your sex, “while forbidding or discouraging inappropriate behaviors, especially in relation with the opposite sex” (Bourdieu *Masculine Domination* 25). Ownership and the accumulation of capital aligned with masculinity and social power, the considerably short history of women working in male dominated industries show how difficult integration has been for both sexes, especially over the last century. Bourdieu notes that the more that women are “subject to the traditional model of sexual division of labor...the weaker their cultural capital and the lower their position in the social hierarchy” (Bourdieu, *Distinction* 40). As Bourdieu points out of Katherine MacKinnon’s use of the “fake” female orgasm, “Male pleasure is in part, enjoyment of female pleasure, of the power to give pleasure” that confirms the extent to which male power determines the how genders interact: “men, who expect the female orgasm to provide a proof of their virility and the pleasure derived from the extreme form of submission” (*Masculine Domination* 20, 21):

...this is because it is constructed through the fundamental principle of division between the active male and passive female and because this principle creates, organizes, expresses, and directs desire – male desire as the desire for possession, eroticized domination, and female desire as the desire for possession, eroticized domination, and female desire and the desire for masculine domination, as eroticized subordination, or even in the limiting case, as the eroticized recognition of domination (*Masculine Domination* 21)

From this social determination of gender where women occupy a subject position that is objectivity less powerful, the more that they are subject to a traditional model of femininity, the more the less access they have to social capital and political power.

The impulsive violence of sadistic masculinity is a radical will of refusal aligned with paternal authority. The sadist libertine is often viewed as ultimately self-annihilating; a hidden masochist who identifies as, and speaks the language of the victim. Masoch's writing also provides an aesthetic form, given in the demands of his mistress, and the contract that binds her to automate his wishes down to her gestures and the use of her body. At odds with the social, de Sade's libertine is radically critical of the power structures and hypocrisy of his time. He was, "interested in the obliteration of personality from the viewpoint of power and liberty" (Sontag 56). He inscribed a form of masculinity that was pervasive and also suppressed. His influence resurfaced at the end of the nineteenth century that spanned fields and continued on till about the seventies, when BDSM and sado-masochism in psychoanalytic theory and cultural studies became integrated in the larger field of perverse sexualities. As the particularizes of sadism and masochism are generalized into a perversification of sexuality, largely against homosexuality according to Foucault, the literary products of sexuality and power as cultural forms in sadean and masochistic fantasies, and they are often subsumed in a 'biologizing' of human sexual development.

It is often the case that masochism is primarily known as a negative attribute of sexual identity. To see masochism as an attribute of an individual, i.e pathologically perverse sexual attribute, is to assume that pain and pleasure are mutually exclusive in the erotic lives of well-adjusted people. Freud's oedipal lens of masochism suggests that the violence and aggression of

the death-instinct, *thanatos*, is separate from the *eros* of life and the pleasure principle, so the struggle between the life drive and death drive is the essential internal struggle of all living things. According to Jean Laplanche, Freud's idea that, "the internal residue of his self-destructiveness is bound in place by eros (here unduly assimilated to 'sexuality'), to give birth to 'originary erotogenic masochism'" so that in Freud's theory of life and the biological drives, there is a, "vital, objective sadomasochism, which is never anything but the struggle of two great biological forces" ("The Sexual Unconscious" 210, 211).

Freud leaves no room for eroticized violence in his text that can account for the pain of sexual experience and Bersani argues that Freud tentatively makes powerful assertions about the fundamental nature of all life between life and death, desexualized aggressive violence emergent in the pleasure principle: "Sexuality – at least in the mode in which it is constituted – might even be thought of as a tautology for masochism." Citing Laplanche who links fantasy with sexuality emergent with masochism as a sexual drive, "the activity of fantasy which constitutes sexuality in human beings is inherently an experience of 'psychic pain'" (34). Masochism is the origin of fantasy and the sexual; "in one sense, masochism serves life. The threat to psychic wholeness in each destabilizing fantasy is an enrichment of being: masochistic excitement" being linked with sexual perturbation, and masochism being the origin of fantasy. Bersani citing Laplanche, says, "Freud's non-sexual sadism is desire's interpretation of its life-serving affinities with death as nothing more than—death" relying on his concept "original sadism" that has no aim to inflict pain (*Forms of Violence* 34, 35).

Masochism proves to be a useful object of analysis for cultural theorists insofar as it reflects and often critiques forms of social stratification especially due to the fact that desire is the primary means of social production for Deleuze and Guattari. But also, masochism can be

characterized as the desire to erase subjectivity, which is a crucial aspect to Deleuze and Guattari's work. Because of the fact that masochism extends beyond simply a sexual perversion and extends to the fact that desire is the mode of inquiry to analyze political and social multiplicities, the study of masochism lends itself to a study of human survival and material history in general.

According to Deleuze and Guattari, Freud's use of the Oedipus myth as a metaphor of sexual individuation serves a repressive function in capitalism, "that reduces the anarchic productivity of unconscious desire to familial forms of desire" (Lorraine, "Oedipalisation" 195, 196). The "holy family: mommy-daddy-and-me" are repeated in the public (Seem, *Anti-Oedipus*, xv)<sup>2</sup> Yet in the Oedipal lens of the mommy-daddy-me paradigm, the daughter remains an absent other in the theory yet again. In attempting to provide a narrative for human sexuality and the drive toward pleasure, Bersani notes that Freud "tentatively" suggests sexuality "may prevent complete sexual happiness" (*The Freudian Body* 20). Showing that Freud's difficult conclusion, "an aggressive destructiveness forms the basis of love," Bersani argues that another way of saying is, "destructiveness is constitutive of sexuality" (20).

Against the grain of Freud's *scientia sexulias*, where sadism and masochism are two sides of the same coin, sadomasochism, Deleuze argues that sadism and masochism have distinct aims, politics, and narratives that undermine their reduced status as perversions. Freud, like early sexologists including Kraft-Ebbing and Havelock Ellis considered sadomasochism (algomania) a deviation from healthy psychosexual development. As patients and clinicians of the so-called perversions, they are also great anthropologists. In their narrative, form, and content, each author discovered and articulated new ways of thinking and feeling into language and discourse

---

<sup>2</sup> Relating capitalism's mission for profit and "the abstract quantification of money and labor" that "encourages desire to permute across the social field in unpredictable ways (Lorraine, 195).

(Deleuze 16). His revisionary literary study of sadism and masochism as emergent discourses and distinct languages instead of pathologies denoted by signs and symptoms uncovers narratives of masculinity and culture as historically situated subjects. Deleuze's succeeds in showing how psychoanalytic models fail to comprehend language, narrative, and material historical conditions present in literature. Masochism emerges; along with its opposite sadism in the:

...complex interchange between literature, science, and philosophy...a set of discourses that collected around a behavior that suddenly came to be seen for the first time as distinctive and needing scientific explanation. It is in this complex development that its cultural and historical meaning resides" (Mansfield *Masochism: Art of Power* 1)

According to Mansfield, "masochism is produced out of the overlaps and gaps" among the writing Kraft-Ebbing, Freud, Sacher Von Masoch, and Sartre (1) Among their "cardinal points" it was Kraft-Ebbing who "named and rationalized it", Sacher Von Masoch "endlessly reproduced it in literature and gave his name to it," Freud, who "tried to integrate it into the general field of psychopathological theory," and Sartre who, "produced it as a point of meaning in the endless and expanding range of possibilities of the interrelationship of self and other that defined modern being" (1) Mansfield argues, "an analysis of this event will provide us with an understanding of why and how it became important to speak of it" (1). Masochism's moment of discovery, "the isolation and denomination of masochism as an event of major historical significance (1). Mansfield argues of Masoch's masochism, "the masochist fulfills his desire by annihilating the desire of the other. This illusion takes place by the representing the desire of the other as maximized in the extinction of the masochists desire." According to Deleuze, Sade's libertine derives pleasure by committing violence on his "unconsenting and unconvinced" victim whereby impersonal element (violence in the form of demonstrative reason and indictments) is enacted by pure reason, using a paternal language of authority and demonstrative reason. The sadist aligns

himself with the law in order to enact the very rules they prohibit: a total alignment with the father and an eradication of the mother.

De Sade provided the model of male sexuality as sexual and cultural sadism in his life and work. Everything that we know and that has been said about de Sade's sadism is pertinent to what we know about male sexual cruelty and eroticized violence. Sade's philosophy was against women illustrated by his gendered use of women as metonymies of nature and society: nature that seeks to destroy in order to reproduce itself, and the image of religious hypocrisy and the façade of virtue against degraded society that represented mankind. Arguing that humans are degraded by nature, his many crimes and his misanthropic vision were written during the large portions of time that he spent in prison during his lifetime.

De Sade's cultural history from the impact of sexology and Freudian psychoanalysis brought his name to the surface in a completely new way that effaced the literature. The resurgence of de Sade had a huge impact on the French tradition of literary and cultural analysis, that expanded in to art, with the surrealist movement, and into cultural theory with Bataille, Lacan, and reinventing male sadism as a masochistic image of modern masculinity, in France from the resurgence of de Sade with the rise of the name as a perversion to the surrealists to the writing of Pauline Réage's *Histoire d'O*, our theories of the subject and gender division is that a part of masculine and sexual identification is in its ability to tolerate its own castration, or lack and accept punishment as a basis of masculine sexual repression, is manifested by a shift in cultural perceptions of power and sexuality. De Sade was made into something new, and it was also a formation of power and masculinity.

The very nature of a gendered Sadean logic of violence is continually regarded as the central reason why men should have more social and cultural capital as women by virtue of their sex organs and perceived functions:

...threefold process by which writers transformed his sexual crimes into consensual sex, transformed his literary crimes in the refusal of crime, and reinterpreted his desire as reason, Sade's crimes were not just made into metaphor but suppressed" (169)

Revisionary studies on de Sade that crescendoed during inter-and post war returns to de Sade and his legacy:

Sade's biographers, as well as other medical men and writers, reinterpreted Sade's sadism itself as a healthy form of expression. This transformation of sexual expression, including Sade's into something healthy was thus consistent with the idea that sexual, even perverse instinct informs the most normal kind of behavior (Dean 134).

The turn from congenital to cultural based norms of sexual behavior in interwar France reflected shifts in cultural reinvestigations regarding the role of women in society. In French post-war investigations of de Sade, he was often depicted as a social martyr, "a victim of bourgeois hypocrisy...who had like all prophets, been misunderstood" (Dean 138). On the other hand, de Sade's redemption from criminality and vice to a version of modern masculinity, often lead researchers to impose his misogyny as a norm, suggesting that his desires were not any more than what women give men readily. Ideologies of moral decay and their effects on the human psyche were influenced by the influx of socialist politics, the avant-garde and surrealist movements, and French philosophy.

De Sade and Masoch, represent the degree to which the work of art in the mechanical age of reproduction rings true. Looking to the early sexologists who used the names of Masoch and de Sade to define and universalize human perversity (the dark side of sexuality) we can see that in a relatively short amount of time, between de Sade's lifetime in the mid eighteenth century, and Masoch in the interim, to the naming of "sadism" and masochism" as a sexual aberrations in

the late nineteenth century, was a defining moment for masculinity and sexuality during the French revolution and leading into the Enlightenment period and then to the visual turn in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bataille, and Lacan among their contemporaries cast an influential shadow, and perhaps the most attuned ways to understand the libidinal role and the cultural realities of violence and sexuality.

#### 1.4 The Story of *O*: Female Masochism and Eroticized Masculinity

*“Yes, men are foolish to expect us to revere them when, in the end, they amount to almost nothing. Woman, like man himself, can only worship at the shrine of that abused body, now loved, and now reviled, subjected to every humiliation, but which is, after all, her own. The man, in this particular affair, stays in one piece; he is the true worshiper, aspiring in vain to become one with his god”*

*Pauline Réage, Preface to L’Image, 1956*

In the late nineteenth century, female criminality, nonconformity and deviance became a crisis of masculine authority; between the 1890s to the end of World War I, deviance had developed from a sign of degeneracy of the soul to a pathology that anyone might have, no matter how one appears, they may become potentially pathological or guilty of being deviant themselves (Dean 61). During the war prostitution and women in public dramatically increased and in the 1920s, the birthrate in France declined;

...female deviance came to symbolize a crisis of male authority which began in the late nineteenth century and crystalized in 1918...when the French lost the Franco-American War in 1870, the defeat was attributed to a peculiarly French malaise” that lead to a national campaign to prevent women from healthcare and birth control measures (Dean 58, 59)

In 1920, contraception and literature about them were banned and “France’s so-called loss of virility to de-population” was mocked in satirical representations of French women’s, “refusal of their designated social roles (Dean, 59). According to Dean, the link between masochism and sadism in France after World War I, men were not literally becoming masochists but, “the non-referentiality of the self characteristic of masochism—that the self is known only when repressed—came to constitute masculinity (201).

The image of the sadistic male libertine is the erotic image of O the heroine of Pauline Réage’s *The Story of O (Histoire d’O)* published in France in 1954 under pseudonym. The novel’s heroine “O,” consents to be enslaved to her lover Rene, who admits her to a secret fraternal order at “Roissy” a rural chateau outside of Paris. O’s enslavement consists of ritual beatings and sexual humiliations that include body modifications, branding, and prostitution among the order’s members and associates. Most alarming about the novel’s convergence of eroticism and violence is that the heroine not only consents to her physical and emotional torture, but that her submission is a declaration and proof of her love. Initially, the novel remained relatively obscure outside of elite French literary circles celebrating the novel’s ingenuity (Ciuraru). In a rare 1975 interview with Régine Deforges, Réage remarked, “All the booksellers thought the book had been banned, or was about to be, and they therefore kept it under the counter or rented it at exorbitant prices...there was a kind of self-imposed or suppressed scandal” (6-7). The obscenity charges that were made by the French Vice Squad, the Brigade Mondaine, states:

Considering that this is violently and willfully immoral book, in which the scenes of debauchery between two or even several people alternate with scenes of sexual cruelty, contains a detestable and condemnable ferment and is in addition an assault on decency and public morals. (Deforges, 9)

A little over a decade after initial publication in 1969, the book had at least seven hundred international translations and had sold over 450,000 copies (Wyngaard, 982). The 1996 Grove Press first English first edition became a bestseller. The author's public name, Dominique Aury, remained unknown until 1994, when she agreed to an interview published in *The New York Times*.

Pauline Réage wrote *Histoire d'O* as an, “*une entreprise de seduction*” (St. Jorre 43). In interviews with St. Jorre and Deforges, Aury says the story was never meant for publication. It was written as a series of letters to her lover Jean Paulhan. Paulhan was a well-established figure of the French literary intelligentsia, and even a member of l'Academe Française. It was Paulhan who advocated and fought for the novel's publication and for whom the story was written. Fearing that Paulhan was losing interest in her, she set out to prove that she could write a novel as well as de Sade. At the time of De St Jorre's interview the now eighty-six year old Dominique Aury had had well established and rewarded careers as a journalist, editor, and translator. He describes her affair with Paulhan that lead to the novel's creation, “marked by moments of great passion and periods of anguish, and it produced an unusual progeny: the first explicit novel to be written by a woman a published in the modern era.” (43). Known for having wandering eyes and many affairs, Aury told de St. Jorre that she needed to do something that would make Paulhan “sit up” to keep his attention on her and express her love by impressing his intellect: “I wasn't young, I wasn't pretty, it was necessary to find other weapons” (45, 43). Knowing Paulhan's admiration for the Marquis de Sade, she thought to write an erotic narrative in the spirit of de Sade. Paulhan greatly admired her writing and asked for more, leading to the creation and later publication of the novel.

The publication of the novel in the United States is arguably Grove's most culturally influential publication because of how it coincided with and affected the second wave feminist discourse, and the reopening of Supreme Court, United States obscenity laws called "The Roth Opinions" that reevaluated literary merit among pornographic works. *O*'s influence on the second wave pornography wars and U.S. censorship laws politicized female sexuality in convergent and divergent strategies for distinct aims. *O* was difficult to publish in the U.S. due to censorship laws in the Supreme Court that determined; "material utterly without redeeming social importance" were evaluated and deemed to have literary significance (Wyngaard, 982). When Grove tested the novel's reception in 1963, the "Translator's Note" emphasized the author's gender as a strategic maneuver to substantiate its literary merit, continuing critical conversations in France that argued that the novel's special status as an obscene work was because of the author's gender. Because the novel was written by a woman, which elevated its literary significance and on the eve of its publication in 1966, the novel had been praised in the *New York Times* and endorsed on its list of recommended books in the summer of 1966 (987, 989). Susan Sontag's 1969 essay "The Pornographic Imagination" argues that *O*'s contribution to sexually explicit writing that challenged conventions of obscenity due to its literary and aesthetic qualities, was new to American audiences.

In both France and America, claims were even made that the author was actually male or an "unnatural woman" while others argued that the author's gender transformed it into artful literature about sex, and minimized its obscenity others even called the book non-pornographic in its failure to titillate male readers. At the same time, anti-pornography debates encircled the publication of *O*, and feminist critics called the book a

logical rendering of traditional female passivity, subscribing to dominant male discourse spoken through a female. Later feminist criticism suggests that *O* negotiates dominant ideology that privileges fantasy over gender essentialism. While the book's gendered violence elevated the novel's literary qualities and helped articulate the measure of literary merit in obscene literature in the U.S., its violence was the main point of damnation among a radical sex feminist debates that accuse the novel of internalized misogyny that eroticizes violence against women.

Within the first year of publication, the French government deemed the novel, “violently and willfully immoral” and launched an investigation to uncover the author's identity (Deforges, 9). Initially, *O* remained relatively obscure beyond elite French literary circles that celebrated its ingenuity and literary significance. *O*'s controversial subject, the sexual enslavement of a 20-something Parisian photographer called “O,” to her lover Réne, depicts a detailed fantasy of masculine domination; *O* is regarded the first female authored novel of female sexual sadism, that defines the genre. *O*'s appearance drew out long standing debates about pornographic content, female sexual expression, and literary significance. It came up against puritanical obscenity laws in the U.S. called the Roth Opinions that deemed content suitable for American audiences: “*O* was viewed as revolutionary –as ushering in pornography's end in the U.S.—because it brokers the taboos surrounding women's creation and consumption of sexual content” (Wyngaard 982).

The Story of *O*'s U.S. publication in the 1960's by Grove Press is considered a “watershed moment,” that, as a 1966 *New York Times* review describes, escorted “the end of any coherent restrictive application of the concept of pornography to books (Wyngaard 981). In mainstream U.S. debates about gender, pornography and literature, as Amy Wyngaard notes, *O*'s

publication “played a, central role in tracing the parameters of debates about pornography,” and, as a larger cultural event, forced debates regarding gender, pornography, female art and artists, sexual liberation, censorship, and most importantly female desire, to a cultural head that courted conversations about artistic relevance, pornographic content and images, and suggested that women’s sexuality is not only violent, but ravenous, demanding of male sexual attention and domination:

...The fact that *O* was presented as being written by a woman and featured a female protagonist complicit in her own sexual exploitation was seen as increasing that work’s stakes and impact...[O] gave shape to the category of erotic literature in the U.S., which was opened up by the 1957 Supreme Court decision, known as the *Roth Opinions*, defining obscenity (and its corollary, pornography) as material ‘utterly without redeeming social importance’” (Wyngaard, 981-2)

Another key factor in *O*’s publication is that it brought to the surface key distinctions between pornography and literature, and the relationship between sex and love with violence and cruelty between women and men. The distinction between literary pornography and conventional pornography is one that certainly did not predate *O*: in fact Grove Press had lead a campaign a year prior to *O*’s publication to bring De Sade’s novels to American audiences. De Sade’s popularity and social impact lead the way for *O* to become socially relevant and consumed on a massive scale from 1954-1966.

*Histoire d’O*’s publication in France and abroad lead government officials, philosophers, politicians, literary critics, historians, and cultural critics alike, to question the limits of female sexuality. Among historical and critical accounts of the novel, *O* is considered the first modern creation of sadomasochistic literature written by a woman that “gave shape to the category of erotic literature” (Wyngaard 982). Cultural responses to the novel questioning whether or not a woman, “the female de Sade” could actually write forceful depictions of extreme sexual

depravity that trace parameters of public and social assumptions regarding sexuality, intellect, and desire especially for public consumption. The French government's investigation into the publishers and affiliates including Réage herself, then living as Dominique Aury and working with Paulhan.<sup>3</sup> The unspoken question, that the limits of public discourse and masculine authority built into official, state, and institutional language, presents underlying anxiety repressed by the culture: what can't a *man* write like Réage? But the other questions remained: how could a *woman* write such explicit and sensuous pornography? What is female sexuality if it is anything like this? The answer, although quite obvious is enmeshed in a web of cultural discourse and lack of structure to sustain the psychic reality of woman that I hope to aid in its excavation and opening by and stitching as Réage does in her fantasy of O. The question that remains in public discourse but represents the limits of masculinity discourse and the uses of language in general: why is it that a man can not write a novel like *O*?

### 1.5 Authorizing Female Sadism

*“Rare is the man who has not dreamed of possessing Justine. But, so far as I know, no woman has ever dreamed of being Justine”*  
*(Jean Paulhan, “Happiness in Slavery” XXV)*

We can see how the female author of sexual sadism is also different in experiential knowledge of male sadism and masochism, where, “interpretation, whether analytic or literary, is an enterprise of mutual seduction and displacement ‘(Suleiman, *Subversive Intent* 92) And a much more intimate knowledge of gendered sexuality and violence as a personal, silent, burden. Throughout this paper, the reader is taken to have knowledge of postmodern cultural studies and psychoanalytic theory. I hope to consider how the practice of psychoanalysis in reading the

---

<sup>3</sup> Reage later admits to Deforges that she knew the head chief of police and that it was understood between them that she was the author and the charges were officially dropped.

female author as an always-already divided subject of sexuality. Unlike the literary pornologies of de Sade and Masoch, *O* of its aesthetic hegemonic form, (maintaining a distinction between French and American culture, aesthetics and gender as research and time allow) In looking at female sexual aggression I am looking at its most originary representation in literature; *The Histoire d'O* written by a woman both educated and culturally elite. Indeed, sexual experimentation and writing are a luxury attuned to, even when reacting or subverting, hegemonic demands. Masoch and de Sade's writing is nearly impossible to find without attention to their lifestyles. Masoch's real contracts with women and de Sade's lust for degradation and violence are a part of their writing and our knowledge of masculinity. The economic and cultural capital of heterosexuality and white privilege that each author navigated in their writing weave an anthropological vision of aesthetics and sexuality as violence and cruelty in masculine sexuality.

The female sexual The concept of the de-centered subject emerged as a "cultural crisis in interwar France" with Bataille and Lacan who conceived of the self, "paradoxically, as an unsymbolizable and hence inaccessible other" (Dean, 5,6). The self-annihilating and self-preserving ideals of subjectivity found in the language of eroticized pain and pleasure, is a central investigation of obscene literature. Bataille and Lacan are central figures in this concept of the subject that comes to symbolize the self, as an "irretrievable other" "forerunners of poststructuralism", with the aid of French culture (Dean 9). According to Susan Sontag, "death is the only end to the odyssey of the pornographic imagination when it becomes focused on the pleasures of transgression rather than mere pleasure itself;" when obscenity appears, the

intellectual pursuit of knowledge comes into play because the boundaries of transgression are created and scrutinized (“The Pornographic Imagination 62).

1 sadism of *O* in *O* is distinct but not isolated from the female sexual sadist in rape revenge porn. Female sexual sadism as cultural study of female sexuality (especially involving masculine domination of women) is a material reality of sexual desiring that remains unexamined in the fields of gender and sexuality, cultural studies, and literary theory to this date. *O* was also the first novel to represent lesbian sadomasochism, that greatly impacted the porn wars in the late 60s early 70s’ political debates about women’s sexual domination and the role of pornography (detailed below). Women are made inferior in addition to objective risks of lifetime survival because of masculine sexual authority over women. The illusion femininity is manifested by reproductive organs is dated, yet maintained within sexual paradigms of masculinity and femininity (male object/ female other) in mainstream cultural debates. By refusing to look at female suffering and masculine sexual domination more clearly, we maintain a culture that silences women.

There is a very real effect in the mental landscape of female subjectivity in relation to masculine power that must be acknowledged as a formation of unexamined knowledge. As Luce Irigaray argues, against Lacan’s phallic signifier, there is a version of female subjectivity in the masculine imagination that is unaware of itself. As she describes in “Any Theory of the ‘Subject’ Has Always Been Appropriated by the ‘Masculine’”—

The Copernican Revolution has yet to have its final effects in the male imaginary. And by centering man outside himself, it has occasioned above all man’s ex-stasis within the transcendental (subject). Rising to a perspective that would dominate the totality, to the vantage point of greatest power, he thus cuts himself off from the bedrock, from his empirical relationship with the matrix that he claims to survey. Exiling himself even further, (toward) where the greatest power lies, he thus becomes the ‘sun’ if it is around him that things turn, a pole of attraction stronger than the ‘earth.’ Meanwhile, the excess in this universal fascination is

that ‘she’ also turns upon herself, that she knows how to re-turn (upon herself) but not how to seek outside for identity within the other: nature, sun God...(woman). As things go now, man moves away in order to preserve his stake in the value of representation, while woman counterbalances with the permanence of a (self) recollection which is *unaware of itself as such* [my emphasis]. And which, in the recurrence of this re-turn upon the self—and its special economy will need to be located—can continue to support the illusion that the object is inert. ‘Matter’ upon which he will ever and again continue to spring father, leap higher, although he is dealing here with a nature that is already self-referential. Already fissured and open. And which, in her circumvolutions upon herself, will also carry off the things confided to her for re-presentation. Whence, no doubt, the fact that she is said to be restless and unstable. In fact it is quite rigorously true that she is never exactly the same. Always whirling closer or farther away from the sun whose rays she captures and sends curving to and fro in turn with her cycles (134)

Being unaware themselves of the role they play as reflections of a character that a male subject has put in the place of a self, women submit to a theory that denies their subjectivity that “fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the imaginary” (133). At base, Irigaray’s critique of Lacan, is not that the economy he describes does not exist, but fails to acknowledge the power that masculine authority over speech, autonomy, political power, jurisprudence, and uses of language, is the assumption that the Other is inevitably tied to the split subject; that the other represents his opposite at the same time that the other presents his own reflection, even if he is unaware of it. Reflecting masculinity, even one that does not recognize himself, or is able to black out entirely from the other’s existence teaches women to accept levels of social abuses, and political ideologies that harm and demean their role.

The crisis that female autonomy presents to masculine authority is played out the many guises of male masochism and sadism. Masculine domination mobilizes hegemonic masculinity because it allows masculine power to be the default status in erotic content of sexual desire. When this fact is called into question, it masculine authority is brought to bear on conversations about gender and sexual relations between the sexes. It is important that Réage, like Masoch and de Sade, wrote sexual fantasies about violent fantasies that contain masculine domination and

power. In Sade's sadism and Masoch's masochism, masculine and feminine roles may be switched or projected, switch, but they are still trapped in a masculinist vision of the "I" as historical product, and internalized rules of being and perceiving interwoven with our senses of others. The gendered other is of crucial importance when considering the act of looking, speaking, and thinking as a subject with sexual attraction to the gendered other.

The Story of *O* was also fabricated as a female in order to emphasize the novel's association with women writers and consumers of the novel (Wyngaard 986). From 1960 to 1966 when the novel was finally published, strategic alliances and contracts were made between French and American publishers, translators, and news magazines especially the New York Times to pave the way for its release. A central aim of their efforts sought to frame *O* as a work of literary merit that elevated its "philosophical, mythical, and aesthetic value" over its pornographic content against the puritanical laws that would have it deemed offensive; smut, garbage, pornographic trash, anti-or pro-feminist propaganda, and control the conversation about *O*'s controversial content (Wyngaard 989). "The fact that *O* was presented as being written by a woman and featured a female protagonist complicit in her own sexual exploitation was seen as increasing that work's stakes and impact" whose appearance, "gave shape to the category of erotic literature in the U.S., which was opened up by the 1957 Supreme Court decision, known as the *Roth Opinions*, defining obscenity (and its corollary, pornography) as material 'utterly without redeeming social importance'" (Wyngaard, 981-2). The novel was "mobilized to condemn the patriarchal victimization of women and celebrate the freedom of human imagination" (982).

Another key factor in *O*'s publication is to disambiguate the distinctions between pornography and literature, and between literature and psychosexual perversion, but also literary

pornography from pornography, and erotic fiction as a genre attached to *O*, that was considered socially relevant artistically, in its style, and attached to transgressive, and threatening, female sexuality. Because of *O*'s appearance in post war France, and social and political liberatory upheaval in the U.S., its sensationalism was measured with equal amounts hysteria. Its publication wrought a long standing debates about pornographic content, female sexual expression, and literary merit in 'smutty' content i.e. sex for sex's sake, (that appeared as a consumable, "regulatory category" in early nineteenth century) to a head (982). "*O* was viewed as revolutionary –as ushering in pornography's end in the U.S.—because it brokers the taboo's surrounding women's creation and consumption of sexual content" (982). In bringing to the surface crucial and contested images of women, gender, and sexuality, *O*'s author and her heroine also delineate the literary categories of female sadist, female masochist, and female sadomasochist, within interdisciplinary literary criticism and cultural theory, sexological studies and Freud's discovery of the structure of the unconscious in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, fin de siècle appearance of pornography and a cultural product, and how the sexual submission of women correlates with "public morality, female sexuality, and feminist principles" in the larger umbrella of gender studies (Wyngaard 982). At the intersection of political and ideological culture of paranoia, liberation, and social upheaval attached to women demanding the freedom to seek and authorize their social and political sexual autonomy.

The story of sadism and masochism suggest how historical dynamics of the artist-subject confrontation that is increasingly mystified over time from the artistic object is mystified in cultural meaning. The names given to these authors highlight our sense of this immediacy between the work of the artist whose perverse sexuality is immediately viewed through a self-

aware lens of intense precarity<sup>4</sup> or state of vulnerability when consciously looking at art. The viewer is implicated in the act of looking at transgressive art makes them a stand-in for the artist and the ideal looker, who must react and as Bataille argues, transgressive art incites dogmatic reactions. I argue that representations of sexualized violence whether implicit or explicit mirror this fundamental aspect of humans as they relate to themselves as object in the world, especially sex or love objects that is akin to saying gender relationships in western heterosexuality.

I am not indicting or valorizing female sexual sadism or sadomasochistic practices. At best I hope to reckon with female sadomasochism as a historical reality. Taboo formation and language are all constructs that reign in and command sexuality and violence in gendered forms that make up civilization and masochism and sadism are understood as conditions of man, in different cultures and contexts in different ways. This paper is framed around the publication and a close reading of *The Story of O* but it starts with a history of sadism and masochism framed as a theory and context germane to exploring female sexual sadism and masculine violence as they relate to male sadism and female masochism. The complexities of female masochism and sadism are difficult to parse, and have expansive tendrils in multifaceted ways throughout recorded history. At best I hope to reckon with female sadism as historical iterations of female sexuality where woman's sexual arousal toward particular forms of male domination, exacted in particular corporeal and emotional strategies of dehumanization (away from masculinity).

My aim is also not to simply critique essentialist viewpoints or point to ways that representations of erotic violence from female artists resolve the pressing issues of male sexual domination, or to assume that women's uses of sexualized violence are successfully subversive. I am however interested in how male and female authorship of pornographic literary philosophies are differently situated in cultural meaning. An implicit claim in this is that there

---

<sup>4</sup> Judith Butler

are fundamental narrative strategies and uses of language that are particularly about gender differences and sexual subjectivity. The methods I had received to study how women use masochistic strategies to navigate the inner and outer world of female subjectivity as a cultural product, I had not fully comprehended how the very existence of female sadomasochism was almost entirely absent from conversations about consent, gender, power, and women's inferiority to men. I wanted to understand dynamics of power, gender, and eroticism in obscene literature, theory, and film, but did not understand how female-authored sadomasochistic fantasies had already been created, and continue to develop, without being integrated to become useful politically and academically. As Pierre Bourdieu states of the disposition of art and the artist "under the influence of property;"

‘Art for art’s sake, as it had been called, not having its legitimacy within itself, being based on nothing, is nothing. It is *debauchery* of the heart and *dissolution* of the mind. Separated from the right and duty, cultivated and pursued as the highest though of the soul and the supreme manifestation of humanity, art or the ideal, stripped of the greater part itself, reduced to nothing more than an *excitement of fantasy and senses*, is the source of *sin*, the origin of all servitude, the poisoned spring from which, according to the Bible, flow all the fornications and abominations of the earth’ (Bourdieu 49)

My interest in female masochism as an aesthetic elaboration of sadistic urges, and masochistic strategies of manipulating power had largely focused on male artists, and even though I do not deny the value and importance of these representations, they lack an ethos of female subjectivity as a model of knowledge. In an independent study with Dan Smith I read Nick Mansfield's *Masochism: The Art of Power* that details how female subjectivity is not only unexamined as a form of written language, speech, or representation, but that masochism is a form of power, aligned with masculinity. These philosophical concepts are at the core of my research yet unsatisfactorily realized in academic studies of love, violence, and gendered heterosexuality. It is always outside the boundaries of conventional language and representation that the points of

excitation and intensification of feelings and emotions are signaled by violence, aggression, and threat. It is in experimental narratives that ideals of love and death in gendered heterosexual narratives are obviated and explored. I transitioned from a study of masochistic strategies that confront and play with power dynamics, to thinking about masochism (and sadism) as a hegemonic form of masculine culture as an “erotics” of power.

Lastly, I want to conclude that the study of masochism and sadism are at the base a study of subjectivity. As the gender divide and the subject divide remains the phallogentric view of human relationship, this concept of power does not leave room for the way that power, art, and aesthetics, and the project of self-translation, aestheticizing the self, is an aesthetic and political action. In *The Way of Love*, Luce Irigaray argues for a use of language as a, “philosophy in the feminine, where the values of intersubjectivity, of dialogue in difference, of attention to present life...are recognized and raised to the level of wisdom” (vii) She argues that the conventional political formula for quality is, “A=A” that instead she argues, should be, to “A+B=One,” so that;

the masculine and feminine are in no case the inverse or the opposite of each other. They are different. This differences that holds between them is perhaps the most unthinkable of differences – difference itself (107)

In *Intimacies*, Bersani’s answer to the subject object divide in psychoanalysis is summarized as an, “antiredemptive myth of sexual relations, in which neither the subject nor the object can be redeemed by love, but can only be lost” (101). He, like Irigaray, Foucault, and Butler among other theorist approaching sexuality, love, and violence as constitutive of the subject bind, suggests a new form of language, “new vocabulary, new ways of putting what can go between people that do not presume a lethal antagonism (103). Respecting the totality and unknowableness of an other is a difficult task. Based in the concept of love, that Freud mostly

subsumed as sexual instinct and desires, is difficult to conceive of without getting caught in analysis of masculinity and power.

Nick Mansfield's idea that masochism "allows us to see how unliberating, and unprogressive, the contradictory politics of self-unmaking and self-remaking may be" as "poststructuralism has not given up on the subject as a locus of the radical remaking of humanity" (98). What masochism shows in its relevance as fantasy, sublime, and theatrical in its elaborate narratives, "designed the possibility of a power that could operate in a permanent form of disavowal itself." Largely reliant on Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of masochism as "a locus of indifference," "the masochistic total subject we encountered in modernist fiction was able to be all shifting locations of possible subjectivity and intersubjectivity...we are in a world beyond subjectivity, but one that still attempts to imagine an act of selfhood. This act recurs in the agency that resonates through the verb becoming (95-96)." Like poststructuralism, that "arose as the possibility of being in a state of permanent of enduring skepticism and contestation of power" that both, "attempts to deal with a power that no longer was seen in absolute terms" a power of "recognition and resistance" (98). Mansfield's idea, that self-denying as a form of strengthening and perpetuation is much like our modern view of the narcissistic ego and Freud's influence on sexual individuation, where the uses of language are lost in the insistence on violence and masculinity and our shame based view of sexuality:

Indeed the paradox of object-relations theory presents us with is that the individual's narcissism is seen as the saboteur of his development, development (maturity) in this picture involving exchange with real objects beyond his control. And yet what is taken to mobilize the greatest violence in the individual is the abrogation of his narcissism. The very thing one needs to do, the very thing one's development apparently requires is the very thing that unleashes the most violent destructiveness. There is, one might say, a tragic flaw in this absurdly self-defeating story. In promoting the developmental necessity of overcoming narcissism, object-relations theorists have been, as it were, encouraging the greatest possible violence between people" (Bersani, *Intimacies* 91)

We are well past seeing power in absolute terms, and masochism shows us that the self-denying, self-defeating manipulation of power is not one that is ever fully wielded by the subject; it is already available. Yet giving up our narcissistic dream of totality and omnipotence as a way to connect with the other is always a navigation of violence and domination. It is because words are performative, that we are afraid to use them differently. They are difficult to express when they describe what is prohibited to say as well as think of feel.

Tim Themi's article, "Bataille and the Erotics of the Real," argues that Bataille's "synthesis of the Dionysian wisdom of Nietzsche and the mindfulness of the sexual real made possible by Freud" and his connection to Lacan, presents, "how the ethics of desire and the 'real' emerging from Lacan's clinic is augmented by the *erotics* of the real in Bataille's taboo-transgression" (312). One of the ways that transgressive literature inspires creative thinking and opening possibilities of human intersubjectivity that sees beyond the oedipal frame of gender and sexuality. Inspired by Lacan's ethics of the real that Themi proposes: the 'ideal,' as per the 'superficial opinion' of western moralism" and Nietzsche's "declaration that with 'intrepid Oedipus eyes' we ought to examine *human* nature as we have 'the rest of nature,' 'to translate man back to nature' such that with 'Odysseus ears' we are 'deaf to the siren songs' of another world accessible as a puritan soul (312), Themi presents the argument that Bataille links these two great aims of Lacan and Nietzsche by enabling a, "focus on how taboo structures of morality can be *transgressed* in a complimentary erotic process that returns to the rest of nature—to the *real* of nature as *jouissance*" whose explorations should have an anthropological focus and genealogical approach (312). Themi argues that an ethics, "caught in the imaginary" that fails to explore, "drives beyond usual pleasures" that restore an "*openness*" "the originary erotics observable in pre-Platonic Greeks" that "developed sacred rituals for it's structured affirmation"

(312, 313). Bataille provides a basis for the erotic function of the real in his theory of transgression and the, “Paleolithic ‘transition from animal to human,’” and the formation of taboo structures, “aspects of nature pertaining to sex and death” and “equating these with violence” (Themis, 313). For Bataille, this negation of nature is the diametrical opposition by which we came to structure civilization, where violence and nature are in opposition to the rational world. In birth, we learn to repeat these structures, where violence and nature are subsumed but always threatening to break through the culture that we have created out of nature, “humanizing a world of work founded on respect for taboos, awareness of mortality, and concomitant developments of tools for controlling and understanding nature” (313).

I do not claim that my literary merit be sought in the organization of my ideas and content, nor the conglomeration of words that make up long sentences above and below. (with the caveat of my revision plans over the next 3 weeks.) even my cultural analysis of the pornologies of de Sade, Masoch, Bataille, and Réage as artistic philosophies, and the poetical and artistic qualities of Lacan, Deleuze, and Freud, as they write about sexuality and gender and our relationship to authority. In studying sadomasochism I was seek to understand a group of ideas across many disciplines that attempt to reach to the core of my own understanding of gendered heterosexuality as I learned strategies to think about with increasing and sometimes decreasing levels of clarity, the history of ideas that lead me to study female sexual sadism as univocal form that leans on and explore the boundaries and taboos of Oedipal desire and sexual subjectivity.

Dear reader, you may find herein, suspicious repetitions, and difficult to parse out language. While my intention is not to be outwardly sadistic, I am aware that part of the intimacy of power that I share with phallic aura of academia is one of a flawed sense of masculinity in

myself. However, using a masochistic strategy that enabled or prompted me to set limitations on the project and myself, that also serve to justify the feelings of displeasure that the demands of writing a dissertation entail (superego manifestations of guilt, fear, and shame). This dissertation weaves through ideas and texts that may remain undeveloped or not sufficiently explained. Some ideas may seem brought up and dropped off, perhaps to be returned to later, some not. With the inevitable humiliation and threat of failure that comes with exposing my research and my writing I have undergone the suffering and humiliation that comes with not working hard enough, not having discipline, or simply being not good enough. Although I would like to have the capacity to make my writing mostly kind to the reader, I hope that over time it develops closer to that ideal.

## CHAPTER 2. DEFENDING A PRICK: THE MARQUIS DE SADE AND THE MYTH OF THE CULTURAL MARTYR IN WESTERN MASCULINITY

*“Being the incarnation of every possible image of perversion, and having defied kings, insulted God and inverted the Law, he will never cease to pose a threat, posthumously and like a spectre, to all the representatives of biocracy and their vain pretensions to try and tame delight in evil”*

*Élisabeth Roudinesco Our Dark Side, 52*

### 2.1 De Sade’s Tragedy

Amid the turmoil of the French Revolution, the Marquis de Sade was having a rough time. Not only in his sex life, where he hosted infamous orgies paying underprivileged laborers to be sexually tortured, but also in the abuse he suffered from his fellow aristocrats who sentenced him to prison repeatedly throughout his life incriminated him and left him dying in an insane asylum. His many crimes and his misanthropic vision was set against prison walls for large portions of his life that he spent in contemplation and writing. The Marquis was born into libertinism: his father and brother were notorious for abusing their staff, and known for their cruelty. His mother was absent throughout his life, and his female caretakers would use him sexually in his teens. Among de Sade’s writing, crimes, and biography, is the image of deranged tyrant whose privilege leads him to revel in human cruelty. Simone de Beauvoir notes in her detailed account of de Sade and his writing “Must We Burn de Sade” that Sade’s argument for men’s rights to violence over women was by virtue of their strength. Sade’s basic charge against the codes imposed by society is that they are artificial, despite the fact that he leans on various stances towards nature as violent female energy that in turn should be treated with the same disdain. Klosowski believed that the key to de Sade’s writing and aesthetic is a “hatred for his mother”

(De Beauvoir “Sade” 13). His stance against female reproduction and creation is quite relevant to the idea that women simply appear and reflect a potential subjectivity that sustains his moral principles of destruction; for Sade woman, like nature is a deranged mirror of the self and humanity at large.

According to Roudinesco, Sade’s father was a “debauched libertine” (40) whose mother relinquished care to his father’s mistress. His older brother, “whose cruelty and depravity were notorious” was like his father who provided the formative models for his entitled sense of wounded and violent masculinity and his unconscious fear of the other. By the time de Sade was five he, “displayed no affects and no guilt, and enjoyed inflicting all kinds of violence on other children” (40). Once de Sade reached adulthood he was well-schooled in the violence, vice, and cruelty that defined his writing and personal tastes, and lead to his ultimate execution. During his years in prison, de Sade became a writer. “The pervert acquired, in a word, the status of theoretician of the human perversions” (43). De Sade’s prison writing from that time period remained unpublished until 1904 to be fully translated and published in the late 1920s (Roudinesco 43). Leading up to de Sade’s birth and the French Revolution, the political atmosphere of France was often regarded by early sexologists in terms of moral decay and political corruption (cite):

When Phillippe d’Orléans became regent after the death of Louis XV, he enjoyed unlimited powers and made his own contribution to the gradual dissolution of royal absolutism...Orgies, acts of blasphemy, economic speculation, a love of prostitution, luxury, extravagance, and caprices...helped to challenge the values of tradition, which were contrasted with a desire for fleeing pleasures” (Roudinesco 29-30)

De Beauvoir comments:

The curse which weighed upon Sade—and which only his childhood could explain, was this “autism” which prevented him from ever forgetting himself or being genuinely aware of the reality of the other person. Had he been cold by

nature, no problem would ever have arisen; but his instincts drove him toward outside objects with which he was incapable of uniting, so that he was forced to invest singular methods for taking them by force. Later, when his desires were exhausted, he continued to live in that erotic universe of which, out of sensuality, boredom, defiance, and resentment, he had constructed the only world which counted for him; and the aim of his strategies was to induce erection and orgasm. But even when these were easy for him, Sade needed deviations to give his sexuality meaning which lurked in it without ever managing to achieve fulfillment, an escape from consciousness in his flesh, and understanding of the other person as consciousness through the flesh (33).

His depravity is characterized by polarizing degradation and innocence as he rails against the hypocrisy of “human virtue” espoused by corrupt religious institutions and politicians. “He accumulated debts, he would fly into a rage for no reason at all...He subordinated his existence to his eroticism because eroticism appeared to him to be the only possible fulfillment of his existence” (De Beauvoir 16-17).

Sade was widely and popularly seen as an “everyman” by medical and scientific professionals of the early twentieth century who “chose to evaluate the nature of Sade’s sadism through an investigation of the relationship between his life and his writing” (“Sade’s Selflessness” *The Self and Its Pleasures*, Carolyn J. Dean, 136). Late nineteenth century scientific studies tended to see Sade’s “sadism” as a reflection of moral decay reflected in the eighteenth century (Dean 142). Even though Sade’s works were destroyed, banned, and all of his plays in his late life were lost along with his prison manuscripts after his death, his place in history was resurrected for his literary value by Apollinaire in the late nineteenth century, who “hailed him as a prophetic genius” (de Beauvoir, “Sade” 10). Maurice Heine’s formation of the Société du Roman Philosophique in 1923 dedicated to publishing and advancing research related to Sade including his manuscripts that Heine himself transcribed for publication (Dean, 136-7). As a result of Heine’s efforts, Sade’s work, along with his widely documented letters, manuscripts, and crimes de Sade became an object of cultural studies officially. Through the

1920's the surrealists, like Sade's biographers, developed an image of de Sade as both victim and visionary and made his name synonymous with truth at the expense of persecution...the movement politicized de Sade (Dean 162). Among the influential figures for the surrealists who exalted Sade as a, "hero, martyr, and victim...a pure image of heroism made more heroic by his oppression" was the rise in literary and cultural critics in the 1930's that largely considered de Sade, "significant less for his sadism than for having written about it" (166). Jean Paulhan for example, praised de Sade's style and his "absolute spirit," and Jean Desbordes considered Sade a literary genius (Dean 166-7). De Sade transcended from a depraved criminal and representation of human (masculine) depravity to a revolutionary hero from the early to mid-twentieth century especially in European schools of thought, particularly France. He was also considered by some as man of indomitable cold reason that shows both the "nature" and perversity of man.

No one during the interwar years, denied that Sade had actually raped, beaten, and sodomized women and men; what they questioned were the precise nature of the events, the gravity of the charges, and whether they merited the punishment Sade had received. The inquiry reflected the profound transformation of moral values to which Pierre Janet had alluded to in his preface to *Psychopatha Sexualis* (Dean 142)

As might be expected, de Sade did not invent libertinism and the traits that belong to "sadism" as a proper name given to a psychological condition and emotional state belong to that greater model of masculinity. De Sade's cultural relevance as an embodiment of "modern man," from the man who is "hard" for the sake of others, to the tragic blind "neurotic Oedipus,"

Both embody the predicament of a 'modern man' who has to live in a world in which he has no ground to stand on but a law whose foundation can never be known, which is already constituted as the law, and in which his "true desire" his 'true self', can be articulated only as an (albeit legal) lie (Dean 195)

De Sade's resurgence in the late 1800's was a crucial moment for the crisis of masculinity in modernity, where the meaning of the self, the criminal the sexed other were undergoing rapid changes as the study of sexual development as a scientific enterprise intensified.

## 2.2 Sade's Aesthetic Influence on Modern Masculinity

De Sade provided the cultural model of male sexuality in the broader category of perversion, as an *ars erotica* of masculine domination, that we can retroactively view as Freud's Oedipal model of sexual development. Everything that we know and that has been said about de Sade's sadism is pertinent to what we know about male sexual cruelty and eroticized violence. The very nature of Sadean logic relies on a concentrated distaste for religious ideals and he uses nature as a debased image of female-identified chaos. But we can also see how the idea of the self with Sade, seeped into aesthetic production and the work of the Surrealists, who made Sade a metaphor of the self; "to place desire at the center of ...cultural subversion" (196):

For the Surrealists through Klossowski, (though it can be extended to Lacan), the image of the neurotic father, burdened by his own authority, tormented by his unfulfilled dreams and aspirations, an image fashioned after Sade, became a central metaphor for the production of culture. That image, refigured identity in terms of a new kind of selfhood rooted paradoxically in a desire for selflessness, in a death wish....If fathership therefore remained the fundamental condition of authorship, its authority no longer derived from a potent virility. The father's identification with the executioner, with authority, is instead expressed as a desire for self-punishment (Dean 197).

If, as Dean shows of the French criticism of Sade, his sadism is a disguised self-punishment and desire to be a victim, then we can also see how the appearance of women in Sade is simply a mechanism by which he can enact self-annihilation. Dean argues that Sade's:

...somasochistic self came to be a metaphor in sexual and textual terms for a new concept of the self: one whose ontological basis is sexual, one that is nonreferential, that has not origins except the law that constitutes it through repression: (199).

Sade was redefined in masochistic terms in France's interwar years.

At the same time, the role and representation of women in culture was being reorganized; women became more public and demanding of autonomy. Dean links the image of the “new woman” leading up to the 1920's. Dropping birth rates in the interwar period corresponded to the scientific explanation of sexuality from previous religious based paradigms: “the new focus on disciplining women by attempting to regulate male sexuality...implied that sex and gender—one's biological sex and one's sex role—were related functionally rather than naturally” (74). The clear creation of a cultural form of masculinity and modern man in French philosophy and literary criticism, is also linked to a new formation of gender relations as cultural rather than natural formation that created room for the hidden masochism of sadism that alleviates male anxiety about their feelings of powerlessness and conflict with women as social actors and sexual deviants themselves.

All of these problems of the time are linked to a masculine drama of the father according to Dean, there was a competing sense of feeling about gender during the post-WWI birth rate crisis in France where crime rates were attributed to “a general moral vacuum created by the absence of paternal authority” because male potency was called a under scientific scrutiny, and “feminist demands for equality (72). Single women and prostitutes were seen as criminal because of their increasing “participation in social life” (72); I given free reign, to have casual sexual relationships and liaisons instead of marriage” that as the “prominent French psychiatrist Edouard Toulouse saw it, traditional male authority had been rendered dysfunctional by women” because, women, “could no longer be bound, identified, or defined in old ways” (Dean 73). We can trace echoes of male sadism and female sexual domination as disturbances of gender and women in the work place, as war and its consequences wreak havoc on the masculine subjects of

modernity. The cultural martyr has a masochistic virtue that compels their deviance as a mode of resistance and perseverance despite the external odds against his personal autonomy. Likewise, Lacan argued that: “Sade upheld the law not because he desired absolute mastery, but because he *repressed* that desire, accepted what he lacked” (193). As a defense mechanism toward the law and the repression of his inability to become the father, or have communion with his mother Sade’s life and what was made of it in French literary and cultural analysis acted as a refusal of the other and the self where,

...entry into the symbolic order splits the ego and defuses the aggressive potential in the mirror stage, with its refusal of the alterity of the other. Lacan implied that Sade in fact learned to compensate for the loss of the (m)other through his incessant demands (his capacity to name), which really only demands for the (forever) lost object of desire, called now by other names, other demands. Sade’s compulsion to write (his bragging, his reiterations) thus represents a lack expressed as a demand that can never get what it wants (Dean 194)

Dean notices that like Klossowski and Bataille, Lacan’s theory of Sade argues, “that Sade is not always unconsciously begging for punishment but seeks to avoid it by (unconsciously) adhering to oedipal law (194). What distinguishes Lacan’s reading of Sade from Klossowski and Bataille is that Sade appears more “human” because his virtue lies in “refusal to see his is upholding the law”: “Lacan’s version of Sade’s humanity most effectively describes how it is that law-abiding citizens can also be monsters, because he is most explicitly concerned to demonstrate to what extent the very logic of the law makes us who we are” (195).

De Beauvoir’s names one of the more aesthetic and creative ways that male sadism and male masochism are linked. In choosing cruelty rather than indifference, (that Deleuze and Guattari argue the masochist as a body without organs seeks to achieve):

...is probably why he finds so many echoes today, when the individual knows that he is more the victim of men’s good consciousness than of their wickedness. To unleash this terrifying optimism is to come to his aid. In the solitude of his prison cells, de Sade lived through an ethical darkness similar to the intellectual night in

which Descartes wrapped himself. He emerged with no revelation, but at least he disputed all the easy answers. I ever we hope to transcend the separateness of individuals, we may only do so, we may only do some on condition that we be aware of its existence. Otherwise, promises of happiness and justice conceal the worst dangers. De Sade drained to the dregs the moment of selfishness, injustice, and misery, and her insisted on its truth. The supreme value of his testimony is the fact that it disturbs us. It forces is to re-examine thoroughly its basic problem which haunts our age in different forms: the true relation between man and man (89)

In between indifference, masochism, cruelty, sadism, sameness, and difference in kind between men and women is told in the story of sadism, masochism, and female sadomasochism, that reveals the extent to which masochism's role in modern masculinity and the sadism that it alleviates. The eroticism of de Sade that appears, "as a mode of communication, the only valid one," "We might say in parodying Claudel, that in de Sade 'the prick is the shortest path between two hearts'" (de Beauvoir). Here again I isolate a huge portion of de Beauvoir's writing on de Sade, not only in her concision and poetic grace, she considers an ethic beyond Sadean masculinity, in critiquing the masculine elevation of him as a cultural martyr, even though his "communication" style was not language, but eros that frames a sexual ethics of what Themi describes as an ethics of the real. To not allow de Beauvoir to take command of the next few pages is to allow her words to propel my project forward. She says of de Sade's sympathizers, that to align his subjectivity with modern masculinity, or a virtuous cultural martyr, unwilling to be silenced in the face of the truth, that they align themselves with an ethics of death and lack of sympathy defined by his ultimate desire for cruelty:

To sympathize with de Sade too readily is to betray him. For it is our misery, subjection, and death that he desires, and every time we side with a child whose throat has been slit by a sex-maniac, we take a stand against him. Nor does he forbid us to defend ourselves. He allows that a father may revenge or prevent, even murder, the rape of his child. What he demands in that, in the struggle between irreconcilable existences, each one engage himself concretely in the name of his own existence. He approves of the vendetta, but not of the courts. We may kill, but we may not judge. The pretensions of the judge are more arrogant than that of the tyrant, for the tyrant confines himself to being himself, whereas the judge tries to

erect his opinions into universal laws. His effort is based on a lie. For every person is imprisoned in his own skin and cannot become the mediator between separate persons and from whom he himself is separated. And the fact that a great number of these individuals band together and alienate themselves in institutions of which they are no longer masters gives them no additional right. Their number has nothing to do with the matter. There is no way of measuring the immeasurable. In order to escape the conflicts of existence, we take refuge in a universe of appearances, and existence itself escapes us. In thinking that we are defending ourselves, we are destroying ourselves. De Sade's immense merit lies in his taking a stand against these abstractions and alienations which are merely flight from the truth about man. No one was more passionately attached to the concrete than he. He never respected the 'everyone says' with which mediocre minds lazily content themselves. He adhered only to the truths, which were derived from the evidence of his own actual experience. Thus, he went beyond the sensualism of his age and transformed it into an ethic of authenticity (86).

One of Deleuze's most important contributions to sadomasochism as an object of study in cultural studies is to complicate Freud's assumption that sadism and masochism are extensions of one another given the postulation that sadism can become masochism when turned upon the self and "takes the place of the sexual object." ("Three Essays," Freud, 1905 71-72). The idea that sadism and masochism are oppositional binary pairs is Freud's attempt to create a sexual orthodoxy conforming to the psychosexual development of gender identity and sexuality within the Oedipal paradigm. Activity passivity, masculine feminine, and healthy deviant sexuality align with his view of sadism and masochism as opposing and reversible states of the subject object division. In *A Child is Being Beaten* (1919), Freud's interest in the switching that occurs at the level of the ego in masochism grounds the ways in which gendering functions in Freud's theories of eroticized violence.

The binary reflects the masculine and feminine ego formation that Freud likewise aligns with the masochism in boys and girls. In his search for the structure of male subjectivity, with the father figure as the central object of masochistic fantasy, Freud uses the girl's masochistic fantasy in three stages to show how male masochism is always seeking the image of the father,

and how the boy comes to imagine that he is being beaten by the father. In *A Child is Being Beaten* (1919) Freud's interest in the switching that occurs at the level of the ego in masochism elaborates the ways in which gendering functions in Freud's theories of eroticized violence. Recurring throughout Freud's work is the idea that masochism and sadism function like bisexuality. The binary reflects the masculine and feminine ego formation that Freud distinguishes when he defines masochism in boys through the lens of the young female that also desires to be beaten. In his search for the structure of male subjectivity, with the father figure as the central object of masochistic fantasy, Freud uses the girl's masochistic fantasy in three stages to show how male masochism is always seeking the image of the father. As the tyrant, the i.e., phallic ideal the image of the parental superego is projected onto the image of the (woman as the corrupt social milieu, and the law given by religious principles and corporeal punishment). It is the image of the father that de Sade and Masoch war against in their own version of masculine subjectivity, where their search for a decentered subject is externalized: "decentered subject" of the masochistic aesthetic is truly two different modes of power, where the male subject attempts to redeem his lack under the influence of the law as the father.

### 2.3 Male Masochism and Power: Strategies of Castration

*What masochism makes possible is the pleasure in pain; or rather what masochism reveals is the capacity to bear, the capacity to desire the ultimately overwhelming intensities of feeling that we are subject to. In this sense, the masochistic is the sexual, the only way we can sustain the*

*intensity, the restlessness, the ranging of desire*

*(Adam Phillips and Leo Bersani, Intimacies, 103)*

In *Masochism*, Nick Mansfield outlines that masochism's fantasy, like de Sade's relies on the dream of being a total subject, that can sustain its own annihilation, castration, and lack because its central principle is in transgression, which for masochism is the model. It is actually a conventional model of power in postmodern politics for example, "where the powerful, from presidents to pressure groups, always disavow their own power" (x). Masochism operates as a mode of transgression so that it can tolerate its own castration; able to sustain its own critique of phallogocentrism and essentialism. It can sustain subversion even by radical theory, an element that it sustains as a mode of its perpetuation: "a power that can operate by way of transgression" (x). Masochism is able to operate as a contradictory form of power that can operate and refute its own power. In de Sade, this power is disguised as endless violence that is actually his secret wish to be both annihilated and omnipotent, a total refusal of the other that we see in the male gaze of conventional pornography. In Masoch, the other becomes a mirror of the self-imagining the other to be an embodiment of an ideal torturer; he is able to prove his authority and control of power by making the other into a project of self-denial.

If deep down, the sadist is truly wishing for his own self-annihilation, he also denies that are two distinct forms of masculine power that work together and can even tolerate its own castration. His sense of castration is so obscured, even from himself that his violence is allowed to retain a naturalized vision of masculinity with destruction, violence, reason, and ultimate authority. Masochism, as Mansfield details, has been cultivated in and by the aesthetic domain. Masochism itself is an aesthetic formation modeled by the sublime and the dream of becoming one and indifferently dispersed among all things, an object and subject. This type of subjectivity that dreams of being a total subject, "simultaneously both masculine and feminine, a subject of sexual desire and that desires objects...nothing is alien" (x). Masochism is understood by its

theatricality, or scenes, and as an aesthetic outlet, but should also be also understood in its most elaborate medium in literature with its “contradictions and impossibilities,” that it is a specifically literacy aesthetic that, in philosophy, is understood as the sublime. According to Lyotard, the sublime carries with it, “both pleasure and pain.” In *Masochism: The Art of Power*, Nick Mansfield argues that masculinity and power or concurrent in his analysis of the “complex phenomenon” of (male) masochism as, “an entry point into the dynamic and obscure field of subjectivity and politics that conditions the possibilities of meaning and meaninglessness available to us” (ix). As sadism and masochism, are aligned with masculinity and power in cultural representation and the experience of “uncontrollable psychosexual urge” “spanning art, philosophy, theory, literature, and personal practice” (xii).

Masochism exists at the intersection and overlap of a whole set of sexual practices, on the one hand, and public and cultural “the identification of masochism with femininity relies on a crude binarism that links masculinity with activity rather than passivity, a complete misunderstanding (xii)

In *1000 Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari describe masochism’s engagement with desire as a productive process; becoming world as an inversion of signs (*Plateaus* 155). As such, the masochist proves to be a useful model for the way masochism is viewed as a way of form of male selfhood, “that simultaneously disappears and maximizes itself (Manfield 97). Masochism is a signifying structure where the masochist is able to become the self and the world as the same principal, as a beyond of subjectivity that is often viewed as the sexual desire for self-annihilation.

Masochism proves to be a useful object of analysis for cultural theorists insofar as it reflects and often critiques forms of social stratification especially due to the fact that desire is the primary means of social production for Deleuze and Guattari. But also, masochism can be characterized as the desire to erase subjectivity, which is a crucial aspect to Deleuze and

Guattari's work. Because of the fact that masochism extends beyond simply a sexual perversion and extends to the fact that desire is the mode of inquiry to analyze political and social multiplicities, the study of masochism lends itself to a study of human, (male) relations with power itself, "and that also consumed its antagonists, making them mere versions of itself, preempting its experiments and turning its politics into a type of art" (Mansfield 99).

Deleuze and Guattari describe an engagement with desire as a productive process in masochism through the act of becoming as an inversion of signs (*Plateaus* 155). The very nature of this impulse of the BwO as an assemblage indicates the restrictive nature of social production. It seems as though masochism is reactive in the sense that its assemblage attempts to become a productive alternative means of expression in some unifying subjective space, even one that seeks its own dissolution and disruptive flows of annihilation and reassemble. Despite the kinds of strata that are constituted on the BwO of the masochist, there is a continual desire embedded in masochistic desiring production that attempts to invert existing strata and signifying systems as a model that whose self perpetuation and annihilation are maintained.

#### 2.4 Pornological Literature: Sadism and Masochism as Objects of Cultural Analysis

The role of violence is given in an interplay and exchange of roles, between the victim and his torturer, reflecting a dialectical ideal of persuasion, alliance making, and myth, while the sadist appeals to an ideal of pure reason. Although Deleuze does not fully develop pornography as a concept, it is clear that the arousal inspired in the porno of violence reveal a conceptual relationship between descriptive language preceding actions, and the function of the law through demonstrative language in Masoch and de Sade: "aimed above all at confronting language within its own limits, with what in a sense is a non-language ...accomplished by an internal splitting of language: the imperative and descriptive function must transcend itself into the impersonal" (23).

This dualism, that transcends toward, “a higher function” reaches an apex to the point of a “nonlinguae;” a process where the personal transforms to impersonal language. A key aspect of the pornological text is that it be considered a “dual language” of pornographic textuality in description, and a language of violence in the form of imperatives. In Sade, the higher function of impersonal language represents an idea of, “pure reason” by invoking a “universal, analytical reason” (Deleuze 23). The concept “pornology” appears twice in Deleuze’s work and is contained to few pages in the first chapter. The concept ends Deleuze’s rigorous analysis of de Sade and Masoch’s transcendent functions however because it is language that characterize pornological literature and the way in which we come to know the meaning of masochism and man through these texts; “in which the monstrous exhibits itself in reflection” as a confrontation (exchange) of violence becoming identical to particular forms of sexual arousal (22-3).

Deleuze argues that Sade follows a mathematical and rational logic: “he is on the side of violence however calm and logical he may be...the point of the demonstration is to show that the libertine is omnipotent, “the demonstration is identical to violence...the acts of violence inflicted on the victims are a mere reflection of a higher form of violence to which the demonstration testifies” (Deleuze 19). There is no higher power according to the torturer who does not need be understood by the victim. An unacknowledged form of Sade’s sadism is being forced to listen to endless lectures in conditions under conditions of corporeal depravity and distress. Justine is notably tortured by a priest in her many trials. While he practices a private satanic ritual, he is also describing and showing her how virtue has gotten her nowhere (unlike her sister Justine). The victim image of the virtuous woman is that of a sheep like follower whose beliefs that are often held by women against libertinage are was also aligned with religious law. In de Sade’s delusion of rationality as violence, “acts of violence inflicted on the victims are a mere reflection

of a higher form of violence to which the demonstration testifies” (19). Sade’s libertine derives pleasure by committing violence on an “unconsenting and unconvinced” victim, while Masoch’s victim educates and persuades his chosen despotic mistress to fashion her into an ideal cold mistress wrapped in furs. Masoch seeks a contractual alliance with an ideal “despotic mistress” whom he seeks to persuade and educate into her role while De Sade imposes his violence onto his victims in a form of endless punishment (20). In *Venus in Furs*, Severin’s written and oral contracts that detail his torture that is then repeated as the mistress’s imperatives, is contrary to the Sadist that details the torture to the victim using imperatives. The use of imperatives is crucial to Deleuze because of their copiousness in *violence as erotica*, compared to the very few imperatives given in pornographic literature, accompanied by obscenity (17). For example, Sade’s libertine derives pleasure by committing violence on an “unconsenting and unconvinced” victim, while Masoch’s victim educates and persuades his chosen despotic mistress to fashion her into an ideal cold mistress wrapped in furs. Masoch seeks a contractual alliance with an ideal “despotic mistress” whom he seeks to persuade and educate into her role while De Sade imposes his violence onto his victims in a form of endless punishment (20). The masochist suspends reality to imagine a supersensual ideal. Through disavowal, he induces a fantasy that suspends the real successions of frozen images postpone of pleasure and heighten the expectation of pain. Sade embodies a rational Spinozist, tyrannical logic by aligning himself with the law to impose his ideal delusion of reason and cumulative violence on the real in the sadean spirit of negation. Masoch’s higher function of pornological i.e. the dual language of imperative and description is achieved in a dialectical-imaginative function. Masoch’s male victim advertises for a torturer whom he can “educate, persuade, and conclude an alliance with” in the form of a contract. The ideal woman for Masoch is a woman he feels has the propensity to perform as a despot.

Masoch's hero undergoes many forms of humiliation and violence in his dialectical undertaking to cultivate an ideal woman into a torturer, the actual torment that he requires his mistress to subject him to, and her continual doubt or incapacity to fully master Masoch's ideal. In contrast to de Sade's 'demonstrative reason,' Masoch introduces "dialectical reason" inspired by Platonic means of persuasion in an "Ideal of the dialectical spirit" (23). In Sade, the woman is powerless, feeble, and intellectually inferior; she is not meant to be educated, only punished for her ignorance. The speeches that the libertine develops are simply means to show his woman of virtue that he is aligned with the law whose aim is violence, and whose power is demonstrated in his cold use of reason. The masochian woman never fully identifies with the role proscribed to her by the masochian hero and his ideal cruel mistress. In *Venus in Furs*, Wanda betrays the hero Severin, and leaves him. In each the female character is used as a prop for the male subject's intellectual, emotional, and sexual desires, and whose autonomy is always deferred to the pain/pleasure paradigm of the sadean and masochistic hero.

In Sade, the woman is powerless, feeble, and intellectually inferior; she is not meant to be educated, only punished for her ignorance. The speeches that the libertine elaborates are simply a means to show his woman of virtue that he is aligned with the law whose aim is violence, and whose power is demonstrated in his endless demands and indictments. According to Deleuze, masochism projects the paternal authority of the father onto the image of the mother so that when he is beaten by his mistress, the law of the father is disavowed and punished in the victim. The personal and pornographic is subsumed by the libertine's delusion of logic and reason that align him with institutions of paternal law. Sade's cumulative violence aims to destroy the superego by aligning himself with it and imposing its abuses on the real. The masochist allies himself with

the narcissistic ego by disavowing the superego's authority as the law of the mother, who punishes the image of the father in her victim.

It is fantasy, Lacan suggested, that contributes the limits of Sade's own sadism; fantasy makes desire possible because it "intervenes to sustain *jouissance* by the very discord to which it succumbs. Fantasy stops the inevitable annihilation that results when the right to *jouissance*, and in Sade's work, becomes the law. Sadistic desire constitutes a paradox in which the absolute right to rule annihilates the rules, in which turning the right to pleasure into the law essentially means the "freedom" to die of desire (191-192).

How is this Sadean masculine impulse leaned on in Réage's female sadism? Deleuze attributes imperatives to the utterances of the libertine and the cruel woman. De Sade's use of description is identical to the demonstrative, with the continuous monologue of the libertine dominating the mode of discourse in his representative novels. Masoch's use of imperatives are attributed to his cruel mistress, yet his descriptive language is given by his hero, "Severin," in his penultimate work *Venus in Furs*. De Sade's descriptions are "obscene in themselves" while, of Masoch articulate how Sade and Masoch are fundamentally different, that questions, "whether Masoch does not present a symptomatology that is more refined than Sade?" (16). With Masoch, the descriptive function is dialectical; it implies a method of discourse regarding convergence and resistance; Severin seduces Wanda to sign a contract; this is one of many steps toward his dialectical ideal; to seek a woman's consent to be educated into a role he imagines using her body as a vessel. In this sense, the contract itself is a typical sadistic maneuver to find a woman based on her characteristics and attributes to enslave. Rather than seek the weak, and feeble, Masoch lusts for a domineering, imposing, threatening upper class woman that he finds in Wanda.

The demonstrative is viewed in De Sade's style in terms of repudiation and instruction between the interlocutor and its object, or the speaker and the audience. It is an attitude of personal violence in terms of the sadist/libertine's tastes and personal pleasure derived from violence, and the impersonal philosophical element of pure reason as violence that supersedes the former, "endless repetitions, the reiterated quantitative process of multiplying illustrations and adding victim upon victim, retracing the thousand circles of an irreducibly solitary argument" (20). *Justine* and *Juliette* serve as de Sade's archetypal ideal victim: a naive 'woman of virtue' in peril. These young ladies are humorously more tortured perhaps by the libertine's diatribes than they are by the actual beatings. As unconsenting victims of the libertines' proselytizing," the purpose of these forced listening sessions are not meant to educate or persuade the virtuous woman (Justine or Juliette), but to demonstrate reason and logic as forms of violence in language (20). [The libertine demonstrates his hatred for what the female victim represents in culture] The libertine uses reason itself as a form of violence in a rational and cool demeanor. In de Sade's pornological universe, reason itself is given as proof of the libertine's omnipotent alignment with violence, cruelty, and endless suffering where "the demonstration is identical to violence" directed onto the body and soul of his virtuous victim (Deleuze 19).

## 2.5 Pornology: Problems with Masculinity and Power

Without stating it explicitly, Deleuze attributes pornology to the language of sexuality and violence, privileging masochism as the more interesting of the perversions, because of its elaborate strategy to persuade and indoctrinate, rather than simply demonstrate violence and power on an unconsenting victim. He looks to the language of Masoch and Sade to determine their particular ways of using and imagining cruelty and violence. Deleuze brings sadism and masochism under the umbrella of pornologies, and goes on to discuss how imperatives and

descriptions in each author reveal their particularities in law, language, and violence in sadean and masochian scripts. To integrate sex and violence, each author uses sensual detail to convey the pornographic, and what Deleuze calls the personal element of their literature, that transcends to an impersonal desexualized element that reveals the perverse logic masochism and sadism. Deleuze uncovers ten differences between the literature of Masoch and de Sade:

- (1) Sadism is speculative-demonstrative, masochism dialectical imaginative;
- (2) sadism operates with the negative and pure negation, masochism with disavowal and suspension;
- (3) sadism operates by means of quantitative reiteration, masochism by qualitative suspense; (4) there is a masochism specific to the sadist and equally a sadism specific to the masochist, the one never combining with the other;
- (5) sadism negates the mother and inflates the father, masochism disavows that mother and abolishes the father;
- (6) the role and significance of the fetish, and the function of the fantasy are totally different in each case;
- (7) there is an aestheticism in masochism, while sadism is hostile to the aesthetic attitude;
- (8) sadism is institutional, masochism contractual;
- (9) in sadism the superego and the process of identification play the primary role, masochism gives primacy to the ego and to the process of idealization;
- (10) sadism and masochism exhibit totally different forms of desexualization and resexualization; (11) finally, summing up all these differences, there is the most radical difference between sadistic apathy and masochistic *coldness* (134)

A significant difference between these authors is the function of imperatives and their speaker, as well as the role that descriptions play in producing sensation, arousal, and obscene language for particular ego-satisfying aims; Masoch, attempting to abolish the image of the father by projected phallic properties on his mistress, while de Sade satisfies his desire for omniscient perpetual violence and authoritarianism against the image of the mother by aligning himself with his daughter in an incestuous union.

Masoch's higher function of pornological i.e. the dual language of imperative and description is achieved in a dialectical-imaginative function. Masoch's male victim advertises for a torturer whom he can "educate, persuade, and conclude an alliance with" in the form of a contract. The ideal woman for Masoch is a woman he feels has the propensity to perform as a despot. Masoch's hero undergoes many forms of humiliation and violence in his dialectical undertaking to cultivate an ideal woman into a torturer, the actual torment that he requires his mistress to subject him to, and her continual doubt or incapacity to fully master Masoch's ideal. In contrast to de Sade's 'demonstrative reason,' Masoch introduces "dialectical reason" inspired by Platonic means of persuasion in an "Ideal of the dialectical spirit" (23). In Sade, the woman is powerless, feeble, and intellectually inferior; she is not meant to be educated, only punished for her ignorance. The speeches that the libertine develops are simply means to show his woman of virtue that he is aligned with the law whose aim is violence, and whose power is demonstrated in his cold use of reason. The masochian woman never fully identifies with the role proscribed to her by the masochian hero and his ideal cruel mistress. In *Venus in Furs*, Wanda betrays the hero Severin, and leaves him. In each the female character is used as a prop for the male subject's intellectual, emotional, and sexual desires, and whose autonomy is always deferred to the pain/pleasure paradigm of the sadean and masochistic hero.

In *Venus in Furs*, Severin's written and oral contracts that detail his torture that is then repeated as the mistress's imperatives, is contrary to the Sadist that details the torture to the victim using imperatives. The use of imperatives is crucial to Deleuze because of their copiousness in *violence as erotica*, compared to the very few imperatives given in pornographic literature, accompanied by obscenity (17). For example, Sade's libertine derives pleasure by committing violence on an "unconsenting and unconvinced" victim, while Masoch's victim educates and persuades his chosen despotic mistress to fashion her into an ideal cold mistress wrapped in furs. Masoch seeks a contractual alliance with an ideal "despotic mistress" whom he seeks to persuade and educate into her role while De Sade imposes his violence onto his victims in a form of endless punishment (20). The masochist suspends reality to imagine a supersensual ideal. Through disavowal, he induces a fantasy that suspends the real successions of frozen images postpone of pleasure and heighten the expectation of pain. Sade embodies a rational Spinozist, tyrannical logic by aligning himself with the law to impose his ideal delusion of reason and cumulative violence on the real in the sadean spirit of negation.

Masoch's language transcends personal and descriptive detail to the impersonal coldness of the mistress, he educates and persuades (20). In this alliance, the masochist enacts a scenario where, "the masochistic subject must see his desire returned to him as nothingness, as something completely extinguished by someone else's desire" (Mansfield 8). A pact is made through the use of contracts primarily written and signed that detail and describe the tortures and how she will perform them in Deleuze's description of the masochistic aesthetic. His ability to educate and cultivate the woman is an educational undertaking that is also an experiment with a risk taking consequence of failure. Masoch imagines an ideal where "he appears to be educated and fashioned by the authoritarian woman" (Deleuze 22)

Severin's desire must be acted out by being presented as the suppression of his desire. In other words, the masochistic subject must see his desire returned to him as nothingness. As something completely extinguished by someone else's desire...*the masochist consolidates his power by representing its destruction* (Mansfield 8).

In "Description of a Woman" Deleuze argues that unlike Sartre's asexual other where other humans are objectively asexual people who can only think of making love with a thing as an expression of the self, the Other "revealed in its "sex" would be objectively lovable and would impose itself on the lover." (17). The self does not make create the significations of the other, the other imposes itself as the world onto the self as a wholly objective universe; "The other is an expression of an absent external world, an expressing without an expressed...the action of a hollow presence" (18). Deleuze calls for a "phenomenology" of the other as the "beloved" wherein the self and the other are signified in their sex and where "a description of a woman cannot be made without reference to a male-Other" (17,18).

The male-Other is defined not as a consciousness, nor as another "I," but objectively as a possible exteriority. Woman, however, is completely different. Here we must be simplistic, and adhere to the naïve image: the woman in make-up, who torments the tender, misogynist, and dissimulating adolescent" (18)

While the male-Other is a dissimulating adolescent, "which expresses something other than itself," the Woman, phenomenologically *is* the external world. "In vain would we seek the expression of an absent external world on the face of this woman. In her, everything is presence" (18). Laurent de Sutter's "Deleuze and the Maiden: A Short Introduction to Legal Pornology" takes Deleuze's concept as a retroactive and conceptual link to Deleuze's non-canonical work, "Description of Woman," and his later works on Kafka and cinema to suggest that Deleuze conceptualizes eroticism as desire animating images, specifically in cinematic images and the

image of woman, whose pornographic obscenity represents, “the *milieu* of the law” where the book of the law symbolizes pornography: “porn is the operation by which the law reveals its fantasized power and through this fantasy, its true impotence” law as a fantasy image of power that is also libidinal (91). Sutter suggests that Deleuze’s single use of the term pornology in *Coldness and Cruelty*, “points to an application of a pornographic logic to philosophy” as a “counter-system” where “pornology = girls + images + practice of law” – is an “antiphilosophic and explosive equation:” an antiphilosophic counter-system wherein the three theorems are equivalent (90, 95):

The theorem of girls would be: *all order gives rise to its own disorder in the attempt to foreclose its possibility*—the foreclosure of the possibility of disorder creates disorder.

Then, the theorem of the image: *all reality gives rise to its own limitlessness in the attempt to exclude its opposite*—it is the refusal of fantasies that makes them a reality.

Finally, the theorem of the practice of law: *law—as a system of rules—gives rise to its own annulment in the attempt to control practice*—it is the avowal of the supremacy of the law that annuls all possibility of the law (95).

*Justine* and *Juliette* serve as de Sade’s archetypical ideal victim: a naive ‘woman of virtue’ in peril. These young ladies are humorously more tortured perhaps by the libertine’s diatribes than they are by the actual beatings. As un-consenting victims of the libertines’ proselytizing,” the purpose of these forced listening sessions are not meant to educate or persuade the virtuous woman (Justine or Juliette), but to demonstrate reason and logic as forms of violence in language (20). [The libertine demonstrates his hatred for what the female victim represents in culture and nature (an incestuous union with the daughter in the oedipal traid). The libertine uses reason itself as a form of violence in a rational and cool demeanor. In de Sade’s pornological universe,

reason itself is given as proof of the libertine's omnipotent alignment with violence, cruelty, and endless suffering where "the demonstration is identical to violence" directed onto the body and soul of his virtuous victim (Deleuze 19). Considering gender in Deleuze's particularization of sadism and masochism qua literary analysis from sexology to Freud, Deleuze considers how gender functions differently in de Sade's sadism and Masoch's masochism. In both perversions, a reversal occurs near the end of their narratives: in Sade, the libertine is "permitted" to exercise, "what his punishments were previously intended to deny him...the pain he suffers is an ultimate pleasure, not because it satisfies a need to expiate or a feeling of guilt, but because it confirms in him his inalienable power and gives him a supreme certitude" (39).

De Sade's erotic imagination exists as a foundational text of pornography and as a model of naturalized modern male subjectivity. The pornography as a text, is founded in a delusion of total subjectivity, self-annihilation, and repression of love, union, or even co-creation with the natural world. Incapable of knowing his pain or deal with his inner conflict against himself and others, he chose a delusion of omnipotence and misanthropic masochism expressed outward, against the world. Sade is able to show how the most normal masculinity and be the most monstrous. He provided a trenchant version of masculine deflection of responsibility for his crimes. His desire to be punished by the law is also a desire to uphold rather than act as it. The monstrosity of his mind was projected onto the monstrosity of the outside world. His deviance ensured his annihilation, of himself, the law, nature, and the other.

What Masoch provides is a cultural aesthetic of self-annihilation and transgressive masculinity as a power that can sustain its own subversion even to the point of annihilation. This mode of power serves the same anti-social impulse to retain authority, power, and self-authorization. Authority and power in the name of masculinity relies upon the domination of

women and the denial of female subjectivity and self-expression. For a woman to write a pornography, is to produce the very voice that reflects the contradictory and denying masculinity of the male-other. Nothing is sought; nothing is given except in violence and submission, and the repetition, "I love you." What is denied however is the mode of power by which the total subject of masculinity maintains sameness and authority in the operation of self-denial. A appears to be acting out self-denial, although her motives are difficult to understand. Women are expected to want liberation at the same time that they are meant to struggle for it and be humiliated in their attempts, to admit the embarrassing and humiliating acts that sustain their silence. O's psychic landscape, as I analyze in the next chapter, embodies and narratives the sadean and masochian images of the female-other: the woman who dreams of being Justine also a story of the author of *O*.

### CHAPTER 3. “A FEMALE DE SADE” THE STORY OF *THE STORY OF O*

*“Yes, men are foolish to expect us to revere them when, in the end, they amount to almost nothing. Woman, like man himself, can only worship at the shrine of that abused body, now loved, and now reviled, subjected to every humiliation, but which is, after all, her own. The man, in this particular affair, stays in one piece; he is the true worshiper, aspiring in vain to become one with his god”*

*Pauline Réage, Preface to L’Image, 1956*

#### 3.1 Subversion as Perversion: Female Masochism in *Historie d’O*

The idea that women don’t actually revere men despite their submission to them is rarely discussed element of female eroticism. How women who submit to men actually feel about men represents a cultural anxiety about female knowledge and power that is subsumed by their deviance, criminality, and threat to the moral fabrics of the social order. The idea that O would submit to male domination because she has an internalized misogynist view is a culturally negative representation of female sexuality according to some feminist critics. However, negative emotions often block us from facing the truth or at least “a” truth about how we have come to experience.

Réage admits her own participation in a sadean corporeal mortification and emotional degradation. The narrator’s consciousness represents freedom in humiliation, that once undergone, is consecrated by the outward marks of abuse and the inward sense of gratification as the subject becomes a shrine. The sadean impulse of female sexual sadism is in exploring how the secret that women keep from themselves and others is that women’s intimacy with the ultimately unattainable power of male masochism and male sadism, disguised by the image of a singular paternal order. This power is withheld in the form of erotization of the body, the law of

violence, and masculine integrity. In so doing, she aligns herself with the criminality of de Sade, whose transgressive writing casts an influential shadow on modern masculinity. Sade's view and resentment of love as possession between people, is O's ironic sadistic desire. Her aim, being love is something that attains by ennobling male sadism and masochism in her corporeal mortification.

Part of Réage's perverse fixations lie in secrecy. Her letters that became O, her open use of a pseudonym, her participation in the journalism of the French resistance, and her life long love-affair with Jean Paulhan. Implied in the message, "aspiring in vain to become one with his god," from the introductory quotation, Réage acknowledges her de-centered subjectivity, that also keeps the secret of male sexual fantasy to maintain autonomy, to not be split by the invasive other. As a de-centered subject, Réage shows the sadism and masochism of masculine domination as an element of the shame that she carries in submitting to it. She simply reflects the perception that the male sadist whose operation of power is one of transgression, to prove that she loves him in order to live. The omnipotent fantasy of authority that O's lover Rene participates in is played out by O's masochism that pretends that his desire is also her own. While O's love is directed toward her lover rather than the whip, Rene's love is in the proof of his authority. With each lash he becomes more convinced that she is truly his. Lacking the ability to merge with the other without a sense of loss, or self-annihilation, O chooses love and learns to identify with her abused body as a demonstration of complete and total otherness; the most extreme version of sexual enslavement to the point of becoming a living object. Becoming a cognizant animal, unaware of her status as an idol of sexualized abjection a living otherness, but feeling her power, O would rather die than be left alone to return to her life as an independent modern woman.

When Régine Deforges published ‘Pauline Réage’s’ confessions the intimacy, detail, and depth that these women achieve in their conversation, reveals a language charts out Aury’s sense of gender, sexuality and eroticism including the nature of fascism in masculinity, the mythological depths of sexual desiring as subjects of gender and culture. They are speaking nearly twenty years after O’s initial publication, and they reflect on its material history, including legal documents, reviews, and debates over the novel’s themes of eroticized male power and female submission.

Réage’s opaque career and personal lives are distinguished by secrecy and obscurity. Introduced to Paulhan by her father during the early years of WWII, she was working as a translator and distributor of surreptitious news stories with the French Resistance movement under the pseudonym Dominique Aury (de St. Jorre 44). Paulhan was married, a father, already had mistresses, and was the publisher of the *Lettres Françaises*, the clandestine news source Aury had been working for, and the editor of the respected *Nouvelle Revue Française* (de St Jorre 44). Their affair was doubly clandestine because it took place during the German occupation and was under the threat of arrest, but by her early forties, near the end of the war, she became unsure that she could maintain Paulhan’s love and interest. She told Deforges that it was during this time that she realized she could be a writer, but that the writing of *O* needed an accomplice, “it has to be for the one who loves her; nothing of this kind can be made unless the man involved is someone you love” (74). She knew that Paulhan was only intellectually rather than libidinally interested in de Sade, but she admitted to Deforges that *O* was drawn from her own fantasies from childhood that had stayed with her for her entire life (73). *The Story of O* in was written for one audience, as a form of seduction and a confessional of a private erotic life that became a relatable narrative of “secret” female desire on an international scale. As erotic literary

philosophies, those of Masoch and de Sade incorporate sex and violence, confronting the limits of language, transcending from the personal at the level of description to the impersonal that confronts power and violence as a psychosexual gendered drama. Réage, like Masoch and de Sade, creates culture in her literary representation of female sexual sadism.

In her rare interviews, notably powerful are her coming-out *Times* interview historical piece by St. Jorre, (1994) and her conversations with Anne Deforges (1974). Both corroborate her claim that the novel was, “*une entreprise de seduction*,” an attempt to prove she could write as good of an erotic novel as de Sade in a bet with her lover Jean Paulhan (St. Jorre 43). Aury claims the story was never meant for publication. It was written as a series of letters to Jean Paulhan, who was a notable public figure in France’s literary elite, especially his membership among l’Academe Française and his post as editor of *Nouvelle Revue Française* (40). Fearing that Paulhan was losing interest in her, she set out to prove that she could write a novel as well as de Sade whose works Paulhan had been translating. At the time of De St. Jorre’s *New York Times* interview with Réage, the eighty-six year old Dominique Aury had had well established and rewarded careers as a journalist, editor, and translator. St. Jorre describes her affair with Paulhan that lead to the novel’s creation, “marked by moments of great passion and periods of anguish, and it produced an unusual progeny: the first explicit novel to be written by a woman and published in the modern era.” (43). While Aury’s love to Paulhan evokes anxiety about his commitment; Rene presents O with the option of being a pure object to maintain his interest. Without projecting intent on the author, ideals of devotion, self-annihilation, and commitment are themes of love that resonate with Aury’s love and O’s love.

Aury stoically asserts that her intentions to write the novel were out of love at the same time that they were admittedly borne out of dread and the feeling that she was not good enough

for Paulhan to remain in love with or interested in her. Whether her claims are true, they reveal particular hegemonic distinctions regarding romantic love between men and women and performances of gender. Deforges raised the issue of consent and the novel's publication to Réage by asking if it's publication was also a means of seduction. If Réage wanted the novel to remain secret, as a clandestine series of letters between her and Paulhan, did the novel's publication undermine her intention for writing the story, or was the novel meant to be about any lover she might have and did she secretly hope Paulhan would be so impressed that he publish it? She insists that she didn't care about the novel's publication: "No. When you give something, you give it completely; you don't go back and say, 'Sorry, but I didn't want it to be used in this way or that'" (75-6). She asserts that love can be one sided between either gender, as long as one person gives themselves fully and freely even when the love object does not feel the same. She believes that to care enough about something involves a price that one must accept. Her vision of love implies abandon, or complete confidence in the one you love, "to your destiny" (Deforges 53-4). Viewing love as a form of power, such that abandon performs a gendered relinquishment of the self and body to an ideal other in the male involving total trust; stressing the image ideal in the male torturer as a projection of desire for a knight in shining armor.

I agree with Amelia Ziv, who argues that writers like Kaja Silverman tend view, *O*'s depiction of female subjectivity negatively and in so doing, deny the significance of the author's gender in their argument that pornography is inherently oppressive ("Perverts Progress" 67). *The Story of O* is grounded in a proportionally small amount of literature and criticism, but the texts that exist examine *O* in thorough and useful ways in terms of its literary aesthetics, it's

publication and influence, the history of the author, and the conditions under which it was written, and its attendant reception. Dominique Aury tells Deforges:

What I also realized then was the certainty that there are some things you don't do just as there are some things you don't talk about openly, for the simple reason that people are upset if you do; I refer strictly to personal matters. And then many years later, the imperative reflex intervened; don't upset or compromise family and friends; don't use your own name; talk about it only with those directly involved"(13)

A form of familial and personal knowledge is one that remains taboo, forbidden to speak about. Accepting the norms expected of her gender as a means of social survival and family loyalty, Réage herself proscribes to the social script that deems women the bearers of secret knowledge that can compromise their entire sphere of safety, family, friends, and above all lovers.

Both de St. Jorre, and Deforges consider the origin story of the novel in their commentaries on romantic love and female sexual deviance under the guise of submission. Aury told de St. Jorre that she needed to do something that would make Paulhan “sit up” to keep his attention on her and express her love by impressing his intellect: “I wasn't young, I wasn't pretty, it was necessary to find other weapons” (45, 43). Paulhan greatly admired her writing and asked for more, leading to the creation and eventual publication of *O*. Reage wanted to prove that she could write a novel as well as de Sade whose works Paulhan had been translating. At the time of De St. Jorre's *New York Times* interview with Réage, the eighty-six year old Dominique Aury had had well established and rewarded careers as a journalist, editor, and translator. St. Jorre describes her affair with Paulhan that lead to the novel's creation, “marked by moments of great passion and periods of anguish, and it produced an unusual progeny: the first explicit novel to be written by a woman and published in the modern era.” (43). Both de St. Jorre, and Deforges consider this origin to be a remarkable commentary on romantic love, and gendered desire explicated in *O*. Aury told de St. Jorre that she needed to do something that would make Paulhan

“sit up” to keep his attention on her and express her love by impressing his intellect: “I wasn’t young, I wasn’t pretty, it was necessary to find other weapons” (45, 43). Paulhan greatly admired her writing and asked for more, leading to the creation and eventual publication of *O*.

While Aury’s love for Paulhan evokes anxiety about his commitment; Rene presents O with the option of being a pure object of his sadistic dissimulating desires and to maintain some semblance of autonomy even if he is the victim of his own narrative. This subtext of heterosexual romance and traditional gender is given in form and content, but the act of authorization is key. In becoming an author of a deviant desire within normative frameworks of female subjectivity, Aury reaches the boundaries of female representation and goes beyond into the cultural landscape of masculinity and the public arena of authorship and the sexist field of art criticism, social repression of women and sexuality, and the all-male cannon of phonological works.

Paulhan will question Réage’s masculinity and his own in his introduction to *O*, “Happiness in Slavery.” Masoch’s sadism and Sade’s masochism, whose author’s lives inflect and mirror their cultural meanings, function in a much different sense of gender and sexuality in the triangulation of gender sexuality and violence in heterosexual romance narratives.

But from a female viewpoint the story arouses intense anxiety, a sure antidote to pornographic fantasy...On the one hand, she is the answer to every man’s secret dream. On the other hand, she is an object awful in her implications. It is the former quality that makes her story pornographic. And it is the latter quality that takes her story beyond simplistic exploitation of sexual fantasy and lets it metaphorically explore a fundamentally human condition’ (Michelson “Apology for Pornography”).

When asked about O’s passivity toward men, Réage considered that for O, taking initiative was too humiliating, and admits that she herself hates being humiliated although she knows it’s absurd: “if one wants to be destroyed one has to accept the means that go with it” and she

suspects that O wants to escape life because; “the world is too much for her” (83). Réage’s attitude toward Paulhan honors those social scripts of gender in the binding strategy of total abandon, that it would seem as though she, like O, is forcing her lover to perform an image of masculinity that she lives up to, like her childhood fantasies of men as “knights in shining armor...those who claimed to be courageous and brave...those who kept their solemn vow” (81). Desiring to be totally humiliated like O, and hating to be humiliated like O, Réage speaks to historical conditions of gender and sexuality particular to a female subject and author. Réage’s total love for Paulhan, a man who she fears will cuckold or even abandon her, is opposed to O’s consent to be prostituted, become one among many bodies that her lover will penetrate and abuse, and total lack of freedom to make any decisions of her own outside of the choice to love, consenting to and anticipating abuse. Réage considered that for O, taking initiative was too humiliating, and admits that she herself hates being humiliated although she knows it’s absurd. The logic, “if one wants to be destroyed one has to accept the means that go with it” equates love with destruction; . The means, are as supposed, the circumstances that one must cultivate through and with another person, be it love, or self-destruction. Réage tells Deforges that she suspects O wants to escape life because; “the world is too much for her” (83):

The story of abandonment, noted by Aury in her interview with Deforges, signals the loss of male loyalty, trust, and honor; and disappointment in men that is built into their upbringing. Women are always told to worship men for these qualities that they actually lack. Like Réage, O reconfigures her sexual normality in the face of male power as [cultural capital as male power] and her sexual fixation on love as death to suggest a particular form of female sadomasochism that proliferated after her novel was written [*L’Image*, Anne Rice *Sleeping Beauty* series, et. al.].

The story begins in Monceau Park, Paris, where O and her lover Rene, sit at an intersection when a non-descript car arrives. Rene orders O to “get in” (3). The elaborate description of her clothing can best be described as a sexy schoolgirl uniform: “high heels, a suit with a pleated skirt, a silk blouse, and no hat.” As the car begins to move, Rene orders O to lower her stockings, unfasten her garter belt to remove her panties, lift her skirts to sit directly on the cold imitation leather seat, and put on her gloves; when they arrive at their destination, Rene unbuttons her blouse and cuts away her brassiere with a pen knife (3-4). . She is already dressed in what seems to be a uniform, “high heels, a suit with a pleated skirt, a silk blouse, and no hat.” As the car begins to move, Rene orders O to lower her stockings, unfasten her garter belt to remove her panties, lift her skirts to sit directly on the cold imitation leather seat, and put on her gloves; when they arrive at their destination, Rene unbuttons her blouse, cuts away her brassiere with a pen knife (3-4), and delivers the following speech: When they arrive at Roissy, Rene delivers the following speech to O:

“Listen” he says. “Now you’re ready. This is where I leave you. You’re to get out and go ring the doorbell. Follow whoever opens the door for you, and do whatever you’re told. If you hesitate about going in, they’ll come and take you in. If you don’t obey immediately, they’ll force you to. Your bag? No, you have no further need for your bag. You’re merely the girl I’m furnishing. Yes, of course I’ll be there. Now run along. (5)

O is made ready to enter Roissy. The details of O’s history are almost immediately made into a description of her clothing and how she is made to wear them. The costume functions to delineate her physical and emotional submission to Rene especially in her deprivation of clothing. Details of O’s outfits act as fetish objects. In “Confessions of O” Réage tells Deforges that like O’s uniforms, the novel is a story about *recognition*, to which O’s outfits were the signs (28). The last details of O’s costume are her leather handbag and it’s contents of “her identification papers, her compact, and her lipstick” (3). Her identification papers are the official documents of

her identity the state, her birth name, photograph, address, and physical descriptions that denote her “real” status in the modern world. The compact provides *O* with a reflection of herself, no doubt to apply her lipstick. *O*’s lipstick reflexively illuminates the performativity of gender where the application of makeup symbolizes normative standards that collude with the now fetishized male gaze.

The female sadist explores the sadistic aesthetic of masculinity as a possessed woman. Knowing that Réage, challenges the masculinity of de Sade’s eroticism to claim she could write as well as him. An interesting claim, depending on if she means quality of writing, or literary philosophy of eros and thanos. Unlike masochism, there is no sense that *O* has ever accosted or demanded anything from Rene other than his love. She imagines the imperatives of masculine domination as in the speech that is given to *O* when she arrives at Roissy:

You are here to serve your masters. During the day, you will perform whatever domestic duties are assigned to you, such as sweeping, putting back the books, arranging flowers, or waiting on a table. Nothing more difficult than that. But at the first word or sign from anyone, drop whatever you are doing and ready yourself for what is really your one and only duty: to lend yourself. Your hands are not your own, nor are your breasts, nor most especially, any of your bodily orifices, which we may explore or penetrate at will. You will remember, at all times—or as constantly as possible, that you have all right to privacy or concealment, and as a reminder of this fact, in our presence you will never close your lips completely, or cross your legs, or press your knees together (15)

To all of this, *O* never consents or says no to. She is simply then taken away. Like the sadean drama, the victim is not meant to be persuaded even though at the same time, *O*’s consent is dispersed throughout the novel and implicit in her most private sense of love for Rene (a most private sense that she also experiences in orgasm from beatings and rape). Paradoxically, her greatest sense of freedom in love is at the loss of privacy and self-ownership outwardly. To remain open to male sexual domination is to show how it’s operations of power demand that the flesh be proof of a final loss or ambivalence toward it. While *O* demonstrates the pornographic

sexuality of the female object, she also mechanizes the psychical experience as one of transcendence and emotional liberation from daily life. After writing the first chapter, Aury confesses that she felt that it was done, but Paulhan wanted more. In writing the two subsequent chapters, the fantasy is interrupted by daily life and the more interesting settings and scenarios and humiliations and tortures that O undergoes.

Fraternal bonds and paternal authority act as a fantasy formation of female sexual sadists will; her course towards annihilation and jouissance. In the second book we are introduced to Sir Stefan who we discover is René's half-brother, whose "gray, unflinching gaze" takes over those of René, from the moment of their meeting on.. The incestuous homosocial pulse that runs beneath Sir Stephan and René's social and familial bond underlies the female slave trade and attitude towards gender in heterosexuality; men provide each other "true companionship" in a Western myths of militaristic bonds between men, in the virtues of loyalty and honor. Aury characterizes their relationship as homosexual not in the traditional, but in the anglo-saxon soldier-buddy relationship. It's very close to a military situation" (84). Before Sir Stefan "takes" O, (a violent anal rape, involving blood), and given over to him by René, Sir Stefan tells her that they are related by their Mother, although he says that their bond is beyond, familial relation. He is also a member of Roissy. He says to O, "There is also a freedom between us so absolute and of such long standing that what belongs to me has always belonged to him, and what belongs to him likewise belongs to me (70) His name also implies milita and ranks, that we see O rising up in as a movement between men, by whose proximity, alone, in her consent in private and to keep the order and it's machinations secret. She is taken further into a new set of agreements with Stefan, will be at Roissy every day, and is "fond of habits and rites..." that will eventually lead up to her presentation to the capitulation in the final scene of the novel (71).

“Aury describes herself as a voracious reader, whose father would hide pornographic literature in his library behind other books, that she found when she was “14 or 15” (Deforges 11). To that Deforges asks is her father found out. Aury’s response,

You bet he did: a real anatomy lesson, complete with drawings and color palettes, all of which put an end to the whisperings in the corridor at school. Not to mention the fact that about the same time a girl friend of mine—who I suspect was in cahoots with my father in the matter—Suggested to me that a male cousin of hers stood ready and willing to give me a lesson in the subject. *He promised me a complete lesson without destroying my viriginity* [emphasis mine] (11)

I emphasize the last line, because it is easy to assimilate the “he” as Réage’s father and her cousin. Her father’s educational interest in his daughter’s sexuality, particularly in her fantasy life and sexual knowledge, is also shared with her friends, which by today’s standards, seems strange in and of itself that he would be in cahoots with. Her father’s obscene literature was given across all facets of her sexual knowledge; anatomy being the pornographic gateway to teach his daughter about her body and what it can do.

The preface to *O*, “Happiness in Slavery,” was written by Paulhan with admiration and contributed to the novel’s success in France and the U.S. He frames the novel in terms of its literary merit and cultural relevance rather than its ability to incite lust in the reader. Rather than seeing an ideal of masochistic virtuousness with Réage, Paulhan sees *O* as a contribution to decency. Yet as a virtue, he rejects the assumption that the novel’s spirit is masochistic. The mystical ideal of submitting to another’s will often attributed to lovers who become, “rid of selfish pleasures, interests, and personal complexes” this essential quality of *decency*, evokes an, “indefinable, always pure and violent spirit, endless and unadulterated...a decisive spirit which nothing disturbs, whether it be moans or horrors, ecstasy or nausea” (XXIII, XXIV). Paulhan’s Preface is an attempt to understand politics of gender and sexuality in the novel’s prose, narrative style, and tone. He writes, “That you are a woman [Réage] I have little doubt...It is something a

man would never have thought of, or at least would never have dared express...And yet, in her own way *O* expressed a virile ideal. Virile, or at least masculine”(XXIV). He sees *O* as a fairy tale inundated by whips and chains that evoke a deep familiarity and sense that is sobering, chaste, lead by an ideal of love that is virile; a “ruthless decency...indomitable and quick to punish” (XXVII).

The narrator tells the story of consensual maledom between lovers as Réage tells her erotic fantasies to Paulhan in the letters that became *O*. He realizes that the style and the narrative reveal an alarming truth about women, who, “never cease obeying their nature, the call of their blood, that everything in them, their minds, is sex (XXIV). With Réage and Paulhan this is a seduction of the intellect, while the narrator is only interested in *O*’s enslavement and degradation as ecstasy. Given the novel’s disturbing erotic premise, it is unsurprising that at the heart of Paulhan’s work on Sade coincided with ideological shifts in medical language regarding non-reproductive sexual behaviors and pathologies of sexual perversity and modern masculinity. Fine-de-siècle sexological studies defined sadism as a congenital sexual disorder under the umbrella of perversity and social deviance. Réage’s literary and intellectual value is increased in his mind and Réage successfully achieves her seduction. The novel, like her love, is the object given fully for him to do with as he likes, just as *O*’s physical and spiritual abandon to René is erotic fantasy of maledom using love as the mechanism of violence and suffering: love in the name of cruelty.

Secrecy is an important part of Réage’s literary language. The surrealist nature of the text is not the same as her male contemporaries. In her attention to detail’s such as René’s freyed slipper, Paulhan finds a feminine impulse, perhaps reading himself into the role that he is playing

for Réage, who has initiated the game, whose stakes, she insists, remain the same. Her directed glance and attention to a minute aspect of René with a gaze of love, unrequited and accepting lack, as a female subject, she notices details, that a perhaps male author would not notice without having a significant or philosophical reason. The secrecy of that kind of loving glance, is particular to a masochistic manipulation of power. In feeling concern toward the other in that way, is to take on a moral masochism, a love that has no control and too much care for aspects of the self that the male finds irrelevant. The object of love we are reminded is not the image of the other as themselves, but the transgressive act of domination and refusal of the other.

### 3.2 Eroticized Anxieties: Aury's Seduction and the Love Contract

Aury tells her erotic fantasies as a bet, in her letters to Paulhan that became *O*. With Aury and Paulhan, this is a seduction of the intellect, while the narrator is only interested in *O*'s enslavement and degradation as ecstasy. He realizes that the style and the narrative reveal an alarming truth about women, who, “never cease obeying their nature, the call of their blood, that everything in them, their minds, is sex (XXIV). He received these letters as an intellectual and Réage realized, that given a reason to be a writer in Paulhan, she could confess and reveal her sexual fantasies to him as a literary feat. Réage's literary and intellectual value is increased in his mind and Réage successfully achieves her seduction. The novel, like her love, is the object given fully for him to do with as he likes, just as *O*'s physical and spiritual abandon to René is given in the name of love.

Paulhan approaches the novel as a mystery of gendered desire, yet he admittedly feels the compulsion to be aroused by asserting that he isn't. Stating that the novel is “not, generally speaking, my cup of tea,” he claims that his lack of arousal is based in a stylistic quality. Her direct, unflinching narrative of female masculinity in style in content is terrifying and vitruous.

His critique unearths a deep-rooted disturbance bearing on his sense of masculinity and revealed in the language of erotic works:

I incline to works in which the author is hesitant, indicating by some show of embarrassment that he was at first intimidated by his subject, that there were moments when he doubted he would ever be able to bring it off. But from beginning to end, the story of *O* is managed rather like some brilliant feat. It reminds you more of a speech than a mere effusion; of a letter rather than a secret diary. But to whom is the letter addressed? Whom is the speech trying to convince? Whom can we ask? I don't even know who you are (XXIV)

Knowing that Paulhan in fact knows the author, his series of questions seem disingenuous in hindsight. Perhaps this was an aside to Aury, recognition that she successfully became estranged and somehow different than she was before as an intellectual and writer. The masculinity of *O*'s virile virtuousness does not appeal to him even though he speaks to the novel in such honorific even submissive awe of the novel's ruthless decency. Thinking more broadly about gender, Paulhan states, "I must pause and consider what there is about masculine desire which is in fact strange and indefensible" perceiving that his perplexity surrounding *O*'s ruthless submissiveness and wondering if erotica acts as a means of instruction (XXVI). He speaks of a wind blowing over rock formations that cause them to create mandolin sounds that people will come to hear who can't help but want to turn away from the phenomena. Without explanation, he talks about the erotic work as a form of reassurance that fear and desire, can be laid bare. In his view of decency, to want to experience sublime phenomena at the same time that you want to look away, one can deny having experienced anything, or one could rendering the flesh to state of abandon in a humbling of the flesh (XXVII).

How can Paulhan's preference for a (male) author's embarrassment and humility lead him to question a strange and indefensible quality of masculinity? The most salient literary techniques of female authorship for Paulhan are in *O*'s attention to detail: "the green stain

dresses, the wasp-waist corsets, and skirts rolled up a number of turns” and more keenly, in O’s matter of fact and careful observations of her lover when he leaves her at Roissy the second time: “when René abandons O to still further torments, she still manages to have enough presence of mind to notice that her lover’s slippers are frayed, and notes that she will have to buy him another pair” (XXIV). Here, Paulhan attributes the femininity of the author to the style, based on her delight in describing her and René’s attire. The masculinity of the author are conjoined with the subject matter in a way that does not appeal to Paulhan: because it is indeed written like a letter addressed to Paulhan, he resists being implicated in the role of the male torturer. Are those attentions to detail a distinction from de Sade that speak to the articulation of feminine desire, interests, and detail that also efface the desiring of the male torturer in O?

Without Paulhan’s status in the French literary scene, *O* would have never been published or written. Introduced to Paulhan by her father during the early years of WWII, Réage was working as a translator and distributor of surreptitious news stories with the French resistance movement under the pseudonym Dominique Aury (de St. Jorre 44). Paulhan was married, a father, and publisher of the *Lettres Françaises*, the clandestine news source Aury worked for (de St Jorre 44). Their affair was doubly clandestine due to their work with the resistance movement, and she remained his mistress for decades leading up to his death near the end of the 60s.

Before Freud developed the drive theory of human sexual development in his *Three Essays*, his analysis was based on the generalized theory of seduction, a specific moment for later psychoanalytic theorists, such as Laplanche was when he abandoned the theory in 1897 that he calls, “the *going-astray* of Freudian thought” when he gave up on his theory that neurotic patients had repressed sexual scenes from childhood (201). “Freud found himself in the wake of the break up of conceptual complex of the seduction theory: an entrapment in a dualism of inherited

constitution versus a traumatic event...and essentially the primacy of the adult other, the other of personal prehistory” (Fletcher 10). Moving away from an anthropological concern with real events and the locus of human sexual development as an anthropological concern, Freud’s departure signaled,

...the asymmetry crystalized in the fundamental anthropological situation is that of a child devoid of a sexual unconscious in the presence of an adult already endowed with such an unconscious... (171)

In seduction theory; the focus of analysis is how the parents particular unconscious was presented to the child as it comes into sexual individuation. This is focused on the unconscious sexual fantasies of the adults that the child experiences, as the entry they experiences into sexed subjects. Under the sexual development theory of sexual subjectivity, Freud’s theory of infantile sexuality and the “oedipal” stages was a binary oscillation between, “external events or inherited constitution” (“Essays on Otherness” 1). Laplanche and Bersani argue that Freud also shies away from his postulation that the death drive emerges from within the pleasure principle. Bersani states that Freud’s theory *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* theorizes sexuality as working against itself: “*sexuality is its own antagonist*” (Bersani, *The Freudian Body* 17). Freud, de Sade and Masoch all shared the conflicting feelings they had towards nature, society, and themselves. Nature, society, and the other are constant external threat the masculine subject’s ability to maintain the illusion of autonomy. Rather than view eroticism as cultural form, Freud attempts to fix human sexual development as a process of sexual individuation in the univocal script of the stages of sexual development and his work never relinquishes the grip of masculine desire for phallic alignment or misalignment, a continual state of being at war with the father over the body of the mother.

Freud in this project certainly establishes a transgressive viewpoint of taboo formation in human sexuality that demands a kind of human perversity, even though the sense I get from research is that, his writing depicts the misogynistic views of a man unwilling to confront his abusive father. Alice Miller argues that in Freud's early analysis, called his theory of seduction:

...all his patients both female and male, had been abused children and recounted their histories in the language of symptoms. After reporting his discovery in psychiatric circles,, he found himself completely shunned because none of his fellow psychiatrists was prepared to share their findings with him. Freud could not bear this isolation for long. A few months later, in 1897, he described his patients' reports on sexual abuse as sheer fantasies attributable to their instinctual wishes (52-53)

Revealed in his letter to Willheim Fleiss, Alice Miller argues that abusive fatherhood resonated with his renunciation of "the truth" in his letters to Willheim Fleiss, to whom he admitted:

Unfortunately my own father was one of those perverts and is responsible for the hysteria of my brother (all of whose symptoms are identifications) and those of several younger sisters. The frequency of this circumstance often makes me wonder (53)

Alice Miller links to the testimony of his son Robert Fleiss in 1897 had abused his son at the time when he was two years old:" "it took Robert Fleiss many decades to find out that, at the age of two, he had been sexually abused by his father and that this incident coincided with Freud's renunciation of the truth" (54). To wonder how Freud was able to write away his theory of seduction to protect his father, is inscribed in his transference of the responsibility of sexual development as being located in the caregivers' unconscious, to the general social categories of oedipal development; and attempt to biologize the law of the father. Upon losing his daughter, it would seem logical that his return to the question of life, death, and sexuality in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, would have a large import in his own role as a parent and father to his daughter. With the addition of Fleiss, Freud's use of language is transgressive in its indictment of

the father; the idea that abuse is certainly not widespread speaks to an obvious lie that we maintain to justify male domination and authoritarian violence.

In his published writings of 1896, then, Freud argued vigorously and determinedly for the seduction theory. Then came the letter of September 21, 1897: "I no longer believe in my neurotica." In the letter, Freud expresses four doubts about his theory. The first concerns dissatisfying clinical results: interminable analyses, poor outcomes, premature terminations. But throughout the rest of the letters, and often clearly in the context of thinking centered in the idea of fantasy, Freud expresses the same clinical disappointment. If clinical disappointment argues against the seduction theory, then presumably it argues against the "fantasy theory" as well. The second doubt is based on the high incidence of sexual abuse the theory requires in order to account for the high incidence of hysteria, whereas "such a distribution of perversion against children is very unlikely" (Freud 1986, p. 283). Here we must note that in 1896 Freud had already explicitly considered the objection that the theory requires a higher incidence of seduction than is plausible (1896a). At that time he accepted this implication of his theory in the posture of a resolute scientist with the courage of his findings. It is curious indeed if Freud is counting a point of implausibility as an argument against his theory, given that he soon envisioned his theory of infantile sexuality at the nadir of implausibility. In fact, Freud seems, throughout his career, to have relished his role as theorizer of the implausible (Ahbel, Rappe, 176-77)

Jean Laplanche argues that Freud's account of infantile sexuality in his "Three Essays" transformed Freud's entire theory of sexual development, from his earlier theory of seduction. As Jean Laplanche argues, "the object of psychoanalysis is the unconscious and the unconscious is above all, sexual" (Tessier, 174), that suggests, "from the recovery of traumatic childhood to that abandoned his earlier theory of seduction: "What was involved was not just a change of casual explanations, but a change in the object to be explained" (Fletcher and Francis 5) In his theory of seduction, Freud's cure was based in the recovery of childhood memories, "of supposedly real events" from the memory of not just that "biologized" sexuality from his earlier theory of seduction.

Almost a decade after the war, Paulhan's wife had died but Réage was anxious that she could no longer maintain Paulhan's love and interest. When Aury wrote the letters that became *O*,

Paulhan was working on his preface to de Sade's *Justine*. She told Deforges that it was during this time that she realized she could be a writer, but that the writing of *O* necessitated an accomplice, "it has to be for the one who loves her; nothing of this kind can be made unless the man involved is someone you love" (74). Aury claims to have never read de Sade when she wrote *O* in her series of letters to Paulhan and tells Deforges *O* was drawn from childhood fantasies (73). Written in fear of losing her lovers interest, *The Story of O* was written for an audience of one, as a form of seduction and a confessional of a private erotic life that became a relatable narrative of "secret" female desire on an international scale.

Whether Aury's claims are true, they reveal particular hegemonic distinctions regarding romantic love between men and women and performances of gender as an idealization of the self against, or with, as having or not having. Male domination is an expression of love to which O can disappear, be erased, and become a total object in love. The male torturer takes on the role of owner, master and keeper. One that Réage, like O, falls on the side of being the one to abandon even if it means total abandonment. When asked about O's passivity toward men, Réage considered that for O, taking initiative was too humiliating, and admits that she herself hates being humiliated although she knows it's absurd: "if one wants to be destroyed one has to accept the means that go with it" and she suspects that O wants to escape life because; "the world is too much for her" (83). Réage's attitude toward Paulhan honors those social scripts of gender in the binding strategy of total abandon, that it would seem as though she, like O, is forcing her lover to perform an image of masculinity that she lives up to, like her childhood fantasies of men as "knights in shining armor...those who claimed to be courageous and brave...those who kept their solemn vow" (81). Desiring to be totally humiliated like O, and hating to be humiliated like O, Réage speaks to historical conditions of gender and sexuality particular to a female subject

and author. Réage's total love for Paulhan, a man who she fears will cuckold or even abandon her, is opposed to O's consent to be prostituted, become one among many bodies that her lover will penetrate and abuse, and total lack of freedom to make any decisions of her own outside of the choice to love, consenting to and anticipating abuse. Paulhan says of the novel, "this type of thing is not, generally speaking, my cup of tea (XXIV) which could be understood rhetorically as a claim to save face, to distinguish himself from perversity, and appeal to the novel as a work of aesthetic and stylistic value, or even a means of disavowing his sexual interest in the subject matter from a narrative of maledom from a female perspective. He received these letters as an intellectual and Réage realized, that given a reason to be a writer in Paulhan, she could confess and reveal her sexual fantasies to him as a literary feat and act of seduction and admittance of her love as an act of selfless abandon.

### 3.3 Dying For It: Female Eroticism and Masculine Domination

*"She did not wish to die, but if torture was the price she had to pay to keep her lover's love, then she only hoped he was pleased that she had endured it"*  
*(Pauline Réage, "The Lovers of Roissy" Story of O, 19)*

*The Story of O* transposes elements of de Sade's sadism, and Masoch's masochism to create a psychic landscape of a woman in love where her lover Rene's masculinity is never called into question. The version of masculinity provided to her is the one that she accepts so long as she remains in love. Her submission is never gradual, it is always given, yet her consent is always being taken further: more elaborate and humiliating sexual abuse, torture that leaves permanent scars, and piercings that are woven with chains that become leashes. Over time, O's outward appearance changes, yet the first words of the novel, "Her lover one day takes O for a

walk,” refer back to her initial status: a woman in love is a woman owned. In Masoch’s *Venus in Furs*, Severin voices,

In matters of love there is no equality...If I were faced with the choice of dominating or being dominated, I would choose the latter. It would be far more satisfying to be the slave of a beautiful woman. I would hate her to be a petty, nagging, tyrant – where should I find a woman to dominate me in a serene and fully conscious manner? (163).

The masochistic maneuver of power, to efface that nagging woman who speaks of her own foreign desires, should be replaced by a serene woman who imposes his will as her own; a stand in for the needs of his superego and fill his anxiety with anticipation. O does not choose to be dominated, and her masochism is a simulation of female serenity and stoicism, fully conscious submission. Unlike Severin, O does not seek out a contract; she is in one as a woman in love. Unlike de Sade, she does not have any design to torture in any systematic way but she, like him is always seeking proof of love, and they are united under the lash and the chains.

Rene orders O who to get into a mysterious car that will take her to Roissy. The command is followed by immediate obedience: “She gets in” (4). Like Masoch’s hero Severin, Réage’s heroine O, is willfully submissive; and the nature of how she came to be submissive in this way is not entirely clear but indicated by her tendencies, behaviors and attitudes towards men and women. Rene who orders her around, and she obeys. However, it is clear that their relationship had never been quite like the way it became after she enters the taxi:

The taxi moves off slowly...She has taken off her gloves, thinking he wants to kiss her or that he wants her to caress him. But instead he says:

“Your bag’s in your way; let me have it.”

She gives it to him. He puts it out of her reach and adds:

“You also have on too many clothes. Unfasten your stockings and roll them down to above your knees. Here are some garters” (3)

Her consent is *a* given, and there is not a clear contract between her and her lover other than that his domination is assured in her love her love for him. The dynamic of romance with Réne is reduced to imperative and description alone, she listens to his orders and obeys his will silently. She observes, she listens, and the narrator details her emotional and physical experience of becoming a an object.

O’s enslavement details a journey of self-awareness, an increasingly fulfilling and exciting life that she keeps secret from her gendered role as a single, educated, Parisian fashion photographer. de Sade’s one-dimensional lens of his female characters as simply “good women” who either contemplate their fear of their male torturers and hold strong to their beliefs in virtue at the expense of certain death and prolonged torture that obsessively repeat throughout his novels, presents the female submissive as an image of social enslavement. De Sade’s hatred of religious morality and the law, his political philosophy of the libertine, images the female subject as the society that he hates, and utilizes the female body as a demonstration of that hatred.

The masochist’s demand that the lover perform a role as if they were not playing one, is Réage’s great use of the supposed masochism of women, O makes no demands yet she experiences the love contract of domination all the same. The question of who is actually in control is that it is both and neither. As long as masculinity remain in the paradigm of total subjectivity, and the role of domination between sexes, love for O is not to seek anything but love as domination, while Rene experiences proof of ownership and authority over her gestures, movements, clothing, and what happens to her body. O is never against the love object or the institution of male domination. Love is tied to her sexual voracity in the face of being ravaged

before, after and in between beatings. She enjoys the torture despite the real physical and emotional pain so that her love can be validated to René. The pornographic details are surprisingly frank and prudish. Réage shies away from vulgarity yet sexuality and violence are continually referred to and anticipated in her increasing helpless objectification and corporeal mortification. O wields love as a means to worship and objectify her body to the sadistic romantic within an institution of male-domination. If O, or Réage, chooses to leave the contractual-institutional bond of eroticized masculine domination, it is also because her love is changed or no longer exists.

When René passes O off to his brother and true romantic partner and step-brother Sir Stefan who is older and seemingly higher ranking than René, that he tells O have the same father. It is simply a means for O to be transferred to a new sexual conditioning and erotic enslavement that allows a new level of sexual degradation with a new person, and a way to show that René's abandonment is both painful, confusing, and inevitable. O justifies her allegiance to Sir Stefan, as it is justified to her by René, as an extension of her love to him, which, by the end of the third book, her love is given up and she is totally devoted to Sir Stefan (23).

As O's physical degradation increases, so does her anxiety over René's abandonments and his love: first René abandons O to Roissy, where she abandons herself to become a sexual object of domination. René then asks her to become a prostitute object of torture among the men of Roissy, who will be equal to him as her master. As she is made a vehicle for the exercise of male dominated sexual sadism, her commitment is increased as René increasingly abandons her. Ironically, O's imaginary love commitment to René increases as his relevance as her lover decreases. Her slavery narrative is disrupted in book II "Sir Stefan" when René gives O to Sir Stefan, his older stepbrother. Stefan anally rapes O in a highly charged scene, more intense and

degrading than any scene with René. A key component of O's slavery is prostitution among René's fraternal order called, "The Lovers of Roissy." While O's submission is fraught with inner turmoil, resistance, and physical pain, each episode of humiliation, bondage, and degradation acts as a step toward a spiritual growth whereby O becomes ennobled in her enslavement and finds her sole purpose in submission. As O becomes initiated into her life as a slave, O rationalizes her consent as a demonstration of love to René: because she loves him, she learns to accept and enjoy her total submission to him and the men of Roissy. The contract is rationalized and substantiated as an experiential declaration and proof of her love.

When O is first taken for initiation into the phallic cult...it has many characteristics of the feudal castle. It has a complete aristocratic society (devoted to organized aggression), a society which Mandiargues described as a circle of blessed and accursed creatures (Palliser "The Anti-Castle in the Works of Pauline Réage" 3)

Janus S Pallister argues that *O* is, "a violent inversion, indeed, a subversion of all the courtly love traditions" like her childhood fantasies of men as "knights in shining armor...those who claimed to be courageous and brave...those who kept their solemn vow" (81). Desiring to be totally humiliated like O, and hating to be humiliated like O, Réage speaks to historical conditions of gender and sexuality particular to a female subject and author. Réage's total love for Paulhan, a man who she fears will cuckold or even abandon her, is opposed to O's consent to be prostituted, become one among many bodies that her lover will penetrate and abuse, and total lack of freedom to make any decisions of her own outside of the choice to love, consenting to and anticipating abuse.

The day after O initiated into Roissy, René enters O's her chamber and interlaces his fingers into her collar. The narrator reveals René's contract:

He spoke. He told her that it was his intention that henceforth she should be shared by him and those of his choosing, and by those whom he did not know who were connected to the society of the chateau, shared as she had been the

previous evening. That she was dependent on him and on him alone, even though she might receive orders from persons other than himself, whether he was present or absent, for as a matter of principle, he was participating in whatever might be demanded of or inflicted on her; and that it was he who possessed and enjoyed her though those into whose hands she had been given, by the simple fact that he had given her to them. She must greet them and submit to them with the same respect with which she greeted him, as though they were so many reflections of him. Thus he would possess her as a god possess his creatures, whom he lays hold of in the guise of a monster or a bird, of an invisible spirit or state of ecstasy (Réage, *O* 31)

Seeking total dependence, Rene demands that she accept his ownership as any male in the order or any person he decides she must also submit to. She is possessed by Rene in many forms as Zeus in the form of a Swan that she must accept as his possession in any form that it may come. O allows herself to be possessed by the dissimulating and unifying power of Rene's authority that comes from his allegiance to a fraternal order. His image of himself as a god possessing his creatures shows how O imagines the lover wants to be so that she can approximate what she is able or supposed to do. Luckily, she is happy to be in a position that deprives her of responsibility or the ability to make decisions about she should do with her body and her life other than love and submit.

The spirit of animal sexuality transubstantiated as the masculine pre-platonic sensibility of the greeks, is resinscribed on O's ultimate form of the Owl, where she is finally ravaged by Sir Stefan and "the captain" and abandoned, given freedom to die. The thantos of the male sexual sadist is much like Beauvior's evaluation of de Sade, whose "merit lies not only in his having proclaimed aloud what everyone admits with shame to himself, but that he did not simply resign himself. He chose cruelty rather than indifference" (89). The scene continues:

He did not wish to leave her. The more he surrendered her, the more he would hold her dear. The fact that he gave her was to him a proof, and ought to be one of hers as well, that she belonged to him: one can only give what belongs to you. He gave her only to reclaim her immediately, to reclaim her enriched in his eyes, like some common object which had been used for some divine purpose and has thus

been consecrated. For a long time he had wanted to prostitute her, and he was delighted that the pleasure he was deriving was even greater than he had hoped, and that it bound him to her all the more, as it bound her to him all the more so because, through it, she would be more humiliated and ravaged (31).

At the emotional level, René's desire for O is one of possession and the maintenance of an asymmetrical form of power based in eroticized male sexuality. It is because O is humiliated and ravaged, that René is able to rationalize his desire to prostitute her in order to bind her to him and prove his ownership. Using religious language, René imagines her as both abject, and common, and in her use becomes a consecrated act.

Réage later agreed with Deforges' interpretation of her idea of the erotic that can only be experienced through the feminine body (92). O's objectification paradoxically frees her sexualized body parts in a way that is distinctly about female experience for Réage as erotic. These body parts to be covered in public are here displayed, highlighted, and freed only to the extent that her bodice restricts her. The attention to detail here serves multifaceted purposes in the author's desire to arouse and titillate. On a superficial level, the details of her attire provide an image of objectification, at the same time that the reader is asked to empathize with O's point of view, and we see the paradox of her objectification: her agency is enhanced as she comes to know René's desires and learns to delight in her enslavement. As Paulhan notes in the preface, "the only freedoms we appreciate are the ones which cast others into an equivalent state of servitude (XXII). O's enslavement seems to follow this logic through the attention to detail and dress combined in a triangulation of objectifying and objectified gazes. Her freedom is enhanced, as her humiliation and enslavement are made more specific, exacting, and providing depth to the characters. However, René seems to already embody freedom, but his freedom is limited to being the owner and master of O. Outside of this master bound to slave in the contract of love.

Furthermore the Roissy fraternity is hierarchical where René is one among many, and not among the highest.

Paulhan finds O's attention to René's frayed slippers to be a telling aspect of the author's gender, but it is O's attention to her own attire, positioning, observant keen awareness of herself and her surroundings, that is so elaborated in the narrative that resists the eroticism found in de Sade or Masoch specifically because the female body is the erotic object of experience. The technologies of her body and costume set the stage for O's transformation to an erotic object and an erotic subject ruled by submission. While O is being dressed, made into an object that can neither look at, or speak to the men of Roissy, she gains knowledge of René's desire and her total abandon to René functions as love. René's gaze upon Jeanne demonstrates his sexual desiring outside of their relationship that simultaneously serves as a demonstration of his love and ultimate possession of O. Once O is dressed, Jeanne stands her in front of a mirror and they stand side-by-side. The visual comparison of the women as objects is substantiated as René comes over to the women and asks that O watch him assault Jeanne's sex:

O saw. She saw his ironic but attentive face, his eyes carefully watching Jeanne's half-open mouth and her neck, which was thrown back, tightly circled by the leather collar. What pleasure was she giving him, yes she, that this girl or any other could not?

"That hadn't occurred to you?" he added.

No, that had not occurred to her. She had collapsed against the wall, between the two doors, her arms hanging limp (33)

The details the author of O so delights in noticing serve a demonstrative function at the same time that they serve as a source of arousal. Once O has been dressed the same as Jeanne, René demonstrates how this uniform allows immediate access for the members of Roissy. In so

doing, O becomes symbolically interchangeable with the any woman in the chateau as a vessel of pleasure among the fraternity. Their love however is what make O his. René demonstrates his lust for, and command over Jeanne, to show O that he can use other women as he does to her within with order. Once O realizes that René can derive the same sexual pleasure from Jeanne as he can from O, her body becomes an objectified as a mechanism of male pleasure in general, while her identity and subjectivity attach more fully to the status of the slave as prostitute and lover.

Her differentiation from Jeanne is only determined by the fact that she *belongs* to René. Once O's arms go limp, René comes to O and reassures her, "calling her his love and his life" and O is comforted. Despite this, O has already become aware that her body's prostitution among the men of Roissy serves as proof of René ownership. In the preceding passage, the reader is given an account of René's and Roissy's logic of sexual exploitation and the economy of love. The division of sexual labor at Roissy is two-fold: the men orchestrate prostitution as a form of exploitation while ownership determines economies of pleasure and desire. For the men of Roissy, mental and physical labor proves their ownership through sexual and emotional domination in willful submission.

For Réage, these details are clearly libidinal. The reader must know how O will be seen once she is fitted in these clothes, but more importantly, how she sees her female counterparts in them for the establishment of the erotic quality of the fantasy. The scene that Paulhan refers to is the first time O is dressed in her Roissy uniform or that she feels as her "armor" (32). In this scene, Jeanne, who O notes is being closely watched by René, dresses O. Ironically, O's attention to details serve a greater purpose, to elicit arousal by creating an image of sensual

objectification of both O and Jeanne, and in so doing, to provide the reader with O's experience of becoming an object of desire

The observations of details then, are inherently feminine perhaps, because only a female could feel objectified in the particular way that she is, because of the body parts that the armor allow to be free; specifically her sex organs, her breasts, and her backside. Réage later agreed with Deforges interpretation of her idea of the erotic that can only be experience through the feminine body (92). O's objectification paradoxically frees her sexualized body parts in a way that is distinctly about female experience for Réage as erotic. These body parts to be covered in public are here displayed, highlighted, and freed only to the extent that her bodice restricts her. The attention to detail here serves multifaceted purposes in the author's desire to arouse and titillate. On a superficial level, the details of her attire provide an image of objectification, at the same time that the reader is asked to empathize with O's point of view, and we see the paradox of her objectification: her agency is enhanced as she comes to know René's desires and learns to delight in her enslavement. As Paulhan notes in the preface, "the only freedoms we appreciate are the ones which cast others into an equivalent state of servitude (XXII). O's enslavement seem to follow this logic through the attention to detail and dress combined in a triangulation of objectifying and objectified gazes. Her freedom is enhanced, as her humiliation and enslavement are made more specific, exacting, and providing depth to the characters. However, Réne seems to already embody freedom, but his freedom is limited to being the owner and master of O. Outside of this master bound to slave in the contract of love. Furthermore the Roissy fraternity is hierarchical where is Réne is one among many, and not among the highest.

Her submission in love to the contract of sexual slavery and torture correlates with the technologies of discipline where body to an emotional saturation of unquestionable excessive

sexuality. She is given a uniform that isolates and enhances her sexual organs, using a tight bodice and makeup to accentuate her body as a multitudinous platform of erotic gazes localized across her body as each with a particular meaning that is above all defined by their availability to the masters. Her living arrangements place her in a dungeon dormitory where she is shackled naked and laid out on a single bed of fur where a lower class of brutish guard whips, and sometimes rapes her nightly. Her behavior is thoroughly monitored and met with immediate punishments upon infraction. She is deprived of the ability to speak or look at the faces of her Roissy masters and is expected to present her orifices at any given moment they choose to use her. As her physical degradation increases, so does her anxiety over René's abandonments and his love: first René abandons *O* to Roissy, where she abandons herself to become a sexual object of domination. René then asks her to become a prostitute object of torture among the men of Roissy, who will be equal to him as her master. As she is made a vehicle for the exercise of male dominated sexual sadism, her commitment is increased as René increasingly abandons her. Ironically, *O*'s imaginary love commitment to René increases as his relevance as her lover decreases. Her slavery narrative is disrupted in book II "Sir Stefan" when René gives *O* to Sir Stefan, his older stepbrother. Stefan anally rapes *O* in a highly charged scene, more intense and degrading than any scene with René. A useful question would be to ask had she not already committed to this ideal of male domination prior to consenting to be René's slave?

Using a another route to uncover Aury's feelings about Paulhan and the novel's success, Deforges asks Aury if its publication undermined her intentions for writing the story: did she secretly hope that Paulhan would be so impressed that he publish it? Again, Aury denies any narrative to suggest that her intentions were anything other than pure love for Paulhan. Love, according to Aury, does require reciprocity: it can be one sided, as long as one person give

themselves fully and freely (Deforges 53-4). She believes that to care enough about something involves a price that one must accept; that to love is to submit to the possibility of annihilation. Based in her childhood fantasies, drawn from fairy tales, and the male knight, sworn to love and protect unto death, Réage says that her ideals of men were betrayed as she learned that men could never live up to her image of them (81). Insisting that the novel was not meant for material gain other than Paulhan's commitment to her, Aury's love is still an investment in cultural capital and it reveals a sadomasochistic tenor to romantic ideals of gendered desire and heterosexual romance.

## CHAPTER 4. CULTURAL AESTHETICS OF FEMALE SEXUAL SADISM

*O repeated "I love you" with such delight that her lips hardly dared brush the tip of his sex, which was still protected by its sheath of soft flesh. The three men, who were smoking, commented on her gestures, on the movement of her mouth closed and locked on the sex she had seized, as it worked its way up and down, on the way tears streamed down her ravaged face each time the swollen member struck the back of her throat and made her gag, depressing her tongue and causing her to feel nauseous...O felt that her mouth was beautiful, since her lover condescended to thrust himself into it, since, finally, he deigned to discharge it. She received it as a god is received, she heard him cry out, heard the others laugh, and when she received it she fell, her face against the floor*  
*(Pauline Reage, "The Lovers of Roissy" Story of O, 19).*

### 4.1 Pornographic Details: The Female Fantasy of Male Domination

Like de Sade's sadism and Masoch's masochism, Reage's perversion is a distinct stylization of eroticized violence. The story of a woman's O journey from lover to slave details recurring moments of ecstatic release during whippings and in her sexual domination from anonymous men. It is important that O is a willful slave who can leave at any time. Réage's fantasy articulates convergences among distinct themes in Masoch and de Sade's fantasies, namely the presence and absence of consent, but importantly, and that a woman authors the fantasy. Rene's continuing commitment to O is dependent on her total submission. In her fantasy of *O*, the master presents the female slave with a contract that proves her love and proves his ownership. Ownership equals commitment, while submission equals love in the gendered power dynamic of the contract. It is also important that O's sexual enslavement is the desire of the Roissy lovers including her lover Rene. In Réage's fantasy, the desire of the man can only be her desire when she is totally stripped of agency. After she is left at Roissy, she presented with

increasingly humiliating sexual abuses to her body that she increasingly submits to. O's body is made into an object of pure discipline, whose expression is saturated with excessive sexuality: the site of the erotic. She is given a uniform that isolates and enhances her lips, genitals, and breasts in a tight bodice with rouge applied to her nipples and labia signifying their lusty penetrability; erotic offerings to the masters. Her living arrangements place her in a dungeon dormitory where she is shackled naked and laid out on a single bed of fur where brutish valets whips, and rapes her nightly when the masters can't be bothered. Her behavior is thoroughly monitored and met with immediate punishments upon infraction. She is deprived of the ability to speak or look at the faces of her Roissy masters and is expected to present her orifices at any given moment they choose to use her. As her physical degradation increases, so does her anxiety over René's abandonments and his love: first René abandons O to Roissy, where she abandons herself to become a sexual object of domination. René then asks her to become a prostitute object of torture among the men of Roissy, who will be equal to him as her master. As she is made a vehicle for the exercise of male dominated sexual sadism, her commitment is increased as René increasingly abandons her. Ironically, O's imaginary love commitment to René increases as his relevance as her lover decreases. Her slavery narrative is disrupted in book II "Sir Stefan" when René gives O to Sir Stefan, his older stepbrother. Stefan anally rapes O in a highly charged scene, more intense and degrading than any scene with René. A useful question would be to ask had she not already committed to this ideal of male domination prior to consenting to be René's slave? *The Story of O* is infused with a spirit of love that mirrors and perverts Aury's childhood fantasy of masculinity as a metaphor of the knight in shining amour.

For Lacan, there is something fetishistic about the *object a*, "if 'normal' sexual activity is directed toward a 'total person,' a partner who is desired for 'him- or her- self,' not for any

particular attribute he or she may embody” but as Lacan directs us to understand, “is pursued because her or she has something...the object that elicits love from us is not necessarily the same object that elicits desire or that can bring us *jouissance*” (Fink 39). In psychoanalysis, perversion is an element of all human desire and should not be understood as a stigmatization, but a normative clinical structure as neurosis and psychosis represent overarching psychic structures. In this scene, *O*’s anxiety toward the phallus that she “dared” to brush with her lips is external and internal where the humiliation she faces as she bring her lover to orgasm is also a real threat of being made to gag, and at the moment of *jouissance* reaching a point of annihilation. The ideal that love brings her delight while the phallus makes her gag collapses the internal versus external distinction. While the phallus is an object of violence and power, it is also the way that *O* can ensure love. Michelson argues, even though she can leave at any time, she forfeits love: “She is thus confronted constantly by a fear of loss...Here is another classic female anxiety, that love for a man will subsume self identity, and the loss of love will leave her without reason to be” (“Apology for Pornography 23). The scene just cited moves quickly from the imperative, “I love you” to falling face to the floor is sadomasochistic because of the pornographic descriptive language of “his sex,” with its protective “soft sheath.” Bringing him to orgasm involves important themes that differentiate Réage’s language of sexuality and violence. Here, the erotic object that *O* claims is the ejaculatory proof of her lover Rene’s orgasm that she takes as a god, that he “deigned” to discharge. In the erotic act of sexual submission, *O*’s humiliation is not in a loss of femininity, but a loss of the secret that she keeps from men, that the phallus also makes her gag, not out of disgust, but because of its form and function, to thrust into her mouth to achieve orgasm.

For O, jouissance is not in the male ejaculation itself, but the process of humiliation that she undergoes over the eyes of the other men, sharing her secret, her humiliation. Underlined by their smoking and talking. The men make comments for the purpose of actualizing O's body as a site of sexualized humor, as her tears appear to them as proof of her humiliation as a form of pleasure, while her tears signify her physical reaction to the real excitation happening to her body. The moment of ejaculation for them is humorous. While it can be perceived as the uncomfortable moment where the male partner loses control, it is also the moment where his ejaculate is imagined as O's fall that may also be the humor for the fraternal order. Female masochistic fantasy should be understood as project of construction and an exploration of the boundaries of the construction. Masochism traces the gap between the female subject and the construct of women with traditional femininity; the masochistic contract is never one that is created by the female subject: it is always a given.

*The Story of O* is infused with a spirit of love that mirrors and perverts Aury's childhood fantasy of masculinity allegorized by the knight in shining amour. In her fantasy of *O*, the master presents the female slave with a contract that proves her love and proves his ownership. Rene's commitment to O is dependent on her total submission. O is allowed to leave at any time. Ownership equals commitment, while slavery equals love in the gendered power dynamic of the contract. Since the contract implies complete abandon, with the single stipulation that she can leave at any time, presented with increasingly humiliating sexual abuses to her body that she increasingly submits to while at Roissy.

Réage incorporates her persisting childhood fantasies into a Sadean script from the point of view of de Sade's Juliette and Justine. The subject of male domination as erotica and sexual fantasy between these two authors belies crucial narrative distinctions: roles of consent, sexual

arousal and orgasm, and a higher sense of self-value and comfort in slavery. Réage also incorporates fetish objects that resemble de Sade including the chateau, a secret fraternal order, chains, whips, chambers, and public displays of humiliation. Importantly, the role of male authority, or the law, follows what Deleuze calls the teleological logic in the Sadean aesthetic where authority alone rationalizes baseless torture, enslavement, and humiliation. While de Sade's male torturers' appeal to the logic of the law as a means to exert it in a purely demonstrative performance, love is the higher rule that necessitates torture and freedom in slavery. While Justine and Juliette are a projections of the morality of the status quo, O projects an image of the male torturer as her lover where love rationalizes a leads to her freedom in slavery. Is O's freedom only gained by being stripped of all responsibility for her self or well being to a man worth of her trust because he desires to own her? Is the strategy of abandonment a strategy of control that allows the submissive female to not ask to be owned since it is her greatest wish? Is it humiliating or impossible to request that a man's love as the desire to own and bind her to him as his slave?

Réage's attitude toward Paulhan honors gender norms, of love and masculinity as a position of bondage and a giving up, or loss of the self, embodied in the erotic object of the woman. This conflict between arousal and the humiliation and fear evoked by power and authority operates as a formation of eroticized masculinity. The experience of the sublime as overwhelming beauty that is also painful, and the French notion of *jouissance* as a pleasure that is too much, speaks to the convergence of eroticism and violence in a sadism and masochism. By looking at sadism and masochism as artistic, philosophical, psychoanalytic, and cultural formations, the central frame implies that I am seeking to know how female sexual sadism exists

through a becoming that is inextricably linked but also a literary style and aims to transgress male sexual sadism and masochism.

O consents to be enslaved to her lover Rene in a silent contract. By obeying his command, she enacts the first contractual and conceptual step into slavery. Interestingly, the movement from the “real” everyday relationship between O and her lover in the park moves fluidly from Paris to the chateau. While Rene’s orders in the car ride seem new to O, she barely hesitates to obey. Upon entrance to Roissy, O’s physical and emotional torture will be rapidly intensified, but she is already psychically under Rene’s total control. This fantasy then, suggests that the desire for submission and ideal forms of sexual domination from the other can be done without a contract, like Masoch’s or using demonstrative language like de Sade. The willful submission of O is never explained outside her love and devotion to Rene. The difference between the contract of love in their roles in everyday Parisian society to secret ritual beatings and sexual humiliations at Roissy is proof of love is necessarily about male domination and female submission; one where the body and psychic economy of the female is acted upon and undergoes torture for the validation of the sadistic male ego.

#### 4.2 Reage’s Jouissance: A Cultural Formation of Female-Authored Sadism

*There is in man—and I use this term in the broadest sense—such a seeming need to make others suffer that they require nothing more than the opportunity to put their deep-seated desires into reality”*  
*(Régine Déforges, Confessions of O: Conversations with Pauline Réage, 132).*

When *O* was published idea like that novel details, “a masculine liberation of the sexual libido” that celebrates the way that women are objectified in pornographic and commercial representation for male possession and enjoyment. Yet *O*’s annihilation and her experiences of jouissance as her journey into degradation intensifies also make an argument about the nature of

love and romance in heterosexual eroticism. By the end her total transformation into a non-human erotic (as she dons and OWL mask and is sacrificed to the “captain” shows how the myth of cruelty as love is the greatest deception of masculine authority, that it is above reproach even in its need and ability to be castrated. Her capacity to bear the brutal cost of masculine power over her sexuality is made rewarding in the comfort of not being and not seeming: a description of a woman. Yet O is also rewarded with endless orgasms, sexual spiritual awakening, and present with herself. *O* deceptively works through female anxieties regarding the loss of love and the brutalization of men in economies of female exchange and institutions of sexual control.

Jouissance, a key component of Kristeva’s theory of the abject, describes how becoming abject implies a in the collapse of the I and the abject, where meaning collapses. For Lacan, who gave the term its cultural significance, jouissance is “contrary to happiness, to the equilibrium, the harmony, the satisfaction one calls happiness...what is difficult about jouissance is that while desire is connected to speech, and to signifiers, jouissance, on the contrary is silence” (Jacques-Alan Miller, “A and a in Clinical Structures” 5). The essence of jouissance for Lacan and Kristeva is in the unknown meaning beyond the pleasure principle, “that presents itself as pain...because it brings no pleasure, but discontrol, discontent, malaise” (Miller, 5). The prophets and mystics of the old testament who perform depraved acts, defy taboos, and disrupt the social order under in the name of God become abject in a state of jouissance that Kristeva describes as masochistic: “One may stress the masochistic economy of that jouissance only if one points out at once that the Christian mystic far from using it to the benefit of a symbolic and institutional power, displaces it indefinitely within a discourse where the subject is reabsorbed into communication with the Other and with others. A source of evil is mingled with sin, and

abjection becomes the requisite for a reconciliation, in the mind, between the flesh and the law” (127-8).

O’s death at the end of the novel characterizes Krisetva’s definition of the abject: that which is not “I.” What is the mechanism of sexual aims that allows O to transcend and thereby annihilate her “self” into an entirely other object; an costumed owl a super and sub human woman. When O is given her mask, she undergoes a transformation in the last scene when she dons the OWL mask. What Deleuze calls, a force of “becoming;” yet as she moves toward annihilation, her sense of saintliness, holiness, and divinity becoming animal-object in her OWL mask attire. Her transformation into the OWL reflects the ideology of animalistic sexuality and human sexuality. Her transformation into the OWL that brings her to the final sex scene with the “Captain” the abstract image of authority and power, who finalizes her initiation into a total object and transformed into an idol of admiration, fear, and ultimate otherness. After she is left alone in the garden where her final rape occurs, she is allowed to be free or to take her own life, being finally abandoned by Sir Stefan.

In her submission to masculine institutional power, O’s subjectivity is woven between the narrator, who is telling the story through an occasional vague memory of two possible retellings of the first book, “The Lover of Roissy,” Réage, and by proxy, Aury, whose interviews are both intimate, frank, and revealing, and trenchantly told in her phenomenological view of female subjectivity, sexuality, eroticism, and love as a binding agent among all individuals that engage in romantic heterosexual love. Because O is the first novel of modern, post-Masoch, Freud, a novel contemporary of Bataille and Lacan, yet coming to intensity in cultural discourse would be Deleuze (*Coldness and Cruelty*), another event in the conversation of sadomasochism, and Foucault, that represent the complimentary and confrontational vision of male and female

sexuality. I argue, that in this unique instance, the author of the novel in a sexed and gendered presentation is curial to its importance as a cultural event. (Especially in the fields of gender and sexuality studies, psychoanalytic theory, and visual culture. Because it is written by a female identified author in a female identified fantasy of male power and sexual domination as narrator subject and female object; Aury's heroine, O). I want to argue is an anitgeneological mode, and more rhizomatic (Literary Theory an Anthology Blackwell "A Thousand Plateaus, 383) As an event, I argue that Aury even expropriates the intensity and insidiousness of masculine sadomasochism. As a defining moment in the genre of literary pornography and further deconstructed in lens of *Coldness and Cruelty*, it is, as "a sign or indication of its genesis, and the expression of the productive potential of the forces from which it arose...becoming more than an event, with the event representing just a momentary productive intensity" (9).

Although *O* is largely underwritten in the larger scene of literary analysis and cultural studies, the novel is integral to the marginal study of the Samois and leatherdyke group that was largely represented by sex positive feminists, leading the way to queer theory under the heavy influence of Foucault's *History of Sexuality* on feminist theory, and studies of literary pornography. In cultural theory, fields like "pornography studies" and "BDSM Studies" ask how sadomasochism exists as social formation whose methods rarely integrate literary analysis and the attendant psychoanalytic implications of the literary style that define how desire exists in particular for gendered subjects.

In *O*, the fantasy is masochistic in its elaboration, and as the delusion of love – a kind of risk taking behavior (Aury's idea, "Conversations"). For Bataille, taboo explores the unknown and as a result, our fears. In this way, pornography and pleasure are always disrupted by the, chaotic, yet apparently *built into* the female fantasy of male domination, is the loss of her love

object in abandonment, despite submitting her entire body and life to love with Rene. She seems indifferent to real events in her life, having very little opinions or feelings about emotional strain, or work relationships with the exception of her lover. I suspect it's somewhat embarrassing to be found out to have such a "masochistic" form of love toward a much more indifferent, yet powerful man and for the entire world to know, especially with the expectation that all women should desire and act as if they are liberated.

Conventional views of women that embody a normative female ideal (of the white, middle class, young) are less troubled in pornography and mainstream visual representation by their *inner experience*, than the danger that lurks on the outside in the form of male sexual domination, the imaginary relationship that women form with men as external threat and internal sexual fulfillment. The threat of violence as a form of love courts a key formation of female sexuality that fantasizes a sadean script under the guise of submission. After O's initiation into Roissy, she and Rene return to Paris where she continues work. "What surprised them most was how changed she was...she stood and walked straighter, her eyes were clearer, but what was especially striking was her perfection when she was in repose, and how measured her gestures were" (60). These signifiers of O's difference from her self, are changes that are not measurable, but they are the markers of ideal beauty and appearance. Previously, O dressed in, "the way girls do whose work resembles that of men" (60). O is never ashamed by her enslavement when she returns to her city life in Paris where she works as a fashion photographer. In fact she feels, "nature of the love contract. Choosing love, i.e. thanatos, O abandons the masculinist renunciation of nature and jouissance for higher principles and higher more grand goals. In narratives mainstream narratives of erotic masculinity, there is a clear continuum between the murderous killer and the immature, self-centered, or unavailable love interest; and the female

that the female restores normativity in her death or in her redemption in the arms of a male. She kills the monster and finds “true love.” She ensures the reproduction of the social order on the side of the moral and the good. She is not troubled, the world outside is troubled and she is typically the beacon of a healthy resolution.

How is being in trouble, and being a troubled person a distinction that can be made about the female protagonist? It usually means going outside of conventional cinema to see a woman who IS troubled: the female subject who is aberrant, perverse or suffering from crippling mental stress. She is diametrically opposed to the final girl and the single lady looking for love in all the wrong places. The troubled woman is a social product: she is perverse and disruptive in her loud, excited, invasive, or totally withdrawn presence. Her troubles blur the lines of trouble coming from the inside and out. Troubled female protagonists often elaborate a fulcrum point to view how internalized conflicts mirror the social. *O*'s loss of self-possession is a choice; she chooses self-annihilation for love and endless jouissance. She is diametrically opposed to the damsel in distress or the woman seeking to fill her needs for love in all the wrong places: *O* is an anti-heroine of the romance genre, and her centrality to the narrative is unique to the genre. In all cases, perverse women are a social product: disruptive in her speech and gesture, style, or even withdrawn presence. Troubled female protagonists often elaborate a fulcrum point to view how internalized conflicts mirror the social. Female sexual sadists blur the lines of trouble coming from the inside and out.

The truth that I must admit as hoping to put forward in this dissertation, the soul of my project, is that women's equality as based in sameness and ability to work through and with male power, is a project of division for the female subject that perpetuates and often increases masculine domination. As a sameness of power, i.e. the glass ceiling, can only go so far if we do

not acknowledge woman's difference in experience from men, and in their intimacy with an important and undertheorized facet of masculine authority and power. Like BDSM studies and 70's sadomasochism, manipulating and exploring power in role play and the aim toward the "loss of self" in the S/M scene, productive discourse is gained in studying and analyzing its critique of phallic power and female sexual submission, and boundaries of gender, (self, and other). However, taboo and obscene art are not necessarily subversive or antagonistic to the existing formation of masochism and self-annihilating capacity of modern power. Sulieman's writing, *Subversive Intent, Gender Politics and the Avante-Garde*, argues:

What does appear to me certain is that there will be no genuine renewal, either in a theory of the avant-garde, or in its practices, as long as every drama, whether textual or sexual, continues to be envisaged—as in Bataille's pornography and in Harold Bloom's theory of poetry—in terms of confrontation between an all-powerful father and a traumatized son, a confrontation staged across and over the body of the mother" (87)

In attempting to answer how female sadism as an erotics of female sexual subjectivity in the novel of *O* and the history of erotized violence in masculine narratives across disciplines, and ethics of power is an ethics of the other and the dream that domination and a loss of self become metaphors of love and intimacy between genders. We must also not be under that assumption that femininity represents the ideal good or that the characteristics of femininity that must be culturally reconfigured must remain attached to the concept of femininity itself, if the appearance of gender and sexuality shift with changes in politics. What I hoped to show in my analysis of *O*, is that women's silence is also an act of secrecy and allegiance to phallic dominion as the only inevitable form of love and sexual satisfaction. By choosing love, *O* chooses dehumanization and death. This form of sexual desire is neither an affirmation of female masochism nor an ideal form of female sexuality or power; it is a cultural reality and historical fact of female sexuality that women vocalize a desire for domination. If we cannot overcome our prudish and narcissistic

fears of female negativity, female aggression, and female sexual deviance.. As a complete “giving up” of the self, the female sadist manifests a lover whose entire fraternal authority and allegiance is formed for the purpose of taking away women’s autonomy, and giving them a total structure that she can become. To become nothing for *O*, is to be made into an alienated erotic object that is no longer human, right before Sir Stefan abandons *O* and gives her permission to commit suicide. If the love contract in *O* is a master / slave scenario, the language of violence is used to fulfill a wish for total abandon(ment) and loss of identity not only in gesture, speech, and feeling, but in the loss of self that comes from losing the attention of her lover that defines her very being.

A cruel psychic double bind that speaks to the hushed voices of rape victims, sexual harassment incidents, and social exchanges that constitutes women as childlike, incapable, and suspicious. Heteroerotic bonds elaborate on what we understand of the novel’s sadomasochistic themes that in turn represent the underlying impulse of classic pornography: “the erect phallus and the carnal woman” (Michelson 22). These themes define sadism and masochism throughout history that saturates male and female heterosexual relationships forged with cruelty, betrayal, abandonment, trafficking alongside the idea that #notallmen are like that harkening back to the knight in shining armor, that Réage herself admits to leading her to believe that men would not treat her poorly. The male as heroic, brave, and good whose chaste idealization of his female paragon whose and sexual purity, innocence, and compliance is their ticket to true love, is missed with the likes of Lucretia whose rape founded Rome, a historical city of western patriarchal civilization.

Erotica is a domain of knowledge in canonical western literature and literary studies that is rarely a focus of essential knowledge. The naked female body is given as a particularized

whole: a contradictory and impossible state of being. The paradoxical nature of the woman as image is that as the locus of sexual arousal, she seems to be a thing that represents a subjective whole. However much a woman's desire or displacement of her role as eroticized object, of the eroticized woman is represented as literature, myth, and art. The eroticized female body is focused on as a partial object, with special attention and meaning given to the woman's, mouth, eyes, and breasts, and in pornography, her sexual organs and their penetration. The sexualized female body is at once in need of protection, and in threat of male brutalization, while the and the loss of male patronage, are also the qualities that enable but never ensure her to be an object of a man's desire and sense of being loved, value being determined by her sexuality. This is an important aspect of cultural and social trauma that inflects female sadomasochism that particularizes how women's desirability is actualized by her physical approximation of gendered sexuality (Foucault, Simone de Beauvoir). In erotica, and literary pornography, these the particularized whole of a woman's body as the locus of sexual arousal as cut up features that all bear on her significance as a sexual object, can only be worked out in narrative.

#### 4.3 Female Sadism in Other Forms

What does Réage's aesthetics of female sexual sadism have to do with the female sexual sadism depicted by the images of Abu Ghraib? Would Valerie Solanis enjoy the *Story of O*? I would venture no. There are two clear forms of female identified sexual sadism. On the one hand, we have marginal radicalized feminist figures that enjoy domination as pain and cruelty. It is a well-known paradox that there is an erotic element to violence that shared with the paradox of pleasure and pain and vice versa. Valerie Solanis' misandry was so polarized against masculine domination that even the notion of male superiority and male ownership over female autonomy in her SCUM manifesto lead her to call for an eradication of men and masculinity altogether.

On the one hand, these women, identified as female sexual sadists, replicate masculine forms of domination that indulge in sado-libertine tropes like cavalier and decadent disregard for the other, (based in privileged white European masculinity<sup>5</sup>) eroticized violence, and delighting in prolonged mortification of the victim's body. To suppose that, "women are just as brutal as men" is on the one hand, seen as a feminist argument against gender difference that is obviously an essentialist drama that is commonly played out when women's sexuality is questioned in media and politics, "where one cannot disentangle contingency from essence" that doesn't always happen with depictions of masculinity and cruelty.<sup>6</sup> Further acts of categorical marginalization can be harkened back to the name of sadism and masochism in science and medicine so that these women's voices, these transgressive representations of female sexual violence can be written off and repressed labeling them, deranged women perverse women.

Camille Paglia, for example, infamous for her media frenzied absolutist statements about gender and eroticized male sexuality as raw power, in the 80's like de Sade, insists that men are driven by lust and violence, only curbed by social control and the risk of punishment. Her sexual sadism is very much allied with the libertine philosophy that nature is inherently degraded and cruel as is humanity and vice versa. I have often wondered how this flavor of fiery feminist, convinced that masculine domination was right and good and that women simply had to wield their power "i.e. do extra work" in ways beneficial and gender and his libertine characters issued fourth on their victims. David Cronenberg's femme fatale in *Videodrome* "character"<sup>7</sup> Her

---

<sup>5</sup> This takes on many forms, but the inherent aspect of this larger mythological nature of masculinity shows a distinct shift towards male sexual perversity as eroticized violence against women and nature that had never been so obtuse and "in your face." These extravagant displays of the male martyr including even Napoleon whose status as cultural martyr still resonates today.

<sup>6</sup> Maggie Nelson is talking specifically about female sexual sadism as a conversation about love and cruelty and understanding women in the context of undeniable "masculine" violence (70)

<sup>7</sup> Performed by Deborah Harry of "Blondie"

proselytizing is reminiscent of the tedious lectures given in Sade's tales that function as the most laborious and equally violent form of torture.

The female sexual sadist of erotic literature presents a canon of authors speaking to each other, alluding back to Réage and her literary themes that present a deceptive vision of female sexuality. Virginie Despentes' *Baise Moi* is arguably sexual sadism disguised as masochism, in the way that Paulhan suggests of de Sade. Pauline Réage's sexual fantasy on the other hand looks like female masochism, taking pleasure in pain, despite the fact that the fantasy is predicated on the protagonist's inability to say yes or no to her torture. She is simply in love with a man who believes that belonging to a secret society of male sexual sadists that enjoy treating women as slaves. It sounds funny, but the way that the story goes for *O* is quite serious. In fact, there is very little humor in Réage's literature. It is often regarded as mystical, serious, and stylistically on the level of sacred texts. Despentes, no doubt would agree with the feminist critics that accused *O* of pandering to male fantasies, while Paglia might venerate *O* for embodying the most appropriate embodiment of femininity. What makes *O* like these other, more overt embodiments of female sexual sadism, and how does Deleuze's theory influence how we can interpret the narrative aims?

Unlike Virginie Despentes' *Baise Moi*, men respond to *O* with a level of intellectual perplexity and curiosity that suggests that the novel acts as a mirror to masculine perversity as a form of socialized consensus regarding men's behavior. For Lacan, "in perversion, the subject the subject struggles to bring the law into being—in a word, to make the other exist...and lies at the very core of sexuality...to seek pleasure for its own sake in forms other than those required for the reproduction of the species" (Fink, "Perversion" 38). Joissance, a key component of Kristeva's theory of the abject, describes how becoming abject implies a collapse of the I, and

the abject, where meaning collapses. The prophets and mystics of the old testament who perform depraved acts, defy taboos, and disrupt the social order under in the name of God become abject in a state of jouissance that Kristeva describes as masochistic: She says, “One may stress the masochistic economy of that jouissance only if one points out at once that the Christian mystic far from using it to the benefit of a symbolic and institutional power, displaces it indefinitely within a discourse where the subject is reabsorbed into communication with the Other and with others. A source of evil is mingled with sin, and abjection becomes the requisite for a reconciliation, in the mind, between the flesh and the law” (127-8). Kristeva characterizes sin is a sign of difference and abjection from Christ. The confession, as a form of debt, cleanses and saves the sinner from the abject, that which is not I.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

To feel perverse in the eyes of others is a great shame that we experience when we corroborate in untrue stories about our sexual identity. When we allow our experiential and sexual knowledge to be a singular rather than continuously transformative process, we deny ourselves the opportunity to transform, and as Foucault stressed, *become other*. When we see ourselves as desiring subjects without shame, we are better able to consider the subject position of another without reactive or repressive impulses. Remaining unable to see ourselves as transformative subjects we remain in a process of denial. The less we are able to historicize ourselves as partial, different, and radically changing at different times in different ways, are live out pre-given narratives that repress our real lived experiences, and ability to create. When we fantasize our omnipotence intensely with adherence to repressive and phallic language, our authority leveraged by a radical denial of the other, and ultimately the self. Our cultural fantasies of potency and impotence are produced in and through our sexual subjectivity, and the association of masculinity with impotence that leads to authoritarian states, curtails our ability to create a self without being first and foremost unified subjects.

Female sadism is an aesthetic form of female sexual subjectivity. As a social construction, the name points to the 'nature' of female masochism and male sadism as the normative positions of masculinity and femininity. Also, female sadism resists reinforcing the mistaken idea that "masochism" is simply powerless, passive or submissive. It is telling, how far masochism as a concept has gone from the work from which it originated, *Venus and Furs* by Sacher Von Masoch, to the aforementioned common understanding. In fact, the hero *Severin*, despite being the "victim" of his torturer, is the author of the entire script and scenario, where his mistress is actually pretending to be and so something that she is unfamiliar with. Female sexual

sadism is also meant to create ambivalence toward to cultural manifestations of gender and sexuality that speak little to the ways that literature is used and theorized over time to understand sexual deviance of women and their artistic representations of eroticized violence. Conventional signifiers of masculine authority and sexual dominance and feminine passivity are often brought down to the nature of human aggression and competition.

Female sexual sadism also brings to bear the nature of male sadism and female submission in representation. Artistic forms of experimental knowledge are also erotic configurations of power; best understood as an *eros* directed towards appearance and gender in the experience of sexualized male domination. Representations of ambivalent and unmotivated female sadism and masochism are mostly limited to the avant-garde, where a *mise-en-scene*, and objective appearance of a woman determine the erotic quality or ease of arousal. Where pleasure and violence emerge simultaneously in artistic representations, it is as necessary to see how they are analyzed in aesthetic form in equal proportion to artistic style, quality is of less normative value. Obscene arts being largely ignored in the study of gender and power, where power is often viewed in a negative light, and due to their marginal and “subjective” relevance. The forbidden knowledges of eroticism and pleasure in violence, what Élisabeth Roudinesco calls *our dark side*, can reveal a method of inquiry; one that examines literature and representation that attempts to subvert our complicity and shame in sexuality as given in the origin story of cultural Christianity and patriarchal masculinity: Eve’s sexualized betrayal of both God and Adam, in being seduced toward the carnal fruit of knowledge.

As products of culture, language, speech acts, gesture, violence and representation, a feminine *eros* of women’s aesthetic desiring in which the imperative form of masculine domination functions at the point of arousal in pornographic description. Domination centers

erotic violence as a product of asymmetrical forms of power and sexuality. The extent to which avant-garde art is deemed, “ungrounded in meaning,” (Bourdieu 44) and shows the extent to which relationships of gender are mystified by a refusal to be open to the possibility of the other, beyond the threat of the decentered and unified subject divide.

Because the it is the way that we use language to understand ourselves and others, the analysis of female sexual sadism as a mainstream eros of female eroticism is needed to overcome the paradigm of sameness and difference that pervades our conversations about woman’s role, woman’s value, and woman’s desires and needs. In bringing an *eros* of female subjectivity in gender and cultural studies is to provide a space of higher knowledge for the very wielding of language that can tolerate its own castration and perpetuate domination between the sexes. Unless we discuss the perversity of male domination in banal and often insidious forms, we will not have language to understand how and why it so happens that women aren’t allowed to discuss it and encouraged to feel like nothing has happened that should make them act like they’ve been violated. By analyzing transgressed art by female artists, we might begin to explore a productive language of sexuality, gender, and deviance, reaching beyond a self-knowledge that proscribes only to the belief that sexuality is perverse, humiliating, or cruel. It is in our intimacies of power that we can question and finally confront the nature of our sexuality and power and imagine power as an opportunity for mutuality and eroticism without the need for domination, repression of the other, and that promotes creation in the way of love.

## WORK CITED

- Ahbel-Rappe, Karin. "I No Longer Believe?": Did Freud Abandon the Seduction Theory? *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. Michigan: 54.1. 2006. 171-199.
- Bataille, Georges. *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986. Print.
- Bersani, Leo & Adam Philips. *Intimacies*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008.
- Bersani, Leo. *Is the Rectum a Grave?* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- *The Freudian Body: Psychoanalysis and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Trans. Richard Nice. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. *Masculine Domination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Byrne, Romana. *Aesthetic Sexuality: A Literary History of Sadoomasochism*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. Print.
- Carolyn, Dean. *The Self and its Pleasures: Bataille, Lacan, and the History of the Decentered Subject*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992. Print.
- Dean, Carolyn. *The Self and Its Pleasures: Bataille, Lacan, and the History of the Decentered Subject*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. 1992.
- de Beauvoir, Simone. "Must We Burn de Sade?." *The Marquis de Sade*. Trans. Annette Michelson. London: John Calder, 1962.
- De Berg, Jean. *The Image*. Trans. Patsy Southgate. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1966.
- Deforges, Régine. *Confessions of O: Conversations with Pauline Réage*. Trans. Sabine d'Estree. New York: The Viking Press, 1975.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Coldness and Cruelty." *Masochism*. New York: Zone Books, 1991. 1-123.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Description of a Woman: for a philosophy of the sexed other." *Angelaki*, vol. 7, no. 3, 17-24.
- De Sutter, Laurent. "Deleuze and the Maiden: A Short Introduction to Legal Pornography." *New York Law School Review*, vol. 57, 2012/13, pp. 85-95.
- Ellis, Havelock. "Studies in the Psychology of Sex." 1879. *Studies in Dominance and Submission*. Ed. Thomas Weinberg. New York: Prometheus Books, 1995. (37-40). Print.

- Freud, Sigmund. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. 1920. Trans. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955. Print.
- "A Child is Being Beaten." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. 1919. Trans. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955. Print.
- "The Economic Problem of Masochism." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. 1924. Trans. James Strachey. London: The Hogarth Press, 1955. Print.
- "The Instincts and Their Vicissitudes." 1915. Ed. Hanly, Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick. *Essential Papers on Masochism*. New York: New York University Press, 1995. 18-34. Print.
- "Three Essays on Sexuality." 1905. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Works of Sigmund Freud: A Case of Hysteria & Three Essays on Sexuality*. Trans. James Strachey. Vol. VII. London: The Hogarth Press, 1962. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*. Ed. Paul Rainbow. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: The New York Press, 1994.
- *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
- *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*. Trans. Lysa Hochroth and John Johnston. Ed. Sylvère Lotringer. New York: Semiotext(e), 1996.
- *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*. 1988. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Hanly, Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick, ed. *Essential Papers on Masochism*. New York: New York University Press, 1995.
- Glick, Robert A. and Donald I. Meyers, eds. *Masochism: Current Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. New York: Psychology Press, 1988. Print.
- Hanly, Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick, ed. *Essential Papers on Masochism*. New York: New York University Press, 1995. Print.
- Hart, Lynda. *Between the Body and the Flesh: Performing Sadomasochism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1998. Print.
- Irigary, Luce. *The Way of Love*. Trans. Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluhacek. London: Continuum, 1992.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum of the Other Woman*. Trans. Gillian G. Gill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974.

- Kraft-Ebbing, Richard von. 1886. *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Trans. Franklin S. Klaf. New York: Bell Publishing, 1965.
- Laplanche, Jean. *Essays on Otherness*. eds. John Fletcher. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Lorde, Audre. "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power." *Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. Eds. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, David M. Halperin. New York: Routledge, 1993. 399-343. Print.
- Lorraine, Tamsin. "Oedipalization." Parr, Adrian. *The Deleuze Dictionary*.
- Mansfield, Nick. *Masochism: The Art of Power*. Connecticut: Praeger, 1997. Print.
- Masoch, Sacher Von. Venus in Furs. "Coldness and Cruelty." *Masochism*. New York: Zone Books, 1991.
- McPhee, Ruth. *Female Masochism in Film: Sexuality, Ethics and Aesthetics*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2014. Print.
- Michelson, Peter. "An Apology for Pornography." *The New Republic*, Dec. 1966, 21-24.
- Miller, Alice. *Banished Knowledge: Facing Childhood Injuries*. New York: Anchor Books, 1991.
- Miller, Jaques-Alan. "A and a in Clinical Structures." *The Symptom Online Journal*, Aug. 2015, [www.lacan.com/symptom6\\_articles/miller.html](http://www.lacan.com/symptom6_articles/miller.html).
- Musser, Amber Jamilla. *Sensational Flesh: Race, Power and Masochism*. New York: New York University Press, 2014. Print.
- Réage, Pauline. *The Story of O*. Trans. Sabine d'Estrée. New York: Ballantine Books, 1965.
- Roudinesco, Élisabeth. *Our Dark Side: A History of Perversion*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009. Print.
- Sontag, Susan. "The Pornographic Imagination." *Styles of Radical Will*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966, 35-73.
- Suleiman, Susan Rubin. *Subversive Intent: Gender, Politics and the Avant-Garde*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990. Print.
- Tessier Hélène. "The Sexual Unconscious and Sexuality in Psychoanalysis: Laplanche's Theory of Generalized Seduction." *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, vol. LXXXIII, no. 1, 2014, 169-217.
- Themi, Tim. "Bataille and the Erotics of the Real." *Parrhesia*, vol. 24, 2015, 312-335.
- Von Sacher-Masoch, Leopold. *Venus in Furs. Masochism*. New York: Zone Books, 1991. 143-276.

Wyngaard, Amy. "End of Pornography: The Story of O." *MLN*, vol, 130, no. 4, 2015, 980-997. Project Muse, <http://doi.org/10.1353/mln.2015.0060>. Accessed 1 November 2016.

Ziv, Amalia. "The Pervert's Progress: An Analysis of "Story of O" and the Beauty Trilogy." *Feminist Review*, no. 46, 1994, 61-75. *Palgrave Macmillan*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1395419>. Accessed 27 March 2017.

Zizek, Slavoj. *Violence*. New York: Picador. 2008. Print.