

“AND I MAKE IT REAL BY PUTTING IT INTO WORDS:” MASOCHISM IN
THE MODERN BRITISH NOVEL.

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MODERN BRITISH NOVEL**

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Abstract

Using the psychopathological literary methodologies of trauma theory and shame psychology, this dissertation addresses the subject of masochism in the modern British novel. Literary psychopathologists investigate the meaning of fragmented narratives by comparing their symbology and mythoi to psychiatric models of trauma, masochism and shame. Trauma theory, for example, focuses on an individual's proto-experience and her/his need to express it in language, while shame theory provides a helpful framework for explaining manifestations of overbearing shame.

The nucleus of my thesis on non-Freudian masochism is pointedly heuristic: it aims to demonstrate to the reader a methodology that is capable of interpreting British modernist texts with a deeper psychological understanding than is offered by most Freudian methodologies. Non-Freudian masochism theory specifically involves the need to hurt oneself or punish oneself by defeating or subverting oneself out of shame or guilt. Even though its paradoxical teleology is rooted in the attainment of love and respect, its unique affective signature resides in its myopic solicitation of self-destructively fatal, when not mortifying, social situations. Whereas my introduction focuses on the conceptual proximity of trauma and shame affect to my own hermeneutical non-Freudian interpretation of masochism, the subject of my conclusion is the performativity of bearing witness, and the empathic ethos of testimonials of departure. My methodology is left pregnant with the hope that my future will include more opportunities to interpret further works by Henry James, Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, as well as other masters of the literary canon.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“The body believes in what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it enacts the past, bringing it back to life.” (Bourdieu 73)

My epigraph from Pierre Bourdieu reveals the role mnemonics and acting out has in human experience, specifically for those reinforcing psychopathological views of human behaviour. I use the term, “psychopathology,” here, inclusively to denote the varied psychological and psychiatric interpretations of the psyche, rather than simply the psychoanalytic. Nevertheless, any introduction in the field requires that one start with that method famously described by Josef Breuer’s patient Anna O. as “the talking cure,” which is founded on the proposition that elucidation of traumatic events can alleviate their long-term psychological impact. By 1893, Breuer and his Austrian apprentice, Sigmund Freud, had discovered through hypnosis that victims of hysteria often repressed the memory of the trauma that had closely preceded its onset, and must be correlated to it somehow. The cathartic lifting of the repression, they concluded, was made possible by the patient’s articulation of the repressed memory. However, the re-occurrence of the patient’s symptoms soon demonstrated that therapy failed permanently to heal individuals.

Freud’s and Breuer’s Studies on Hysteria (1895) was composed of synopses of discussions both doctors had with Anna O who is credited with naming their new

therapy, “the talking cure,” and suggested to Freud the idea that hysteria originates in sexual malfunction. Much has changed in psychoanalytic thought since then, not least because Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920) pathologized war trauma, albeit in a manner inconsistent with what today is referred to as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Freud’s convoluted “attempt to explain the experience of war trauma,” literary critic Cathy Caruth suggests, nonetheless constitutes psychiatry’s first theorization of the, “deeply enigmatic relation between trauma and survival” (9). Caruth’s homage to Freud is common in psychoanalytic literary criticism, even though he often privileged the former’s clinical status at the expense of the latter, or at least reified his reputation as a clinician, when doing so suited his rhetorical purposes.

The idea that psychology/ psychiatry should privilege scientific rhetoric over any other discourse was instrumental to Freud’s pseudo-scientific pathological theses about hysteria, repression and trauma. Indeed, no scientist more regularly used literary models of consciousness to substantiate pseudo-empirical notions, only thereafter to disparage them when speaking as a clinician. No other example is more famous, at any rate, than Freud’s reversing himself on the issue of female hysteria, where his privileging of trieb over affect equates to privileging metaphysics over empirical data about affectivity. As Louise De Salvo has demonstrated, for example, whereas Freud’s initial seduction theory of hysteria argued that it was symptomatic of incest, he nevertheless catalogued it subsequently as a trieb cathexis: in effect, sexual abuse is now, on the one hand, *dismissed* by Freud as hallucinatory, or delusional in nature, as well as, on the other hand, *explained* as a function of unconscious human desire for one’s primary caregiver

(De salvo 3-6). In Freud's work, in other words, the rationality of hysteria transforms from a first-line symptomology indicative of incest, into convoluted rationalizations for retarded female sexual development.

Nor was Freud's privileging of theory over affectivity simply a sign of the times. Consider, for example, Charles Darwin's 1867 anthropological survey of universal somatic expression, which topographies global affectivity by culture on a global scale, and included Aboriginal (Australian), Indian (India), African, Native American, Chinese, Malayan and the Ceylonese. Tragically, Darwin's conclusion, that human beings retain an undeletable emotion-body contingency, was ignored by the medical field for nearly a century, at which time Freudian psychoanalysis had been discredited.

Neurologist Antonio Damasio's Descartes' Error (1994), for example, seems to have established a definitive set of "somatic markers," that, in effect, prove that cultural rationality is based in affectivity, rather than cognition, thereby, reversing almost a century of Freudian influence on the study of emotion (3). Joseph Le Doux (1996) provided a evolutionary teleology for an affectivity a priori soon thereafter, which reinforced the affective means by which cultural grammar functions, and finally put to rest most speculation apropos the nature of taboo rituals or Oedipal anxiety (118).

Though Freud's impact on the relationship between emotion and literature is too massive to be dealt with here, I will state simply that, like it or not, Freud's psychoanalytic principles clearly established a strong, if general, "complementarity between great literature and clinical experience" (Wurmser, *Power* 28). For though often disparaging of fiction as a type of literary psychopathology, Freud's legacy nonetheless

established the idea that literature “takes as its subject all human experience, and particularly the ordering, interpreting, and articulating of experience” (Culler 10). Joseph Adamson and Hillary Clark remind us that the clinician’s diagnostic terms have remarkable affinities with the methodologies used by literary theory; just as the “world of fiction offers a wealth of metaphors and images for understanding shame and affective reality in general,” they suggest that, “our knowledge of literature may [also] be enhanced by a deepened scientific and psychoanalytic understanding” of psychopathology (1).

For that reason, the term “narrative medicine,” which is coined by Dr. Rita Charon MD/PhD is so apropos for describing the methodologies I will now speak of in my following introduction. For, Charon’s work illuminates the various ways in which medical discourse is structured by narrative practise: both in the creation of a therapeutic alliance between physician and patient, as well as in any public discourse about how medicine should be practiced. By training physicians to listen more carefully and to see case histories as narratives, Charon maintains, narrative medicine enhances the capacity for self-reflection, as well as the quality of care the doctors provide. Likewise, the “paradigm shift” in literary criticism from “universal psychic structures” to “internalized relational configurations” has ensured that psychoanalysis is but one of many epidemiological hermeneutics available today to scholars of many disciplines (Schapiro 2). My own recent conversion from traumata/shame psychology to a non-Freudian view of masochism also follows this parallel and demands a clarification of my working definition of each of these three terms in this thesis.

Trauma, according to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders IV, involves any direct personal experience of, “death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate” (424). One’s response to the event involves intense fear, helplessness or horror, which then manifests as disorganized or agitated behaviour. Although the actual cluster of symptoms experienced by any one individual will vary, the two most commonly experienced reactions generally are referred to as hyperarousal and avoidance.

“Hyperarousal” is symptomatically discernible in nightmares, recurrent and intrusive thoughts about the event; repetition/ flashbacks (acting or feeling as if the experience were happening again in the present); panic attacks (intense psychological distress and/or physiological reactivity when exposed to internal or external stimuli that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event); hypervigilance, irritability, and a general overreaction to noises or other environmental cues that previously were not bothersome.

In contrast, attempts to avoid activities or situations that arouse recollections of the trauma are referred to as “avoidance,” and include endeavours to circumvent thoughts or feelings associated with the trauma; being unable to recall an important aspect of the event; disassociation (*i.e.*, feeling “spaced out,” or detached and estranged from others), or self-victimization. Individuals who survive traumatic events often re-

experience elements of them when confronted thereafter with similar affective and/or somatic stimulation.

Physiological responses are exacerbated when the affect-laden memories stored in associative networks are triggered by environmental sensory inputs or cues that activate the autonomic nervous system. Recovery from trauma involves not only amelioration of physiological and disassociative symptoms, but also the cognitive rebuilding of a viable world view integrating the psychological realms of vulnerability, meaning and self-esteem. In non-technical language, resolution of traumatic material involves the conversion of sensory aspects of the experience into a narrative about the event.

Construction of this “narrative” involves more than verbal recognition of the event: it means giving words to the full meaning/nature of the experience as it was happening. For instance, traumatic shame must be developed into a language capable of managing what are often irrational guilt feelings about what one might have done to avoid the trauma. Most importantly, a patient and empathic counsellor must facilitate this reintegration process, or the individual’s trust in the world will simply not return.

The Biology of Trauma

Biology tells us that traumatic events overwhelm an individual's usual coping mechanisms, and cause immediate neurochemical changes in the brain: initially, in reaction to the event, and secondly, in one’s subsequent attempts to convert the proto-

experience into narrative memory. For example, using positron emission tomography (PET scans) one group of researchers identified specific changes that occur in the brains of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) patients whenever they were shown mnemonically symptomatic stimuli of the event (Rauch, cited in van der Kolk, *Traumatic*, 96).

An important decrease in the Broca's area of the brain (located in the left inferior frontal cortex), for example, they concluded, is somehow responsible for blocking one's capacity to express internal experience (feelings). The resulting neurochemical changes in the brain, they speculated, is caused by information inundation that results in memory fragments or "associative networks" being stored, by default, in related thoughts, memories, images, emotions and sensations (Lang, cited in van der Kolk, *Body*, 255). An adult rape survivor who has also experienced childhood sexual abuse, for example, might catalogue memory fragments from the rape with similar memories from her/ his past abuse, even if s/he has no recent recollection of either experience. For that reason, hermeneutical scaffolds are indefensible for engendering the recall stimulation upon which rests ontological reintegration.

Though pathologically intrusive in nature, PTSD is symptomologically reflective of an individual's have suffered some sort of affective/ ontological wounding, and manifest in visual, auditory and somatic material; traumatic disassociation and "flashbacks" are specific affectivities indicative of the symptomology. Although the flashbacks of war veterans are unquestionably the most publicly recognized aspect of PTSD, most victims suffer a symptomological range characterised most frequently by

confusion and amnesia, rather than hallucinations. Luckily, most people who suffer traumata *do not* atemporally, “relive the life-threatening experiences they have suffered” as events “occurring” in their present, though some, of course, do (Rothschild 6).

The paradoxical nature of PTSD, rather, is complicated by its affront on empirical justification. The fact that the psychophysical experience of trauma can occur even when no direct bodily harm is involved makes it virtually impossible, at times, to diagnose. Likewise, PTSD does not occur in every case in which something traumatic occurs. For example, N. Breslau, G. C. Davis, P. Andreski and E. Peterson (1991), report that only twenty percent of trauma victims suffer from PTSD subsequent to traumatic events (217). Accordingly, the DSM IV (1984) divided PTSD into primary and secondary classifications. Primary PTSD refers to events that are, or are perceived as being, immediately compromising to one’s body integrity, while secondary PTSD refers to being a witness to such events. Accordingly, realizing that PTSD most often manifests as disassociation, or split awareness, is pivotal to understanding how traumata works. For, although disassociation is classified as “Acute Stress Disorder” in the DSM IV, Bremner *et al* (330), and C. Classen, C. Koopman and D. Spiegel (190) have shown that the *disassociative intensity* of a traumatic event is the best indicator of whether or not it will pathologically transform into an affectivity script.

Despite its arrival in psychological medical literature as early as 1845, however, the term “disassociation” was basically ignored until 1897 when Pierre Janet used it to speak of the affectations associated with hysteria -- numbing, flashbacks, depersonalization, out of body experiences -- just as Moreau de Tours had, when he

coined the term in 1847 (as qtd. van der Hart and Freidman 198). While Rothschild suggests that disassociation describes a psychosomatic attempt to “dampen” the “impact” of a trauma (66), R. J. Lowenstein suggests it is symptomatic of the mind’s attempt to flee its corporeal host after flight is seen to be impossible (603). This is why some individuals with PTSD suffer highly disturbing emotional and sensory recall states, even as they lack their accompanying time and space significations.

The partial amnesia that always accompanies PTSD, moreover, is a function of one’s mnemonic hardware, to use the word in the sense set out by Tomkins, and which consists of three chief categories; 1) encoding (the process of recording information), 2) storage (the syntax of explicit or implicit retrieval), and 3) retrieval (the grammar of retrieval). Explicit (or long-term) memory, for example, is dependent on oral or written language for both its storage and retrieval, particularly, as it involves remembering operations that require thought and step by step narration. Thus, the narrating of events, expressing one’s experiences in words, the construction of chronologies and the extraction of meaning, are all reliant on explicit memory. Likewise, all of these hippocampal functions are radically interrupted by traumatic events.

Implicit memory, on the other hand, is more utilitarian in scope: what we use to ride a bike, or play tennis. One might initially see the fact that events are not recorded in explicit memory during traumatization as fortuitous. However, “upsetting emotions, disturbing body sensations, and confusing behavioural impulses can all exist in implicit memory without access to information about the context in which they arose or what they are about” (Rothschild 31). Thus, implicit memory works reflexively, or

automatically, in much the same way as do classical conditioning triggers. In those with PTSD, however, these triggers predispose one to automatic reactions without providing the cognitive or pragmatic indicators normally accompanying healthy memory retrieval. In fact, generations of traumatic triggers can cause increasingly greater degrees of restriction, avoidance and eventually debilitation.

The operant conditioning processes that determine behaviour through positive/negative reinforcement are a function of implicit memory. Table manners, for example, are created through operant conditioning, as is learning to sit quietly in class. In general, adulation, gratification and affection increase specific positive behaviour reinforcement while shame, disapproval and pain, diminish it. This is why “[w]hen a traumatic incident is repeated, as with physical abuse, domestic violence, incest or torture” (35), it pathologically habituates as learned helplessness. Those beaten or molested in their youth, accordingly, are exceedingly vulnerable to violent, controlling partners and situations, because their natural impulse to protect themselves has been extinguished. Inevitably blaming themselves for these situations, these individuals replicate whatever adolescent coping strategy they developed, and repeat it, even if it’s degrading or humiliating.

Worse, behaviour that is “conditioned during traumatic events seem[s] to have a greater enduring power than those conditioned under lesser degrees of stress,” Rothschild reports, “[e]ven one instance of a failed or punished survival strategy during traumatic circumstances can be enough to extinguish that behaviour from one’s repertoire” (35). Because state-dependent recall -- which refers to impulsively recalled

phenomena, whether it is a mood, a memory or simply a sensation -- can repeat affectivity scripts in the present without any context, those suffering with PTSD often become paranoid, Indeed, how could one be otherwise, when any subconscious stimulation recall reminiscent of the original trauma, can thrust one's internally conditioned responses into physical overdrive (increased heart rate or respiration, a particular emotional mood etc.). For that reason, "babies raised by caregivers unable to meet significant portions of their needs are at risk of growing into adults who lack resilience and have trouble adapting to life's ebbs and flows. . . . They appear to have more trouble making sense of life's events, particularly those that are stressful, and appear to be more vulnerable to psychological disturbances and disorders, including drug addiction, depression and PTSD" (Rothschild 17). Returning the patient to an equally traumatic set of events in which the terrors of state-dependent recall make therapy impossible.

Thus, one's predisposition to PTSD is the primary factor deciding whether or not one will subsequently suffer from it, and is most often caused by the politics of selfobject neglect, which are most often inscribed in physical, emotional or sexual abuse, and indicative of one's genuine attachment failure to one's self-object. Though such criteria seem generic, they nonetheless constitute the epidemiology most often associated with attachment deficits, suppression mechanisms and stress-related memory disorders. Accordingly, neurologists Allan Shore (1994) and Bruce Perry (1995) maintain that self-object (primary caretaker) attachments are critical in an individual's future capacity to self-regulate positive and negative stimuli. The interactional configuration between an

infant and its caretaker, Shore argues, formulates both the protocol for all further stimulation as well as regulates arousal affectivity (2). Put another way, dysfunctional self-object configurations retard survival development by habituating survival mechanism responses toward disassociation or freezing.

Though traumata gravely affect the extinguishment of explicit memory, then, its greatest impact is on implicit memory (operant conditioning, state-dependent recall), that system which controls the unconscious and fundamental mechanisms of our bodies. Implicit memory contextualizes our defensive behaviour scripts as much as our internal sense -- that regulating system that controls heart rate, respiration, internal body temperature, visceral sensation and muscle tension -- and since defensive behavior is a function of operant conditioning, its constituents are radically success-dependent. As mentioned earlier, a defensive behaviour can be wiped from a protective repertoire after a single traumatic failure. Worse, its accompanying shame, “does not seem to be expressed and released in the same way as other feelings” and only seems to “dissipate under very special circumstances -- the non judgemental, accepting contact of another human being,” making the reversing of such traumata affects close to impossible to treat (Rothschild 62).

Suffice it to say, then, that I use PTSD to refer to an acute neurobiological strain characterized by somatic recall repetition, and manifested through self-effacing shame pathologies. Finally, whereas clinical therapy refers to a process that is mitigated by the relationship between pastoral projection and emotional regurgitation, cathartic abreaction refers to its potentially explosive behavioural discharge in a non-clinical

setting: such as might occur in the author-reader relationship.

Genealogy of Traumata, Affect and Literary Theory

Traditional psychoanalysis, on the whole, has resisted the universal implementation of affect-based theoretical discourses, even as it has continued to be clinically ineffective for treating complicated traumata such as PTSD. With respect to their resistance to neuroscientific data, for example, the Anglo-American psychoanalytic community differs massively with what for decades in Europe has been normative clinical practise (van der Kolk and van der hart 179). For example, Tomkins' suffered virtual excommunication by his colleagues in the American Psychoanalytic Association, following his public condemnation of their clinical resistance ("delay") towards affective-based data (*Affect* 1). Happily, professors of the Humanities have a vigorous, if self-interested, loathing of such methodological xenophobia; though it is anyone's guess why this hybrid originated in the conceptual laboratory of literary theory.

In literary theory, Cathy Caruth (1995), Kai Erickson (1991), Shoshana Felman (1995), Ronald Granofsky (1995) and Petar Ramadanovic (2001) have all written about the place of trauma, and especially, PTSD. For Caruth, traumata are an "overwhelming," "historical phenomen[a]" (151) that are "grasped only in the very inaccessibility of [their] occurrence," and, therefore, are "not fully perceived as [they] occur" (8). These "proto-experiences" sustain an "absolutely accurate and precise" re-enactment of the trauma, we are told, even as they are "largely inaccessible to conscious recall and

control” (152).

While the concept of trauma is topologically used as a trope for reading works about trauma in the work of Ramadanovic and Caruth (such as Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle), Felman and Granofsky use the concept to inform their critical interpretation of texts. In this way, literary pedagogy is performatively, rather than cognitively, based and thus dynamically inscribed in the participants’ “capacity” to “transform themselves in the function of the newness of that information” (Felman 56). Therefore, a reader learns to reintegrate the text’s crisis in an *altered* frame of reference that, in effect, provides it with meaning. The specific way in which I am going to use trauma and shame psychology follows herein.

Genealogy of Shame Psychology as Literary Theory

Where shame for the neurotic is inevitably associated with failure to act in a crisis situation, one inevitably finds, narcissistic patients still manifest it most as projective vulnerable. In both cases, however, shame affect is rarely considered even as patients acknowledge their feelings of worthlessness and invisibility, as well as suffer anxiety attacks and crippling bouts of loneliness. Nevertheless, many of society’s emotional maladies are constituted in shame affects inclusive of addiction, denial, withdrawal, rage, perfectionism, exhibitionism, arrogance as well as obsessive-compulsive and oppositional defiance disorders. Not surprisingly, psychologists have also long considered the major role shame plays in the psychic apparatus, as it is the

affective topography of inferiority.

In “On Narcissism” (1914), for example, Freud suggests that shame is a defence rather than an interpersonal subjective experience, and explicitly relates ego ideal to self-regard; the inability to love, or invest in an object, he suggests, leads to feelings of intense inferiority (101-102). Speaking of such inferiority, literary, as well as clinical affect-based analyses have suffered greatly because of Freud’s faulty conviction that trieb or drive is the *instrumental* component of socialization rather than affectivity.

Even so, Helen Merrell Lynd’s innovative work on anticipation failure decades later made it impossible for psychoanalysis to continue effacing affect generated data. Like others before her, Lynd realized the causal relationship between compounded feelings of shameful self-loathing, and ontological “rejection” (46). However, it was she who brilliantly concluded that, whenever one suffers a,

sudden experience of a violation of expectation, of incongruity between expectation and outcome, it results in a shattering of trust in oneself; even in one's body and skill and identity, and in the trusted boundaries of framework of the society and the world one has known. As trust in oneself and in the outer world develop together, so doubt of oneself and the world are also intermeshed. The rejected gift, the joke or phrase that does not come off, the misunderstood gesture, the falling short of ideals, the expectation of a response violated -- such experiences mean that we have trusted ourselves to a situation that is not there. (46)

Soon, thereafter, A. Reich’s discovery of the inherent self-referentiality in one’s “contempt” for others engendered his conclusion that “narcissistic injury,” was composed by “feelings of inferiority” that often followed “shameful exposure” (230). As the self for Heinz Kohut is the “center of productive initiative,” it is not surprising to

find that repeated failure to achieve what are often impossible goals results, for him, in a shame-prone personality (*Restoration* 18).

Shame results when the ego is overwhelmed by the grandiosity of the narcissistic self experienced as failure, suggests Kohut, so the “shame of the narcissistic patient is due to a flooding of the ego with internalized exhibitionism, and not to a relative ego weakness, vis-à-vis an overly strong system of ideals” (*Forms* 251). As such, “shame arises when the ego is unable to provide a proper discharge for the exhibitionistic demands of the narcissistic (ideal) self” (Kohut, *Forms* 247). The exhibitionistic self must be adequately mirrored through her/ his self-object, if s/he is not to suffer from the empathic failure consistent with feelings of inauthentic self-esteem. The “paralyzing sense of estrangement and alienation” that characterizes narcissistic disorder, Adamson tells us, is a manifestation of having endured “a loss of trust in the world” (*Melville* 2, 15).

Accordingly, it is logical to find that empathic deprivation by one’s self-object retards one’s capacity to analyze one’s future patterns of behaviour, and subsequently manifests in “mortifying feelings of powerlessness and helplessness” (Adamson, *Melville*, 19). It cannot be overstated either, how painful such an ontological breach actually is. For, this is no mere anxiety attack or feeling of panic, but rather, a “global, painful and devastating experience” in which the “self,” and not just one’s behaviour, is “painfully scrutinized and negatively evaluated” by oneself (Tangey 599).

Tomkin’s “Script Theory,” and its attention to script “scenes,” helped delineate what an individual’s overall behaviour suffered because of such condemnation. For

Tomkins, any sequence of events linked by the affects triggered during those events is a “scene,” and is mnemonically filed as if it were, visual or auditory stimuli. Tomkins was fascinated by the way in which six-month old infants learned to expect the pain of a needle whenever they saw a doctor, even though they initially were unable to logically connect the two events (Demos 318). Since affectivity triggers are facilitated through collective factors such as the intensity of the affectivity, or the types of persons and places involved, Tomkins surmised, one’s capacity for expectation, in general, must be the result of how one mnemonically marshals a family of scenes into a “script.” Behavioural *magnification* of a psychological *process* demonstrates the manner in which affect-laden scenes are arranged, Tomkins hypothesized, and therefore are constitutive of one’s ontological immediacy in the present. Said more simply, our future experiences are reflective of those in our past.

Trauma, Shame Psychology and Literary Theory

Accordingly, I contend that the postmodern deconstruction of subjectivity by way of Freud’s symptomology of trauma predisposes one to the conclusion that subjectivity, itself, must be a type of PTSD. For although the idea sounds radical, it is actually logically derivative from the parallel between shame psychology and traumata apropos the retardation of script creation, which is one of the central factors in a non-Freudian masochist construct.

Against such an idea, however, stand the shame psychologists, who include

Joseph Adamson and Hillary Clarke (1997), J. Brooks Bouson (1989, 2000), Mario Jacoby (1991), Donald Nathanson (1992), E. K. and Frank A. Sedgwick (1995), Barbara Shapiro (2000) and Leon Wurmser (1997, 1999, 2000), all of which facilitate the shame psychology of Kohut and /or the shame affect epidemiology of Sylvan Tomkins to explain the role of affectivity in human behaviour. This group of clinician/ literary theorists endeavour to elucidate the un-speakable (the actual wound, or trauma itself) in a particular text, which they believe is symbolized in it. Thus, shame theory surveys paralyzing shame affect cycles as it is embodied in individual characters/ narrators, in order to further its understanding of how human relationships are affectively constituted.

Genealogy of an Idea: Self-sabotage

Perhaps the greatest challenge of my doctoral dissertation was determining the list of novels and authors best illuminated by my method. Those novels I initially had seen as revealing non-Freudian masochism, however, quickly punctured the theoretical margins I set for them. James' What Maisie Knew (1897) and Forster's Howards End (1910), for instance, turned out to be more complicated than I had originally thought, and in the case of the latter, forced me to considerably rework my initial framework. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers (1913) and Women in Love (1920), as well as Woolf's Jacob's Room (1920) were included because their non-sentimental characters seemed to me especially self-destructive.

Though I longed to name how I knew such a thing, then, I am still at a loss to

coherently explain what exactly it was that I found so noteworthy about representations of self-destructive behaviour in modern British Literature. Consequently, I chose to build a genealogy capable of describing to my reader that assemblage of chaotic concepts that initially had seduced me towards my present methodological expedition into literary representations of self-destructive pathologies.

One need only consider the idealization of suicide in texts from the Greek tragedy of Sophocles' Antigone to the Roman mythopoeia of Ovid's Icarus to the irresolute psychosis immortalized in William Shakespeare's Hamlet, to realize to what an extent self-destruction has traditionally been glorified in Western literature. For instance, Shakespeare's psychologism, as is well known, greatly influenced the psychological concerns of the British and German Romantics, not least of whom included Goethe, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Freidrich Schlegel. Goethe's infamous anti-*bildungsroman*, Tales of Young Werther, for example, paints a vivid picture of its protagonist's psychology in a manner that is satirically evocative of Hamlet. Nevertheless, the work was still interpreted as an apologia for suicide by the German reading public, and whose economic support of the text made the creation of Byron's Manfred, unavoidable. Over two millennia, then, the Western imagination has been fixated on the vagaries of self-destruction, even as the concept was used in a myriad of fashions by many cultures.

Perhaps, most telling, however, is the manner in which self-destruction is explored by various artists. Sophocles' Antigone, for instance, accepts that her suicide is the price to be paid for saving her brother's soul from damnation. Icarus' fall, in

contrast, is most often read as an allegory of hubris, analogous to the way in which we now speak of grandiosity. At first glance, moreover, psychiatric terms like masochism, grandiosity and externalization seem to describe very well the erratic behaviour of Shakespeare's Hamlet, Lear and Macbeth, as they do the compulsive desire of Christopher Marlow's Dr. Faustus, or the agonizingly ecstatic metaphysical conceits found in the work of John Donne.

The glorification of suicide took on metaphysical, political and psychological connotations in the poetry of the younger British romantics as well, most notably in the work of Byron, Percy Bysshe Shelley and John Keats. Being sensitive, intelligent individuals, the glorification of death in some of their work is clearly a sign of the times. For all three poets were as repelled by the brutality that followed from the French Revolution (*i.e.*, Maximilien Robespierre's "Terror" in Paris) as they were depressed by the Napoleonic wars that followed it. By 1815, for example, they were but part of an international European critique against Romanticism that included contingents from Germany, France, Spain and Italy. This continental, "illustrious band of world haters," as V. J. McGill refers to them, included none less than the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, the Italian dramatist Giacomo Leopardi, and the early French romantic poet Francois-Rene Chateaubriand (174). Indeed, all three of these artists accepted the hermeneutical limits of metaphysical idealism, and hoped to transform its mythological malleability into new rhetorical forms.

As poems such as "Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte," "Ode on Waterloo" and "Napoleon's Farewell" clearly show, Byron's early poetry had political elements in it.

But it was Shelley's return to England without him in 1816 that inaugurated Byron's reconsideration of his Geneva metaphysics, as well as his more radical ideas about whether or not humanity's "weight of lasting woe" could be lifted by supplementing life with metaphysical typographies like William Wordsworth's "Nature," or John Keats' "negative capability." Charles E. Robinson, for example, argues that Byron's Manfred answered the existential apprehension of the day, "negatively" (41). On the other hand, conversely, Manfred's ascent into a cultural icon could not have been more positive. The *economic* success of Byron's Manfred assuredly mandated that later Victorian literature include counterintuitive characters, for they are evident in the work of Emily Brontë, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy and Henry James.

Indeed, in the work of all these nineteenth century British writers, the concept of self-destruction is used as a foil. Emily Brontë's Wuthering Heights (1847), for example, explicitly correlates Heathcliff's incapacity to forgive Catherine's dismissal of him as a potential husband, to the malice that subsequently invades his life. Whereas Heathcliff's painful sensuality predisposes him nowadays to any number of queer theory readings, the same cannot be said of the curiously deluded Charles Dickens' antihero, Richard Carstone, whose closing financial ruin and demise is rooted in his grandiose certainty that he will be successful in receiving his inheritance from the estate in Bleak House (1852-53), though no one else has been able to do so.

Though Tertius Lydgate is the more Icarus-like figure in George Eliot's Middlemarch (1871-72), the term also is well applied to the novel's protagonist, Dorothea Brooke, whose marriage legacy from her union with a sexually and

emotionally impotent man is dependent upon her opting to never remarry. Eliot's masterfully perceptive narrative reaches its apex in Dorothea's equation of Lydgate's self-destructive thinking, with that of Casaubon, who died without ever securing his key to all mythologies. Likewise, James' Roderick Hudson (1876) delineates a dilettante's affective, as well as artistic, degeneration into death, after his doomed migration to Europe ends in his death in the Swiss Alps.

The relationship between self-destructive behaviour and art is also centre-stage in Oscar Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray (1892), though its supernatural inscription is tellingly imposed on a painting of its protagonist. Tellingly, Gray's malice finally slides off the canvas subsequent to his conclusion of the murderous act that symbolically foreshadows his own degeneration into opium abuse and suicide. Thomas Hardy's two great protagonists in Tess of the D'Urbervilles (1891) and Jude the Obscure (1895), moreover, are also distinguished by their cumulative tendency to make self-effacing, or counterintuitive choices at the most inopportune of times.

This genealogy would surely be deficient, then, should it not refer in some way to the work of Friedrich Nietzsche or Fyodor Dostoevsky. For instance, consider the manner in which Dostoevsky's Notes from the Underground is illuminated in his "imaginative" representation of those social "conditions" "shap[ing]" modern Russian "exist[ence]" (13). Dostoevsky's protagonist, for example, perpetually strikes out at someone, or something, in his monograph but never discerns what, or who, that person or thing, is. Nevertheless, we are curiously told that the misery of his protagonist is a function of his not a function of "superstitious" obduracy, rather than his sickness,

spitefulness or ugliness (Dostoevsky 15). Though positive about the “spite” he *feels* for doctors and medicine, we eventually learn, he is still incapable of “explain[ing]” to anyone what “exactly” it is that “mortifies” him and makes him refuse treatment (15). “I am perfectly well aware that I cannot ‘pay out’ the doctors by not consulting them,” he tells us bitterly, and “only injuring [him] self” through such spite, yet he cannot stop himself from acting as such (Dostoevsky 15). Indeed, he cannot resist the powerful shamefulness that accompanies his illness any more than those “evil memories” that drive him to write down his experiences (Dostoevsky 15). “I have felt ashamed all the time I’ve been writing this story, he confesses to us, so “it’s hardly literature so much as a corrective punishment” (15). For, “all the traits for an anti-hero are expressly gathered together here,” we are told, and therefore, “develop a sort of loathing for real life, and so cannot bear to be reminded of it” (Dostoevsky 122). Said more positively, literature is what makes life bearable.

Though I could hardly realise it at the time, Dostoevsky’s text had already illuminated for me three of the features I would later employ as the basis for a non-Freudian masochism methodology: 1) traumata or disassociation (whether one is ignorant of it or not), 2) shameful blindness towards the consequences of self-destructive behaviour, and 3) engaging in acts of self-punishment or fatalism. Nevertheless, it was rereading Conrad’s Lord Jim that provided me with the greatest literary-epidemiological confirmation for my non-Freudian model of masochism. Simply put, Jim’s case illustrates exceedingly well the causal relation between a material trauma and its agonizing affect in one’s later behaviour. Conrad’s tragic novel concerns the life of a

disgraced sailor who, subsequent to his trial for deserting his ship, lives an uneventful life perpetually in fear that people will discover his shameful act. Although his defection from the ship is hardly admirable, it is comprehensible given the exceptional trauma he undergoes during, and after, the event. Jim refuses to provide an explanation for his actions, however, and rather, imposes on himself the penalty of execution.

Jim's tragic life is not only an indirect result of his inability to deal with the Patna horror, then, but is also constitutive of his incapacity to ever again feel happiness. In other words, Jim is destroyed by an exceptionally aggressive trauma-shame connection which devastates all the relationships in his life, and most manifest in his betrayal of precisely those people that mean most to him. Wurmser's description of symptomologies characteristic of one's "cruelty of conscience," accordingly, describes my non-Freudian masochist methodology exceedingly well, as does it, many of the dysfunctional protagonists that precede Jim in the Victorian, and then follow Jim in the modern, British novel.

My Methodology: Masochistic Mourning

Wurmser elucidates the trauma-shame interdependency he later labels affective masochism in a penetrating essay on Friedrich Nietzsche. Describing the affective scripts of one of his patients, Wurmser momentarily reflects before confessing thereafter that he has,

been very impressed by the severity and cruelty of the superego in cases with severe traumatization of any kind. It is as if the whole brutality of the

trauma -- be it physical or emotional abuse, be it massive loss or persecution, be it physical (somatic) suffering -- had become part of the inner world in the form of cruelty of conscience, of self-beratement and self-punishment, in the form of overwhelming . . . shame.

(*Moral Masochism* 142)

This “cruelty of conscience” is the *sine qua non* of non-Freudian masochism (or self-sabotage), a turning on the self that ends fatally. For though characters are caught up in their emotional “scripts,” to use Tomkins’ term, that does not automatically defeat or subvert their purported goals. And yet, non-Freudian masochism specifically involves the need to hurt oneself or punish oneself by defeating or subverting oneself out of shame or guilt, even as such self-subversion constitutes the psychopathological grammar of socialization. When death is not the result of the trauma-shame affect-masochism cycle, that is, affective death nonetheless manifests itself as a predisposition to self-destruction. Consider, for example, Lawrence’s Gerald, or Woolf’s Jacob, the latter of whom corporealizes his social invisibility by the narrative’s conclusion and fades out of a novel that bears his name.

Strangely enough, the masochism methodology I employ here is conceptually closer to, what postmodern theorists call, the work on mourning (see, for example, the work of Jacques Derrida or Eve Sedgwick), than to object theory, and much closer to Tomkins’ work on scripts than to psychoanalysis. Masochistic mourning, for lack of a better term, suggests that a work’s content signifies, at least by analogy, the process by which individuals move from one site of desire to another (mourning), without which one would continue to grieve neurotically (melancholia). For that reason, any similarities between my work and that of Frederic Jameson and his followers are at best superficial,

and at worst antithetical. In direct contrast to my method, Jameson and his followers argue that the formal breaches characteristic of modernist British narrative are emblematic of aesthetic (read moral) indifference. Ursula Lord insists, for example, that the equivocation of Joseph Conrad's Marlow represents, "the epistemological theme of the elusiveness of truth," in modernism that, in turn, "paradigmatic of the self-doubt and incipient failure of imperialism" (147). In other words, a text's stylistic resonance is valuable only when read through the all too often revisionist ethics of pseudo-Marxist typographies.

One might have thought that if Lawrence, the predominant anti-industrialist and technophobe of the period, didn't subscribe to Marxism, it might be for good reason. Nor were the British moderns dealt with here communists. Rather, they were artists whose profound intention lay in metaphysics, aesthetics and psychology, rather than economic materialism. Indeed, even as they campaigned against the atrocities of the First World War they refused the seductions of Marxist rhetoric. This is why E. M. Forster's following comment to Bertrand Russell so fittingly recapitulates their benevolent collective indifference. "I love people and want to understand them, and help them more than I did," Forster acknowledges ambivalently, "but this is oddly accompanied by a growth of contempt. Be like them? God, no" (as qtd, Furbank 1 259).

The Moderns: Then and Now

Since the genre, "the modernist novel" was superficially created after the Second

World War so that professors of English literature had a “convenient label for university courses,” the term clearly has no epistemic value, nor does it unify the collective of novelists it names by any one scheme, mode or attitude (Whitworth 147). Nor were these novelists connected through shared press agents, publishing houses, or even alehouses for that matter. Though Woolf founded the Hogarth Press with her husband, and fellow critic and writer Leonard Woolf in 1917, she never attempted to fashion any sort of literary movement by way of its publication schedule. In fact, though Hogarth Press’ publication of Joyce’s Ulysses (1922), T.S. Eliot’s The Waste Land (1922), Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway (1924) and E. M. Forster’s A Passage to India (1924) assuredly initiated some communal aspects for those affiliated with Bloomsbury, it seems not to have generated any genuine feeling amongst them. Woolf’s assessment of Joyce’s Ulysses as an “illiterate, underbred book” by a “self-taught working-man,” for example, reveals the real enmity that some of these authors actually felt for one another (*Diaries* 2 189).

Accordingly, even Whitworth’s generic truism that, “[t]he strategy of rejecting the Victorian and Edwardian literary heritage is a defining feature of modernism” is highly debatable (Whitworth 150). For, James, Conrad and Forster, at least from a historical standpoint, actually *constitute* the Edwardian novel. Modernism’s manifestly non-egalitarian fixation with psychology and aesthetics, fail to address the stylistics of Lawrence and Forster. On the other hand, the modern British novelists mentioned herein *did* pioneer a variety of narrative techniques built upon the models of their European predecessors. And among them, are,

the radical disruption of linear flow of narrative; the frustration of conventional expectations concerning unity and coherence of plot

and character and the cause and effect development thereof; the deployment of ironic and ambiguous juxtapositions to call into question the moral and philosophical meaning of literary action; the adoption of a tone of epistemological self-mockery aimed at naïve pretensions of bourgeois rationality; the opposition of inward consciousness to rational, public, objective discourse; and an inclination to subjective distortion to point up the evanescence of the social world of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie. (Barth 68)

In the end, however, no two writers are truly synonymous with each other, nor does any one particular work or author embody the techniques most characteristic of the genre, except that is, for James. For that reasons, the reader of the modern British novel is better served by knowing that they were influenced by an literary tradition that included Dostoevsky, Eliot, Flaubert, Hardy, Ibsen, James, Nietzsche and Tolstoy, and constituted by an allegorical psychologism rooted in its audience's hermeneutical affectivity.

All of which makes the lack of critical and pedagogical interest in British modernism very puzzling, even in today's multiculturally driven, socio-political climate. For, as my commentary on Conrad's A Secret Agent will show, many of these novels could hardly be more apropos to life in a post-9/11 world. I follow William Stowe's suggestion that the lack of enthusiasm provided to the modern British novel today is reflective more of pedagogical incompetence, than student disinterest (201). It would be particularly disappointing, however, if this were not the case given that today's high priests of Marxist critical literary theory (Jameson, Terry Eagleton), in fact, rose to stardom by publishing myopically political criticism that charged James, Conrad, Forster and Woolf with imperialism and xenophobia. Tragically, Eagleton now confesses that the impotence of critical theory in a post 9/11 world is a result of previously failing to

address existentially important issues such as metaphysics, love, religion, revolution, death and suffering. Ironically, those same issues for which the British modern novelists have had to sustain two decades of insults and slights, often without basis.

James and the modern British Novel

Although I anticipated starting this dissertation with Conrad's Lord Jim, I later came to agree with my supervisory committee that my project is better served by following a chronological order. It became progressively clear to me as I wrote this thesis, in fact, that I could not exaggerate James' role in the formation of the modern British novel. And that although conventional wisdom holds that James Joyce is the archetypal modern British novelist, the moderns themselves clearly reserved that place for James. Most novelists simply accepted their subservience to the Master, and not least because his narrative dramaturgy had revealed that alterity which had been simply unfeasible within the representative perimeters of the Victorian novel. Those rich descriptions of Maisie's consciousness James provides to his reader, for example, are what provide him with a kaleidoscope of her most intimate anxieties.

As his writing included techniques found in realism, naturalism, aestheticism and symbolism James' oeuvre, "serves as a great conduit between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of narrative. He participated fully and vigorously in the great formal traditions of the nineteenth century, yet experimented with them, [and] accentuated those elements in them that, when pushed one step further, led in the direction of the

destabilized, the epistemologically vertiginous” (Freedman, *Moment*, 16). How sad, then, that James “spent much of his life lamenting the results [of his writing], and hoping that he would find readers able to appreciate his efforts” (Freedman, *Preface*, xi). That James suffered a great nervous breakdown in 1910, though, hints at the genuine doubts about posterity that plagued him through the last decade of his life.

In contrast with the general British public, the modern British novelists were very aware of the role James played in the development of dramaturgical aesthetics, as well as of his instrumental role in launching the novel into the family of genuine high art. For this reason, my ensuing chapter on James includes a brief sketch of his career that I have not provided for the other authors I examine herein. Though Conrad’s Jim embodies the symptomology of masochism, and Conrad’s Marlow provides the proper heuristic relation between a reader and an author, it is James’ capacity to have transformed that mortification he suffered in 1895 into that dramaturgy indicative of modern British narrative form that most reveals him to be the genuine precursor of performative testimonials such as mine. I will momentarily revisit this performative element, therefore, when taking up in my conclusion the issue of paying witness.

Structure:

Having provided an introduction to non-Freudian masochism as a methodology, as well as a cursory look at the modern British novel as phenomena, I think best to proceed to my discussion of James and What Maisie Knew, before considering the moral

morass that characterizes Conrad's Lord Jim and The Secret Agent. The fourth chapter on E. M. Forster's Howards End inaugurates my consideration of specifically masculine embodiments of masochism. In the fifth and sixth chapters, I undertake a similar analysis of Lawrence's Sons and Lovers and Women in Love, and Virginia Woolf's Jacob's Room, respectively. Finally, my conclusion will reflect on the current state of scholarship that discusses the modern British novel. I will close with an assessment of the ultimate critical and pedagogical value of my methodology.

Chapter Two: Henry James

Henry James was born into a wealthy New York City family in 1843 to one of the best-known intellectuals in mid-nineteenth-century America, Henry James Sr., who included among his friends such literary-philosophical paragons as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Henry James Sr. situated his family, Freedman argues, “in conspicuous opposition to the emergent norms of the middle-class family,” not least in his “bold denunciation of the piety of family feeling” (*Moment 3*). The proud autonomist vision of Henry Senior, for that reason, well illustrates an allegiance to self that characterises the Jamesian attitude as a whole:

I love my father and mother, my brother and sister, but I deny their unconditional property in me. . . . I will be the property of no person and I will accept property in no person. I will be the son of my father and the husband of my wife, and the parent of my child, but I will be all these things in a thoroughly divine way, or only as they involve no obloquy to my inward rightness, only as they impose no injustice on me towards others. (qtd in Matthiessen 55 – 56)

This sense of self-commitment and self-reliance is everywhere in James Junior, most notably in those heroes who strive to achieve it.

James’ family experience, Freedman suggests, created those “affectional sensibilities” that made the author such “a shrewd observer of the crosscurrents of intimacy” and the “work of relation” (Freedman 2). Being “from the first pitched outside the newly dominant middle-class institution of the ‘family,’” Freedman suggests,

allowed James “to cast a sceptical eye on its effects in all the terrains it touched, both public and private” (Freedman, *Moment*, 2). How telling, then, that the “deep strangeness” of James’ familial dramaturgies are virtually “always” smothered in “gusts of perverse emotion” and instituted in the terrible “relation between intimacy and economy” (Freedman, *Moment*, 5). For, they parallel the “[r]ecurrent bouts of depression” that afflicted all the Jameses from Henry Senior on down, “as did varieties of alcoholism, self-balking or defeating behaviour, neurasthenia, business failure and suicide” (Freedman, *Moment*, 4).

Though James traveled back and forth between Europe and America in his youth, and successfully studied with tutors in Geneva, London, Paris, Bologna and Bonn, it was his limited success at Harvard Law School that provided him most with the opportunity to pursue writing as a profession. Although his first short story, “A Tragedy of Errors,” was published anonymously in 1864, his first signed tale, “The Story of a Year,” was only published in the Atlantic Monthly in 1865.

James’ regular contributions to the Nation (1866-69) and Atlantic Monthly (1871-72), however, had always validated his life-long prediction that he would be an important writer someday, even when his financial statements said otherwise. Yet, being important as a writer, as James very well knew, also meant becoming a novelist. Luckily, his enthrallment with the Victorian novel’s architecture was synonymous with his introduction to French, and German narrative forms which he read in the original languages, as well as to classics of Russian fiction, which he read in translation. The truly influential figures on James, however, were likely Hawthorne, who is the subject of

his first book of literary criticism, and Herman Melville, whose body of work has virtually the deepest degree of psychology in the novel genre. James' interest in authors writing in English, then, is equalled by his love for such other narrative titans of the psychological novel as Fyodor Dostoevsky and Gustave Flaubert.

Like many American works of fiction at the time, James' first novel, Watch and Ward (1871), was originally serialized in the Atlantic Monthly, and dramatizes the moral-psychological conflict of an adult male subsequent to becoming the legal guardian of a twelve-year-old girl who he plans to "marry" (sexually assault). The novel's plot foreshadows, then, the numerous curious relationships between adults and children that appear throughout the James oeuvre, even if the plot's shoddy development goes unnoticed next to the work's sterile characterization.

Subsequent to his time in Paris where he was contributor to the New York Tribune, however, James immigrated to England, where he lived first in London, and subsequently in Rye, Sussex. Likewise, the subject of James' first three novels offered situations in which Americans were living in Europe and include the Flaubertian naturalism of Roderick Hudson (1875) and The American, as well as his first internationally successful work, Daisy Miller (1878). That any writer could build a reputation as the pre-eminent American novelist of his time in fifteen years is even more incredible when one realizes that James' early period also includes the impressive A Portrait of a Lady (1881), and Washington Square (1882), his landmark essay on novel composition, "The Art of Fiction," as well as his less successful experiments in narrative naturalism, The Princess Cassamassima (1886) and The Bostonians (1886). Though

hardly exhaustive, in fact, this modest chronology of James' early literary life provides a context for the humiliation he suffered in 1895 in response to the failure of his first staged play, Guy Domville.

Few literary anecdotes are more evocative than that describing James's mortifying departure from the London stage subsequent to the general condemnation of Guy Domville. Less clear is how this humiliating disaster subsequently became the drawbridge between his past and his future, as well as involving the British novel's passage from the Victorian to the modern novel. Though such a feat seems immense today, James almost single-handedly transformed the exhausted satire and uninspired psychologism of the Victorian novel into the deceptively lithe, dramaturgically psychological, narrative immortalized in his three most important novels -- The Wings of the Dove (1902), The Ambassadors (1903), and The Golden Bowl (1904). One might say, then, that James' theatrical failure was inspired by the same fervour that later distinguishes the dramaturgical formalism of his novels.

At the same time, it is hard not to empathise with those lesser members of James' audience who no doubt felt confused and resentful towards James for radically changing the British novel. For James is the author "of some of the most mind-bogglingly obscure prose of his, or any, period," Freedman tells us, for, "[a]lthough some of his works make easy claims on reader's sensibilities . . . others set out quite consciously to challenge, or even to offend them" (*Preface*, xi). For that reason, E. M. Forster, among others, suggests that James' style constitutes a "poor show" even if it does fulfil its "aesthetic duty" (*Aspects* 142).

But, even Forster was impressed by the sheer volume of fiction James published between 1895 and 1899. Who would not be? Aside from the numerous short stories he published during this period, and his publication of two of the most profound psychological novellas in literature -- “The Cage” (1897), and “The Turn of the Screw” (1898) -- he also produced four fascinating, if cryptic, novels that include The Spoils of Poynton (1896), The Other House (1896), What Maisie Knew (1897), and The Awkward Age (1899).

James’s “moral scrutiny” of upper-middle class British values, moreover, is unparalleled in British fiction, with the exception of Dickens, in whose work grotesque caricature is also an artform. James need not have read Dickens, however, to know that audiences tolerate morality tales only when they are exceedingly facile, or inoffensive, or so deeply esoteric that they are unreadable. For, while the moral tension in works such as The Europeans (1879) and the 1881 version of Portrait of a Lady follow the psychological exposition of Gustave Flaubert, James’ post-1895 novels consist of a curious mixture of Dickens-like caricature and Eliot-like plot. Mrs. Gereth in The Spoils of Poynton, Ida Beale in What Maisie Knew, and Mrs. Brookenham in The Awkward Age, for example, are all reducible to the repugantly unsettling features of their physiognomies even as they also represent disturbing characteristics about British society. No wonder readers schooled in the satirical poignancy of Zola’s novels, and the extravagantly pregnant expositions of Flaubert, struggled to understand what James means when he alludes to Maisie’s successful “resistance” to the “strain of observation and the assault of experience,” no one had ever written in such a fashion before him

(*Maisie* 28).

Perhaps this is why, “[e]ach successive wave of theoretical and critical practise – New Criticism, deconstruction, feminism, Marxism, New Historicism -- stake[] their claims and exemplify[y] their style of interpretation by offering powerful re-readings of James” (*Moment* 1). For James genuinely is, as Jonathon Freedman suggests, never simply a “case” to be examined as “an object of critical scrutiny (if not condescension),” but rather, is always “a vital participant” in any theoretical “arena” (*Moment* 1). Having said that let us move onto *Maisie*.

“Of the things that help with the things that hurt”: Masochism, Memory and Malleability
in Henry James’ What Maisie Knew (1897)

“En tierra de ciegos, el tuerto es rey.”¹

Though surely it would surprise many to discover that the “evolution” of the child as an object of study in the art world “closely parallel[s]” the appearance of complex psychological characterization in the modern British novel, it would not have surprised Henry James (Shine 18). No doubt, James observed ways in which the attention of British society in general had shifted “from . . . concern with external phenomena,” to a “preoccupation with inner experience” (Shine 18). That while both concepts were once contemptuously rejected as, “noncognitive piece[s] of window-dressing,” each were to be radically re-conceived in the twentieth century, so that one now looked upon them as, “vessel[s] of consciousness to be explored in depth” (Shine 18). This is not to say, however, that the Victorian novel was bereft of discussion on the matter of psychology and children.² Indeed, Charles Dickens, George Eliot and Thomas Hardy all touched on this complex relationship in their *bildungsromans*. However, as the Edwardian era was about to take shape, the foremost novelist to “establish the child in literature as a worthy

¹ . Old Spanish Proverb: “in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.”

² For an excellent summary of this complex relationship, see Peter Coveney’s The Image of Childhood.

object of complete and honest invigilation” was the self-exiled genius, Henry James (Shine 174 -175).

Whereas British “opinion” failed to “question” with any real “certainty” what we would now call the moral “nature of childhood” until the turn of the century— the same cannot be said of James (Postman 67). Indeed, as his harsh condemnation of Edmond de Goncourt’s *Cherie* (1884) makes clear, James always attributed great importance to the cognitive development of children. The truly “deplorable failure” of Goncourt’s work, James suggests, is its incapacity to “trac[e]” the “development” of Cherie’s “consciousness” (*Art of Fiction* 180). Surely, this work was on the mind of James when he later dramatized Maisie Farange’s maturation from a “small expanding consciousness” (24) to a girl who knows “what she wants” (262).

How curious, then, that his moving depiction of the consequences of affective starvation on a growing consciousness arrives in the form of a subverted *bildungsroman*; particularly, as it is her response to the Non-Freudian masochistic adult behaviour she experiences in her environment that reveals most of what Maisie knows. James tells us in his introduction that what Maisie must “resist” is her psychopathological socialization (28). In a correspondence with a friend at the time, James further explains that Maisie personifies what was an explicit attempt, “to illustrate the marked difference between that which is old-fashioned parlance, a ‘story,’ and that which has the distinctive characteristics of what I call a Subject” (*Life* 299). The reader gains much by asking why it is that Maisie only “gets at experience by flattening her nose against” the “pane of glass” called reality (154). To coherently do so, we soon learn, requires understanding

the psychical disjunction in the adults inhabiting Maisie's environment, starting with her biological parents.

Those with "negative childhood experiences with primary caregivers" are exceedingly "vulnerable in the face of subsequent adversity," Bernice Andrews reports, because they perceive themselves as "responsible for, and deserving of, harsh treatment" (180). Nor is such self-condemnation "fleeting," Andrews tells us; rather, they suffer a "chronic" habituality that "invades" all aspects of their lives (185). "Soul blindness," as Wurmser calls it, refers to the "systematic, chronic disregard for the emotional needs and expressions of [a] child," as well as "a peculiar blindness to its individuality and hostility to its autonomy" (*Power* 191). For example, Maisie's cruel upbringing allows her "monstrous" mother to identify with her, as well as her own mother's, internally inscribed self-hatred, and cruel and selfish behaviour (Shine 114). The result of her treating her own daughter as if she were nothing more than "disavowed parts of herself," in short, is hostility and mystification (Wurmser, *Power*, 71).

Pathological self-blame is engendered in child-parent relationships, when one first "establishes a base of assurance and ease upon which more complicated, or more spontaneous, activities" can then arrive, for these experiences "allow [one] to discern the sense of [future] situation[s]" (Casey 151). These "habitual memories" are, in fact, what allow the child to function in the world, and comprise her/ his "internal history" (Casey 151). Brutal disruption of this mnemonic faculty by way of traumatic interaction between the child and her/ his self-object inevitably destroys its capacity for empathy and social development. In view of the fact that Maisie's knowledge of the world is

moulded by her biological parents' traumatizing behaviour we would expect her to be a basket-case, but it is they, rather than she, tellingly, who manifest affective disability.

For example, Ida's pathological fear of economic vulnerability is so great that she engineers affective crises in the life of her daughter, who then shares her anguish; as when she proclaims that Beale "wishes" they were both "dead" (174). By the same token, it is common for those who have been "made to feel inferior and subordinate as a result of past experiences" to "feel humiliated fury rather than righteous indignation when they are abused or mistreated in adulthood" (Andrews 186). Accordingly, Maisie's affective emaciation and gaunt physiology fuels her mother's clever seduction, which surprisingly commences with an "unexpected softness" (172). As her self-degrading confession to her daughter clearly displays, however, this cruelty is reserved as much for herself as for her daughter (172). "You're all I have," she admits to Maisie miserably, "and yet I'm capable" of abandoning you (174).

"[A]bused children are often told by their parents that that they are bad and unlovable," Andrews tells us, so it is not surprising to discover that they are often "more likely than others to respond to later abuse by blaming their character": especially when such abuse is self-inflicted (178). Perhaps, this is one reason, among many, why Ida grandiosely speaks only of her own sacrifice and honour during her final good-bye. At any rate, it is important to note just how fiercely illogical this proclamation to be Maisie's saviour actually is. "You will never know what I have been through about you," she tells her daughter severely, "never, never, never. I spare you everything, as I always have" (175). In fact, the idea that Ida has spared Maisie anything but the love

and compassion she needed is, of course, absurd. And yet, Ida clings to the illusion that she has been a good mother and has hidden the sordid details of her illness from her daughter, even as she chastises her for knowing them already: ““though I daresay that you know things that, if I did (I mean if I knew them), would make me -- well no matter!”” (175)

Changing tactics, Ida accuses Maisie of knowing what she supposedly concealed. ““You’re old enough at any rate to know there are a lot of things that I don’t say, though I easily might; though it would do me good, I assure you, to have spoken my mind for once in my life”” (175). Ida’s raison d’être, then, is “related to individual concerns about how [she] is regarded by others and is concerned with issues of defeat, intrusion, and ultimately destruction of the self” (Andrews 181). To use Andrews’ terminology, Ida “anticipates” her daughter’s “disdain and rejection” because she has always seen herself as “an inferior and submissive victim” (181). Ida’s perverse charge that Maisie has created “the trouble between” her and Beale, for example, is justified in the same perverse manner as her cryptic prediction that Maisie will “understand” “what it is to have lost a mother” only after she has lost everything (174). The archaic, maternal antagonism Ida always heretofore repressed now manifests itself in her parallel desertion of Maisie. It is important to note, however, that this reversal of fortune is accompanied physiologically.

In fact, Ida undergoes here what van der Kolk calls affective “disorientation,” a condition in which individuals become discombobulated and apprehensive because of intense reflexive “sensations” that inexplicably produce “unmodulated” (and therefore

unwanted) emotions (*Unpublished Lecture*). Ida's fit of rage, for example, expresses a self-directed aggression which results from her incapacity to delineate psychic boundaries between herself, her mother and her own daughter. Ida performs "the ultimate rejection a child can suffer" (Shine 114), then, because of the "deeply orienting" self-rejection at the core of her being (Casey 151). Little wonder, then, that Ida's accusations are ignorant of their farcical self-referentiality. "'When I say 'you,' she now hisses at Maisie, 'I mean your precious friends and backers'" (174). How strange it is, then, that Maisie's monstrous mother does not predispose her toward affective poverty and a gross mistrust of everyone.

Indeed, although Maisie is a damaged product, she is curiously not as damaged as one would expect. Moreover, the description of both Farange women during Ida's contemptuous, and final, leave-taking exposes the great degree to which Maisie is both similar to and different from her mother already. For example, consider the description of Maisie's esteem for her mother's fancy clothes and expensive jewellery as the latter menacingly "towers" over her in the "gathering dusk" (172). This is not to say, however, that Maisie is still too naïve to recognize the genuine malice that her mother feels for her. In fact, Maisie's eyes could "pretty well match" her mother's by "this time," we are told, which evocatively coincides with the "first flare of anger that had ever lighted her face for a foe" (172). Accordingly, her mother's departing words are accompanied by "one of those looks that slammed the door in [one's] face," as well as a final statement -- "[y]ou're a dreadful dismal deplorable little thing" -- that are more a testament to Maisie's superiority than anything else (176). How telling that Ida's blunt provocation

inspires her daughter towards self-sufficiency rather than self-flagellation, which allows Maisie to break this maternal cycle of abuse (176).

Her maternal atrocity, notwithstanding, Ida supplies her daughter with something like recognition, even if only in a poisonously self-interested manner. With his beard and “glittering” teeth “burnished like a breast plate,” on the other hand, Mr. Beale Farange fails to ever see his daughter as anything more than a plaything for his sinister dandy associates, or a bank account to be ransacked (39). This is not to suggest that the teleology of his manipulative arsenal is any less damaging than Ida’s. It is simply different. He orders Maisie’s first governess to repeatedly lie to her charge to ensure that she “always . . . remember[s]” that Beale sacrificed “everything” good in his life on “her account” (40). His passive aggression, in other words, makes Maisie more susceptible to his manipulation than to Ida’s malice.

This is not to imply, however, that Maisie is at ease in her father’s home. She “jumps,” in fact, whenever he “bursts into” one of his “loud laughs,” which, for Maisie, always seem to arrive “like some trick in a frightening game” (40). The manhandling she receives from the “smoking gentlemen” who loiter in her father’s house, moreover, only compounds her anxiety; most notably when they pinch her “skinny legs” and tease her for reasons she cannot fathom (40). On the whole, however, Maisie really never acclimatizes herself to the “bewildering shock of being laughed at unexpectedly by adults” and is predisposed towards paralyzing shame and confusion whenever she subsequently encounters male desire (Armstrong 11).

Even those parenting practises that initially seem honourable, we soon realize, are

always self-serving for Beale, as well as traumatizing for Maisie. His tendency to gesture with gritted teeth while violently “chucking” her mother’s tactless letters into “the fire,” for example, does not “spare her” from their horror, but merely substitutes one nightmare for another (39). Tellingly, Maisie experiences these episodes as if they were part of a “phantasmagoric” dream (39), for it is clearly in service of ego integrity, to use Wurmser’s phraseology, that Maisie “consciously split[s] off” from these potentiality “intrusive” situations (*Power* 65). It is only by way of her uncanny capacity to grasp “a foremost knowledge” of the disassociative regimen in her father’s household, in fact, that Maisie learns of the “proportionally greater niceness she is obliged to show” to men that “kiss” her (39), as well as the proper way in which to engage the faceless females who “address her as ‘[y]ou poor pet’ even as they are loathe to “touch her even to kiss her” (57). Moreover, although “concealment” does not “necessarily” mean “deception” in Beale’s house, Maisie soon learns there are many things she is ““never to ask about,”” nonetheless (54). In this way, what initially was an opaque “collection of images and echoes” is eventually transformed in Maisie’s mind into events with “attachable” “meanings” (40).

This method underscores the means by which Maisie learns about the world “[l]ittle by little,” and which she, then, teaches to her doll Lisette (55). As Maisie is “convulsed” by the same “innocence” as her French doll, the questions of the student “reproduce” the “effect of her own” (55). Children are often instructed in clinical therapy to engage in doll mimicry, so that an adult therapist can discover what a child often knows only subconsciously (Freyd 129, Engel 3). In this case, what such dollplay

reveals is evasion, denial and jouissance. Whenever asked by Lisette to explain “things she really couldn’t tell even a French doll,” for example, Maisie responds with a rhetoric so feeble that even she is left “wondering whether she succeeded in” avoiding the question, or had “shad[ed] off, like her mother, into the unknowable” (55). Likewise, Maisie routinely lies about her whereabouts to Lisette and justifies her behaviour on the grounds that there are “matters one couldn’t ‘go into’ with a pupil” (55). Tellingly, Maisie’s “sharp” response to Lisette’s inquiries into her “motives” for “disappear[ing]” in the middle of the night leaves her feeling “rather ashamed,” even as she is “not quite clear” whether it is because of the “sharpness or of the mimicry” (55). Thus, Maisie learns to protect herself from the behaviour of others, even if it means replicating their rash and irresponsible behaviour.

Yet, what makes this novel so interesting is that Maisie knows things that are inaccessible to the adults in the novel. This requires that she engage in a regimen of emotional fortification, as her final discussions with her biological parents clearly show. Consider, for example, her father’s final adieu, which is so full of lies that the reader can hardly make sense of it, let alone an eight year-old girl. In a display of almost inconceivable cynicism, he reminds Maisie in the cruellest way of her mother’s abandonment only days earlier, so as to manipulate the fact that he is all the family Maisie has left:

“I don’t want to bully you -- I never bullied you in my life; but make you the offer, and it’s to take or to leave. Your mother will never again have any more to do with you than if you were a kitchenmaid she had turned out for going wrong. Therefore, of course, I’m your natural protector and you’ve a right to get everything out of me that you can. Now’s your chance, you know

-- you won't be half-clever if you don't. You can't say I don't put it before you -- you can't say that I ain't kind to you or that I don't play fair. Mind you never say that -- you know -- it would bring me down on you." (152)

Though initially unable to "give him up" (153), Maisie now apprehends that "he had brought her there for so many caresses only because it was important such an occasion should look better for him than any other" (152).

His evasive and obfuscating explanations, she now realizes, were but an attempt to "embarrass her somehow into admitting that what would really suit her" would be for him "to leave her wholly at liberty to arrange for herself" (152). In fact, he "communicate[s] in a series of tremendous pats on the back" that Maisie "should let him off with all the honours, with all the appearance of virtue and sacrifice on his side" (153). Most disturbing is that Beale attempts this cunning sham only because he has discovered a new legal means by which to secure Maisie's inheritance, and to continue to exploit her indefinitely, even as she struggles to survive her abject poverty. Maisie fully comprehends, then, that her father doesn't give a damn about her love or devotion, only about her money, as well as the appearance of his having done right.

Beale now begins a mean-spirited, though "pleasantly" toned, conversation with Maisie about her guardians, Mrs. Wix and Sir Claude, who he presently characterizes as "probably the worst people in the world and the very greatest criminals" (154). When Maisie cleverly responds that this does not "prevent them from loving her . . . tremendously," his unabated laughter ceases only long enough for him to forecast their future abandonment of her, the instant her money "ceases to [be] required" (154). This

ghastly prediction pales, however, in contrast to his sinister condemnation of Sir Claude and the second Mrs. Beale for having “made” a “monster” of Maisie (154). How telling it is that this father-daughter discussion began with Maisie’s vow to go “anywhere” with her biological father, but concludes with his cold, penniless “detachment” (150). Maisie is “so eager” to get away from him, in fact, that their parting reminded her of nothing, not even of a single one of all the nevers that . . . he had attached to the question of their [ever] meeting again” (159). Having realized what charlatans both her parents are, Maisie refuses to be drawn anymore into their “games” of deception; in effect, she finally sees them as the vindictive swindlers they really are (152).

Accordingly, it is disappointing to discover that Maisie’s “step-parents”-- Miss Overmore (later, Mrs. Beale), and Sir Claude--are no less shamelessly self-interested. Having been promptly promoted from the rank of governess to that of brash step-mother, the present Mrs. Beale now secures the attention of Sir Claude, though his inheritance consists of nothing but his charm and good looks. In fact, though he is not so uncouth as to admit it aloud, he exploits her (as well as Ida, Mrs. Wix and Maisie) precisely in order to secure Maisie’s money to himself. Predictably, this genteel facade disintegrates subsequent to the second Mrs. Beale’s detection of Maisie’s request that Sir Claude abandon her; at which point she begins to refer to her former charge as an “abominable little horror” (264). “Have you been a hideous little hypocrite all these years that I’ve slaved to make you love me and deludedly believed you did,” she enquires defiantly (264). Importantly, this question illuminates the unpalatable vulgarity at the heart of the

novel, namely, that this group portrait of adults consists of individuals who cannot comprehend human beings except in economic terms, as “capital” and commodities.

Consider the life philosophy of Sir Claude, for example, which ultimately boils down to one principle: procuring material sustenance from others. How appropriate, then, that Maisie thinks most of his “general glossiness and smartness” whenever she thinks of him (64). For, though much criticism considers this social chameleon to be an incorrigible, Falstaffian boob, he is no more moral than any of the other grifters in the novel. His penchant for economically motivated seduction, in fact, exposes him as a sexual predator. Whereas Mrs. Wix envisions herself with her charge and Sir Claude on an island, for example, both Ida and Miss Overmore are attracted to his sensuality, while Maisie considers him to be her knight in shining armour.

Given that his prostitution is the antithesis of such a union, it could not be more appropriate that Sir Claude is the one who actually extinguishes Maisie’s dream to be part of a loving family. Thankfully, Maisie already recognizes “in the light of his beautiful eyes, the faintest purest coldest conviction that he was not telling the truth,” and will not succumb to his charms as the other women in the novel do (238). But this does not alter the fact that Sir Claude’s characteristic grandiosity hides all the ugly things he does in the service of sustaining the façade of a gentleman. For example, he applauds himself for having made Maisie into ““the most beautiful thing [he] has [ever] met,”” though he has no basis, in fact, for having done so, which allows him to pretend her “sacred” “exquisite[ness]” is rooted in something other than Maisie’s potential inheritance (262).

His abandonment of Maisie and Mrs. Wix at the end of the novel, therefore, is not a single act of “weakness”, but characteristic of the malevolent manipulation of which he is always capable (255). His attempts to convince Maisie that Mrs. Wix is the only obstacle still left between them and their happiness is another good case in point. “‘Mrs. Wix is the obstacle’ between ‘us,’” Claude passionately insists at one point, that is, if “‘she’s affected you,’” Maisie (248). Mrs. Wix is an obstacle, that is, if she impedes his access to Maisie’s legacy.

Accordingly, we should also consider how Sir Claude preys on Maisie’s intense desire to be part of a family, as well as on her general ignorance of the law, when she is most vulnerable. “‘No one can contradict’ the law, he informs her in an intimidating fashion, so ‘we can’t get out of it’” (247). When a favourable outcome begins to seem in doubt, he threatens her with legal action. I “‘stand absolutely in the place of your parents,’” he aggressively charges (251). He tells her that it has been “‘their defection,’” and “‘their extraordinary baseness that has made our responsibility. Never was a young person more directly committed and confided’” (251). How appropriate, then, that these attacks do nothing but illustrate the immoral character of his compulsive grandiosity. So why do critics such as Paul Theroux continue to consider Sir Claude a misguided hero when he has neither the empathy of Merton Densher in *The Wings of a Dove*, nor the emotional complexity of the Prince in *The Golden Bowl* (15)? Though he seems benign when compared to the other thieves and cheats in the novel, he is still a swindler. Clearly, Maisie knows as much when the novel ends, even if Mrs. Beale and Mrs. Wix do not.

Logically, Maisie's tale ends with Mrs. Wix by her side rather than her biological or adoptive parents. Even if Mrs. Wix's emotion is misdirected mourning for a dead daughter, it makes Maisie feel, nonetheless, as if her life "is of consequence to someone" (119). Despite her well-meaning motives, however, one cannot ignore how Mrs. Wix still endeavours to "dominate []" her charge "with much the same stifling effect as the manipulations practised by others with less righteous aims" (Armstrong 23). Likewise, miscommunication difficulties between the pair are often revealed. For example, whereas Mrs. Wix sees Maisie as "a little person" who "knows so extraordinarily much," Maisie believes that Mrs. Wix perceives her as all "the more [superficial] the more she tried to appear complete" (217). Luckily, these anxious misunderstandings resemble those found in healthy parent-child relationships, as when Maisie believes the tears of her governess are a result of having lost Sir Claude to Mrs. Beale, when, in fact, they are the result of being told that she has accepted the pair as her new stepparents. We are told that Maisie "saw"

the straighteners all blurred with tears which after a little seemed to have sprung from her own eyes. There were tears in fact on both sides of the spectacles, and they were even so thick that it was presently all Maisie could do to make out through them that slowly, finally, Mrs. Wix put forth a hand. It was the material pressure that settled this and even at the end of some minutes more things besides. It settled in its own way one thing that in particular, which, though often, between them, heaven knew, hovered round and hung over, was yet to be established without the shadow of an attenuating smile. (217)

Clearly, "something" takes "place" inside Maisie's "closer consciousness" as she lies hand in hand with her governess (218). For this "unutterable sign of their union" (218) inaugurates so powerful an autonomy in Maisie that even her subsequent regressions

into “old flat shameful schoolroom pleas” of ignorance prove to be none other than interludes in the evolution of her affectivity (260). We now understand that Maisie’s “successful” “resistance” to the “strain of observation and the assault of experience” is, in fact, her capacity for affectivity (28).

Therefore, the frame of reference in James’ *bildungsroman* concerns those experiences that the protagonist has successfully resisted, or repressed; the latter term refers to “a certain power of the mind” to “defend itself from emotionally overwhelming events by removing certain experiences and emotions from conscious awareness” (Loftus and Ketcham 7). But surely Maisie does more than simply drown out the gross behaviour of the adult world. In fact, her realization that her parents “desire” “to be rid” of her compels her to manipulate their “theory of her stupidity” (43). For that is the reason why Maisie derives “pleasure” from playing the “little idiot,” and “toils” with “great strain” (40) to transform “old forms and phrases” she has collected from the adult world, into part of an intuitive “sense” of danger “concealing” her “inner self” (43). Just as an adult’s swinging hand has, “significance for a little person trained in that relation, from an early age, to keep an eye on manual motions,” Maisie protects herself from her affective environment, as much as her physical one (175). In short, Maisie “recognize[s]” the malevolence of her environment and repudiate[s]” it by way of behavioural adaptation (Shine 116).

But how can Maisie both evade the self-flagellating tendencies of her parents while remaining sensitive enough to recognize in Mrs. Wix’s “voice” “something” that had heretofore not “yet been reached”? (48) Her “small demonic foresight” (25), for

example, cannot explain her “strange” and “confused” reaction to Mrs. Wix’s promise to “never let her go”; nor why such affective intensity always retards her capacity to make a “statement” about her experience (48). Furthermore, how is it possible that Maisie comprehends the “madness”, “darkness and death” propelling her mother’s masochistic pathologies, without being affected by them? (265). How is it possible, moreover, that Maisie concludes the novel “afraid of nothing” (256) when only hours earlier she had been drunk with the conviction that she had “lost everything”? (251) Or, to ask the question using the phraseology of Cathy Caruth, if the traumatized are “themselves the symptom of a history that they cannot entirely possess,” how can we understand the impossible histories they communicate? (5).

If we are to find an answer to those, as well as the following question(s), how could “so young a person” as Maisie “remain fresh” after so traumatizing a childhood, we must return to the question of subjectivity in the novel (28). There is an old Spanish Proverb, which says that, “en tierra de ciegos, el tuerto es rey,” which means, “in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king.” Though the logic is reversed, the same holds true for the child-parent relationship in Maisie, in which the protagonist is saved from the absurdly self-destructive (or non-Freudian masochistic) pathology observed in adults, even though she retains the scars of her grotesque childhood. More importantly, Maisie’s final fate dramatically underscores the poignant corporeality of Victorian subjectivity, which in turn, lends James’ adult characters that “precious element of dignity” that is necessary for soliciting genuine audience empathy (29). In fact, any cultural texts that increase our appreciation of how “somebody’s right and ease” is

always the basis for “somebody” else’s “pain and wrong,” James seems to say to us, are constitutive of the “things that help with the things that hurt” (25). For what Maisie’s impossible subjectivity ultimately reveals is the understanding, care and compassion that adults must have for one another, as well as for their children. The “things that help with the things that hurt,” then, are those that create, investigate and discover the means by which society better understands just how debilitating such conditions are even when their end is not fatal.

Chapter Three: Conrad

Non-Freudian Masochism in Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim³ (1900)

Psychopathological literary theories reveal how happiness resides in one's ability to negotiate a fruitful contingency between the psychology of one's past and one's present. Historically, psychoanalytically oriented criticism of Conrad's novels used methodologies conversant with Freudian psychoanalysis and fixed on issues of biography, politics, and style. This chapter's psychopathological approach, however, uses a non-Freudian masochism to explain the "suicidal" end of Lord Jim and Winnie Verloc, the two protagonists of Conrad's two greatest psychological novels, Lord Jim and The Secret Agent.

Despite the mountains of critical analyses concerned with the psychology of Conrad's Lord Jim, we can nevertheless loosely parcel much of it into three groups: namely, the "proto-psychological," the structural, and the poststructural (or post-colonial). By "proto-psychological" I mean that positivist psychological approaches based on the work of Sigmund Freud which had surfaced as early as the nineteen-thirties, and like the infamous work by Gustaf Morf (1930), focused on the doubling configurations in Conrad's narrative. New Criticism's subsequent understanding of narrative in semiotic terms, however, inaugurated exemplary socio-linguistic readings of

³ Part of this chapter was published in Conradiana 3: 33 (fall 2001) pp. 231- 250 as, "'To grapple with another man's intimate need': Trauma-Shame Interdependency in Joseph Conrad's Lord Jim."

the novel, such as Albert J. Guerard's Conrad the Novelist (1958). More recently, poststructural methodologies have appropriated the lion's share of critical debate; for instance, Frederic Jameson argues that, "the impossibility of narrative beginnings" in Conrad's work serves as textual signification for imperial guilt (208-209), leading subsequent postcolonial critics to read Lord Jim as an artefact of colonizer dysphoria.

Nonetheless, the critical canon has always converged upon one main theme or topic: in particular, the fine ethical distinctions separating Jim's heroism from Brown's treachery. For many critiques see these men as antithetically symbolic of naval values, and quickly stigmatize Brown while building a case for the ethical position of Jim. Brown's presentation as a diabolic being encourages one to view his nemesis as a virtual Christ-figure more sinned against than sinning (Verleun, *Perspectives*). Cedric Watts (*Preface*), similarly, comprehends Jim's final decision on Patusan to indicate his noble adherence to a sanctified naval code. Zdzislaw Najder agrees, and reminds us that Conrad's sense of heroism is undoubtedly different from our present-day view of such an action, and that Jim's fulfilment of his word is, in actuality, an honourable deed. These views collectively suffer, however, from, sometimes dubious, comparisons between Jim and Brown, particularly when explaining why the latter so fundamentally disrupts the ethos of the former. In contrast, contemporary work supported by present-day psychiatric methodologies can help us understand, rather than stigmatize the two sailors, and in turn, provides a more satisfying account of Marlow's representations of Jim and Brown. When examined in terms of trauma and shame psychology (non-

Freudian masochism), in particular, Marlow's narrative divulges the truly haunting circumstances that lead one man to his death and the other to a life of perpetual exile.

It is no coincidence that Conrad's infamous disgust with Freudian psychoanalytic theory is in harmony with the aggressive critiques subsequently levelled by poststructuralism. Conrad further charges psychoanalytic theory with subsuming the works of creative imagination to dregs of rationality, as well as the artist to the dilettante. For example, in response to H. R. Lenormand's request in 1921 that he apply Freudian analysis to two of his characters -- Almayer and Jim -- Conrad replied with characteristic opacity, "I have no wish to propel the depths. I like to regard reality as a rough and rugged object over which I can run my fingers. Nothing more" (as qtd Stallman 4). Stallman further relates how Conrad promptly, thereafter, returned to the Frenchman the Freudian works he had sent him, along with a letter inscribed with a "scornful" polemic against Freud (107).

In fact, Conrad's lampoon of psychoanalysis' excessive seriousness was consistent with the prevailing post-Edwardian anxiety vis-à-vis technology and science that suggested that empiricism could usurp the potentialities of imaginative independence. Notwithstanding his hostility towards psychoanalysis, Conrad is still considered to be one of the greatest modernist psychologists today, just as he was in his own time. Consider, for example, Edward Garnett's anonymous review of Youth (1902), in which he suggests that the profundity of his "psychological masterpieces" lies in the capacity to reveal the "obscure motives and instincts" that inhabit "the sub-conscious life within us" (132). Owen Knowles and Gene Moore concur with Garnett and suggest that

Conrad's work is full of men who suffer from "Bovarysme," a psychological condition where, "avatars of an extreme and even dangerously exaggerated individualism . . . suffer from an inflated conception of the value of the self" (119). From this perspective, Jim is understood to be a perpetual victim of "everyday life and the constraints of bourgeois morality," an anti-hero "whose subsequent struggles with an unsympathetic world inevitably end in defeat" (Knowles and Moore 119). In short, each man exhausts himself running from those who mean most to them, yet fail to comprehend how their masochistic behaviour originates in trauma and shame. For that reason, neither finds solace in the company of the other despite sharing self-destructive tendencies. Logically, then, we should start by examining the fundamental value each man grapples with: heroism.

The question of heroism is of central importance in the novel because each man treats it fantastically. Jim's idea of heroism, for example, is exceedingly romantic and undeniably influenced by the paradoxical vocation of his morally indifferent parson father. Jim's father "possessed such certain knowledge of the Unknowable," we are told, "as made for the righteousness of people in cottages without disturbing the ease of mind of those whom an unerring Providence enables to live in mansions" (39). His father's ambivalence towards the hypocrisy of the wealthy suggests that Jim grows up associating amorality with the Unknowable and becomes his own "Lord" because the Christian one is revered by too many casuists.

What else is a boy from a family of five sons to do? We cannot forget that he frivolously decides "upon the sea as a vocation" after enjoying "a course of light holiday

literature” (40). Surely, this is a shot at Jim’s father whose Christian vocation is, at least morally speaking, non-ecclesiastical. Having found his own calling to the sea Jim is “sent at once” to train with the Merchant Marine, and although the narrative omits any information about whether or not he enjoys it, it does reveal that Jim was “generally liked” (40). At the merchant marine officer training-ship, Jim envisions conquering “savages” on “tropical shores,” and quelling “mutinies on the high seas” (40). He believes that he will become a captain who is “always an example of devotion to duty, and as unflinching as a hero in a book,” a captain who is capable of raising the “hearts of despairing men” (40). In short, he foresees being much like his father, a man who plays at being something he is not (a man of God, servant of the poor, beacon of charity), and who also lives a life full of grandiose self-deception. Above all, we realize the disjunction in Jim between moral responsibility and fantastical projection, although his grandiosity becomes deadly only after he is made the third mate on the Patna.

A brief recapitulation of Jim’s hallucinatory, traumatic experience on the Patna is, perhaps, useful here. Reaching the ship’s hull Jim concludes that it is virtually rotted through, but rather than alert those around him, he counterintuitively moves to the bridge where he quickly realizes that the two officers ranked above him have already negotiated a lifeboat for themselves. Rather than assist them, however, Jim denounces their behaviour and curses them; nevertheless, he neglects to tell the crew about the remaining lifeboats and thereby prevents their only means of escape. As a tempest follows their escape, Jim and the other officers presume that the Patna is sunk when they can no longer establish its position. Contrary to their expectations, however, the ship is safely

towed to port with its human cargo very much alive. The officers of the ship, on the other hand, are first towed to Aden by a French gunboat, and then to Bombay, to face trial for desertion.

Although Jim's inability to elucidate his horrifying experience at his trial is understandable, his refusal to accept that he acted as any man might in his circumstances, certainly is not. At any rate, Jim's inability to speak at his trial is consistent with what in the language of trauma theory is called a "proto-experience," an experience that, because of its shocking, chaotic nature, is never realized. Jim's inability to explain his "proto-experience" at the trial, likewise, suggests how disassociated he is from the memory of the event itself:

They wanted facts! Facts! They demanded facts from him, as if facts could explain anything! After his first feeling of revolt he had come around to the view that only a meticulous precision of statement would bring out the true horror behind the appalling face of things. The facts those men were so eager to know had been visible, tangible, open to the senses, occupying their place in space and time, requiring for their existence a fourteen ton steamer and twenty-seven minutes by the watch; they made a whole that had features, shades of expression, a complicated aspect that could be remembered by the eye, and something else besides, something invisible, a directing spirit of perdition that dwelt within, like a malevolent soul in a detestable body. (60)

Despite the intensity of his memory, however, he cannot remember the moment at which he jumped from the ship and since the issue of desertion is of primary importance, it is not surprising that Jim begins to feel "irrelevant" at his own trial (61). As Bessel van der Kolk notes, "at the core of our traumatized and neglected patients' disorganization is the problem that they cannot analyze what is going on when they re-experience the physical sensations of past trauma but that these sensations just produce intense emotions without

being able to modulate them” (*Lecture*). This description does, indeed, help explain the confusion that inevitably emerges as debilitating shame.

Babette Rothschild suggests that many who have suffered trauma feel much “shame for freezing or ‘going dead’ and not doing more to protect themselves or others by fighting back or running away. In those instances, one's understanding that freezing is [basically] automatic facilitates the difficult process of self-forgiveness” (11-12). Drowning in an “everlasting deep hole” of shame, Jim never does provide the Tribunal with an adequate reason for his behaviour, and only asks that his punishment be execution (126). Being a third mate on the ship, however, he is not responsible for it and, therefore, is only stripped of his commission. Jim is nonetheless metaphorically executed because of his failure to fulfill his grandiose ideal of heroism; it is ironic that he builds his self-destruction on his failure and, thereby, sabotages any future chance he might have had to become a brave man.

As most critics have noted, it is no coincidence that Jim's two major life catastrophes initially appear to offer favourable circumstances and yet nonetheless end in his humiliation; nor have critics overlooked that the first failure is on a ship named the Patna and the second is on an island named Patusan. On the Patna, Jim suffers what Lansky and Morrison categorize as intense “exposure” to his psychic “integrity,” which results in hyper-anticipation of others’ “disapproval and rejection,” and is “internalize[d]” in the “form of self-reproach” (8). “Self-consciousness,” in this context, is an internalized punishment engendered in the superego, and debilitating shame is the affective result of the shattered ego (Lansky and Morrison 8). As Brown and Jim have

both failed in their individual pursuits, it is logical to find that each fears, as well as constructs the means of their degradation.

Marlow makes it clear, for instance, that Brown's capacity for empathy is dysfunctional because of his youthful love affair with a dying, married woman. Brown's life is well "reported," in this regard, Marlow tells us, and subsequent to her death Brown had to leave his birthplace because others found his love for the missionary wife to be disgraceful. People found it especially so, in fact, because the woman was already "ill at the time he carried her off, and died aboard his ship," Marlow reports, it is said "that over her body he gave way to an outburst of sombre and violent grief" (321). Thus, although neither sailor recognizes what propensity leads them towards precisely those situations that are most self-destructive, they are clearly subservient to them. No wonder Brown is so "down on his luck" when he initially meets Jim, for he lives in fear of a "fierce, aggressive" world that he believes has "bullied" him for twenty years (322). Nor is it remarkable that Brown is "tired of life and not afraid of death," as his life of "suffering" has gained him "nothing in material advantage" (322).

"Outer masochism" is a term describing behaviour in which one's main relationships with others seem to reflect an incessant search for, and a clinging to, tormenting and humiliating partners, a need to end up as the victim (Wurmser, *Power* 368). Jim seeks out situations that torment him, and although he does not retain, as Brown does, a blatant disregard for his own body, he ultimately shares with him the need for personal destruction. Both men carry a burden, accordingly, a series of sins that, at least initially, seems to obligate them to one another. Knowles and Moore suggest that

Brown “provides readers with an extreme interpretative crux,” and “challenges” them “to determine how, and in what measure, this malign Iago-like figure draws on the ‘best’ and ‘weakest’ spots in Jim” (49). Marlow illuminates the dualism in their characters, in addition, by (seemingly) dissolving the characteristics of both sailors into one person. ““There ran through the rough talk a vein of subtle reference to their common blood, an assumption of common experience,” ““a sickening suggestion of common guilt, of secret knowledge that was like a bond of their minds and of their hearts”” (350). As neither man knows dignity, however, each is fixated on the contempt each perceives in the eyes of the other.

Although Jim and Brown both suffer from traumatic symptoms, each manifests them in different ways. Jim’s trauma, for example, engenders in him a “narcissistic fantasy” analogous to a martyr complex, and internalized by way of a most shameful vulnerability. Narcissistic fantasies serve in traumatic situations “as protection against helplessness,” Wurmser suggests, and “a particularly important version of such protective omnipotence” is a delusion manifested in one’s “omnipotence of responsibility” (*Moral Masochism* 378). These self-effacing projections supplement a genuinely sincere belief in the notion that the trauma could have been avoided if only one had only been “strong and good enough” (Wurmser, *Power*, 378). Irrational appropriation of a hypothetical “guilt” in turn initiates a “rescue mission” mode of masochism, where, in order to transgress vulnerability, one appropriates “hypothetical” guilt for the horror one has experienced (Wurmser, *Power*, 378). This linear progression characterizes both Jim’s shame over the Patna affair, as well as his later saviour complex

on Patusan, and explains why he cannot later withdraw from his agreement with Doramin.

Inner or moral masochism, conversely, entails the berating and shaming of oneself, and is emblematic of both Jim's and Brown's relations with each other, as well as with themselves (Wurmser, *Power*, 368). No doubt it is Brown's familiarity with his own shameful legacy that allows him to see Jim's character so clearly. For instance, Brown quickly discerns that Jim's residence on Patusan must be some sort of disciplinary action: "and what do you deserve?" he asks Jim in an accusatory manner (346). When Brown later confesses his incapacity to desert any crew, moreover, he inadvertently alludes to Jim's shame: he claims that his own moral standards would prevent him from leaving anyone, "in a d-d lurch" (347).

Conversely, Jim is neither afraid to stand trial nor go to jail, while Brown lives, "in mortal fear of imprisonment" (322). We now see that Brown's life is a mirror image of Jim's, both having suffered intense shame and fear. For that reason, either man could offer Brown's bitter and angry defence of his existence. "I am here because I was afraid once in my life," he exclaims to Jim, afraid, that is, of "prison" (347). How apposite, then, that Jim's "looking" at the "ground" with a face as "black as thunder" warns of his impending demoralization and death (351).

Whereas Jim's neurosis is most manifest in his defensive "rescue mission" fantasy, Brown's condition is best described by the term "reversal." "Reversal is a turning of the passive into active," Wurmser tells us, "ego-psychologically speaking, it is identification with the aggressor or with the trauma" (*Power* 376). Reversal is habitually

exteriorized as rage and directed outwardly through cruel and selfish behaviour, and is manifest in Brown's increasingly violent rage. Brown feels only "vehement scorn for mankind at large and for his victims in particular," Marlow tells us, and he "enjoys" his "misdeeds" (322-23). The old salt also suggests, however, that Brown's nihilism is a product of his masochistic compulsions, an internal hatred that makes him an alien even to himself:

No doubt the natural senseless ferocity which is the basis of his [Brown's] character was exasperated by failure, ill-luck, and the recent privations, as well as, by the desperate position in which he found himself; but what was most remarkable of all was this, that while he planned treacherous alliances, had already settled in his own mind the fate of the white man, and intrigued in an overbearing, offhand manner with Kassim, *one could perceive that what he had really desired, almost in spite of himself, was to play havoc with that jungle town that had defied him, to see it strewn over with corpses and enveloped in flames.* (Italics mine 337)

Wurmser refers to such a compulsion as the "reexternalization of the cruel conscience," where others are treated with, "the same scorn and are punished with the same pitiless harshness" the masochist exercises on her/ himself (*Power* 379). Generated in an "all-pervasive" "anxiety of envy," reversal manifests in the defeatist attitudes of those who suffer from it (*Power* 373). Accordingly, Brown's presumption that Jim is one of the "white men" from "where he did not think himself good enough to live," is a sign of this all-pervasive anxiety (349). When first making his acquaintance, in fact, "Brown hated him," Marlow tells us, and silently "cursed" Jim's "clear eyes" and "untroubled bearing" (344).

The narrative parallel, then, is clear: Jim mistakenly believes on the Patna that he is responsible for the fate of the ship's crew just as he later erroneously believes the

entire island of Patusan is reliant upon him. Jim infantilizes those in his care, and refuses to take account of their opinions; therefore he suffers not only from an inability to speak, but also from the incapacity to listen. Marlow finds a parallel in Jim's inability to communicate at his trial in his later inability to produce for Jewel a rational explanation for his fatalism. Marlow reminds us, then, of another doubling between the events on the Patna and Patusan: Jim's shame blinds him to Brown's intentions, just as it stops him from informing the crew of the Patna about the location of the ship's extra lifeboats.

Similarly, Jim unilaterally decides to surrender his life to Doramin which condemns Jewel to a life of misery. Previous to his final march Jewel implores him to remember his past unsolicited promise to her: "I asked you for no promise," Jewel reprimands him, "you promised" yourself to me, "unasked" (369). In other words, Jim's selectively kept promises function as aspects of his masochism. His dismissal of Jewel's reproach reveals how he has never, even on Patusan, been able to acquire a sense of dignity, nor has he ever been able to understand her love for him. Her assertion that he belongs to her ("thou art mine"), likewise, is subsumed by a radically excessive self-judgment that has convinced him his death is inconsequential, that he is no longer "worth having" (369). As Rothschild suggests, while "disassociation appears to be an instinctive response to save the self from suffering . . . it exacts a high price in return" (13). For Jim that price is everything.

It is crucial to note the irony here. During the crisis on the Patna, Jim should have enabled the passengers and crew to be saved, but chose not to because of his fear that such news would generate total chaos. In addition, when he chooses not to tell Doramin

about the actual danger Brown represents, he infantilizes the people of Patusan in precisely the same manner. Jim's decision to give up his life, then, is explicitly dishonourable, a manifestation of his grandiosity, rather than a fulfilment of heroic action. Jim infantilizes those he claims to care for, and then leaves them when they are most vulnerable; his grandiosity prohibits him from being able to actually love anyone. Jewel's conclusion that Jim is "false," consequently, is unwittingly astute, especially as his propensity to failure appears only in situations where heroic action is possible. Thus, Jim's behaviour on Patusan illustrates that he never overcame his initial delirium on the Patna. As Rothschild says of trauma victims, the "perception of the event" is "over," but the experience of "having survived is missing" (12).

Jim does undergo severe traumata and so it may be inadequate to explain his fate as the inevitable result of his lack of will when it may be a sheer failure of his body, an instinctive collapse, if you will. Rothschild reminds us that the limbic system in a body responds to extreme traumatic threat by releasing hormones that ready the body for defensive action. These defences usually run across three various fronts. First, if the limbic perception is that there is adequate strength, time and space for flight one will flee. This is, in fact, what we see Jim do when he endeavours to flee the Patna. Second, if there is not adequate time to flee but only to defend, then the body will fight. Finally, when there is neither enough time to flee nor to defend, "the victim of trauma enters an altered reality" (9-10). Clearly, this is the mental space Jim finds himself in after the death of Dain Waris and his men.

Marlow proposes that Jim wanted to explain himself after the death of Dain

Waris, but was so paralyzed by his sense of worthlessness that he found communication impossible: “It was then I believe he tried to write -- to somebody,” Marlow suggests, and “gave it up” (367). His inability to speak, in other words, comes only in moments of severe crisis, as, significantly, he chooses to go to his execution “without” saying a “word” (370); in fact, his only acknowledgment of Jewel’s requests that he salvage himself is the poignant rejoinder that there is “nothing to fight for” when “nothing is lost” (369). Moreover, Jim’s bad faith is simply impossible to disregard when one considers that had he killed Brown at the outset, the latter never would have cost him the lives of Dain Waris and his men. Watts agrees, and further suggests that Jim’s “consequent lenience to Brown” ultimately “precipitates the death of [the] local inhabitants” (*Preface* 132). It is clear that Jim’s masochistic character ends in destroying his life as well as those of the people who honour and love him.

The more esoteric meanings in the novel, on the other hand, emerge through the symbolic patterns surrounding the “relationships” between Conrad and Marlow, and that between Marlow and us: it is as if Conrad wants not only to tell us about Jim’s horror but to fill us with a sense of it. One finds in Conrad’s novel, Watt suggests, a “verbal equivalent” of having attempted “to render visual sensations directly” (176). More specifically, Watt sees Conrad’s technique as conducive to that in impressionist painting which is called, “delayed decoding” (175). Such a technique, as Watt understands it, “combines the forward temporal progression of the mind, as it receives messages from the outside world, with the much slower reflexive process of making out their meaning” (175). The chaotic picture of reality Marlow provides for his audience also fills a reader

with a sense of opacity and disassociation, which intimates an analogue between Conrad and his privileged narrator, and one between Marlow and us.

What I am suggesting is that Conrad heuristically uses Marlow as an authorial mask and means to illustrate that our imagination must be used in order for our lives to make sense. The narrative relationship between Jim and Marlow, like that between an event and an elucidation of it, discloses the hermeneutical element in the fiction: when the facts are too horrible to be communicated, informed speculation is often the best solution. Berman notes in a similar manner that “fictional characters” often “awaken” “countertransference problems,” and rightly directs us to the failure in literary theory to create a critical space in which individuals can “discuss in print their narcissistic strivings and defences” (254 -255).

Marlow provides us with apologies for Jim and Brown so that the reader can learn a valuable life lesson. “Everything was gone,” Marlow editorializes, once Jim accepted that he had “been unfaithful to trust” (367). Inversely, our trust is perfectly safe with Marlow, as long as we can accept, as Jim cannot, that on occasion things go horribly wrong and that no one is at fault. Our narrator does not relate to us what happens to Jim and Brown in reality, only what must be. When meditating on the curious circumstances of Brown’s arrival, for example, Marlow shows his remarkable position in the narrative by having Jim wonder to himself, “[h]ave we met to tell each other the story of our lives?” (347). He also shows his hand when stating to his reader that, “having, run his appointed course,” Brown “sails into Jim’s history” (332). Therefore, Marlow stylizes this story in a manner that ensures that Brown is virtually postulated as

Jim's doppelganger in order that the reader can grasp that a similarly horrible fate could befall almost anyone.

Perhaps it is for this reason that Ursula Lord's insistence on reading Marlow's presupposed narrative equivocation ideologically seems so reductive. She is mistaken to suggest that it represents "the epistemological theme of the elusiveness of truth," in modernism that, in turn, "paradigmatic of the self-doubt and incipient failure of imperialism" (147). This is not to say that Conrad's work does not abound with rich political commentary; indisputably it does. It is only to suggest that we sell ourselves, as well as Conrad short, when we ignore genuine opportunities for empathy in favour of socio-political commentary, as is the case in so contemporary analyses of British modernism.

Knowles and Moore also suggest that Marlow provides wisdom and comfort by creating a whole out of the fragments that make up the lives of Jim and Brown. They note how his "quest to piece together a narrative of Jim's life and then divine its inner meaning," for example, "partly involves him in sifting through a number of contradictory judgements and seeking the appropriate position from which to judge him" (185). Accordingly, Marlow exemplifies the therapeutic practise of inter-subjective speech engagement, which is a psychiatric process specifically created for those suffering from PTSD. Marlow concedes, for example, that his desire to rid himself of Jim's story is as much conscious as unconscious, and performed out of necessity. "I desired, more than I was aware of myself, to dispose of [Jim] -- to dispose of him, you understand before I left" (169). Therefore, his act of narration is, in fact, a constructive

act, a heuristic act and one which he knows he is conducting. “I put it down here for you as though I had been an eye witness. My information was fragmentary, but I’ve fitted the pieces together, and there is enough to them to make an intelligible picture” (311). Put simply, Marlow insures that we “perceive” even Jim’s incapacity to “pronounc[e] a word” in his defence as a manifestation of the “excess[ive] . . . humiliation” he carries with him following the misfortune on the Patna (96).

Accordingly, Marlow addresses those self-esteem issues Jim suffered from even before the disastrous Patna event, and which are rooted in parental alienation. Jim’s dreadfully “anxious” certainty (“there should be no mistake about it”) that his father would never exonerate his weakness, for example, validates in the strongest terms why he is incapable of defending his jump from the ship. “I can’t tell you whether Jim knew he was especially ‘fancied,’” Marlow suggests, “but the tone of his references to ‘my Dad’ [were] calculated to give me a notion that the good old rural dean was about the finest man that ever had been worried by the cares of a large family since the beginning of the world” (121). Here Marlow’s language engenders genuine pathos as it encapsulates the poignant absence of paternal love and forgiveness in Jim’s experience. “I can never face the poor old chap,” Jim relates dejectedly after his trial, “I could never explain. He wouldn’t understand” (121). Marlow may have “no illusions” (329) about Jim’s virtuousness but he does inspire in the reader the empathy necessary for finally providing, “an excuse for that young man,” [Jim]” (77).

Beyond this act of charity, however, is a more self-centred motivation for recounting Jim’s story: Marlow hopes to psychologically impose on his own world the

“miracle” of meaning, the redemption of allegory (76). “Perhaps unconsciously,” he confesses,

I hoped I would find that something, some profound and redeeming cause, some merciful explanation, some convincing shadow of an excuse. I see well enough now that I hoped for the impossible—for the laying of what is the most obstinate ghost of man’s creation, of the uneasy doubt rising like a mist, secret and gnawing like a worm, and more chilling than the certitude of death -- the doubt of a sovereign power enthroned in a fixed standard of conduct. I fear that such was the secret motive of my prying. I was, and make no mistake, looking for a miracle . . . (76)

As Jim is never “very clear to” him, Marlow simply “hopes to attain” in his narrative “some exorcism against the ghost of doubt,” a personal assurance, if you will, of decency in the world (178).

Marlow unequivocally discloses how his own “difficult[y]” (265) to believe in Jim’s “existence” is overcome only through a triumph of his “will” (77). He explains Jim’s “imperishable reality” on the Patna, the “sudden revelations of human figures stealing flickering flames within unfathomable and pellucid depths” (134). Marlow controls the pace at which the drama unfolds for the reader; he is, in effect, a playwright in the phenomenological theatre of our minds. A narrator should be a medium between the lives of her/ his suffering characters and the lives of her/ his readers, a cathartic medium who allows us to defer judgement in favour of comprehension. Rothschild tells us that acceptance and contact are the “keys to relieving shame,” for although it does not “discharge” it, shame “does seem to dissipate under very special circumstances -- the non-judgmental contact of another human being” (62).

Marlow’s meditations upon the potentialities of language, furthermore, outline

language's role in confessional or psychoanalytic moments of catharsis. It is the malleability (or metonymic, metaphorical elements) of language that make it a place where seemingly any joy or terror can be expressed and shared. Marlow contends that language either traps one in an internal hell, or releases one into the security of solidarity, and admits that it is his own need "'to comprehend the Inconceivable'" that drives him initially to contextualize the monstrous irony of Jim's Fate (111).

Marlow establishes through action, therefore, the dictum that honour and authenticity are forever achievable as long as we retain a context for compassion, forgiveness, and hope. The following passage marvellously reveals the manner by which empathy makes sense of reality, especially when things are at their worst. "Only a moment ago," he relates,

I had been so sure of the power of words, and [yet] was now afraid to speak, in the same way one dares not move for fear of losing a slippery hold. It is when we try to grapple with another man's intimate need that we perceive how incomprehensible, wavering and misty are the beings that share with us the sight of the stars and the warmth of the sun. It is as if loneliness were a hard and absolute condition of existence; the envelope of flesh and blood on which our eyes are fixed melts before the outstretched hand, and there remains only the capricious, inconsolable, and elusive spirit that no eye can follow, no hand can grasp. (180)

Therefore, Marlow teaches "us" how to grapple with both our own "intimate" needs, as well as those of others, and since Jim's tale is based in Marlow's "instinctive feelings and bemused reflections," it is as much his tale as Jim's (217). After all, as Marlow never tires of reminding us, Jim only "exists" for us because he exists for him (217).

Marlow asks Jewel at one point whether it is he, or Jim, that ultimately revealed

“the truth” about life to her (289). The “truth” if, indeed one can speak of truth apropos art, is only that Marlow speaks to “us.” His fictionalization of events is the only means by which those who listen to him begin to find compassion for his anti-heroes. Words often fail to evoke immediate truths, but they often indirectly show us that behavioural contingency is centered in an individual’s ability to justify her/ his actions to their society or community. Likewise, words are “our domain” (180), the rhetorical medium that shields our minds from the incorrigibility of material and metaphysical horror, though it is Marlow’s “language of facts” that manufactures the defences of Jim and Brown, by way of the “craftiest arrangement of words” (309). The old sailor knows this only too well and reminds us that there is “no message” to his tale, “unless each of us can interpret for himself” what really happened to both Jim and Brown (309). To argue that Marlow’s function in Conrad’s text is heuristic, therefore, is both coherent and enlightening, not least because Non-Freudian masochist methods do help clarify the complex allegorical meanings in Lord Jim, even if its explanatory power seemingly reaches its apex in that masterpiece published seven years later, The Secret Agent.

Masochism and Redemption in The Secret Agent (1907)⁴

Given that Thomas Mann wrote the 1926 introduction, and that its initial reviews were celebratory, it seems almost inconceivable that Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent has not always been recognized as a "classic and a masterpiece" (Leavis 209). Yet, Conrad's first biographer, Jocelyn Baines, argued long ago that the plot's "superficiality" flows from its lack of a "unifying theme" (332), and Jacques Berthoud complains more than half a century later that the work has never provided Conradian criticism with any "serious intellectual challenge," whatsoever, be it "politicized, deconstructive, post-colonial, feminist, historical, Freudian, or even plain appreciative" (103). But how has such a low estimation of this masterpiece continued to exist for nearly a century?

First, though many of Conrad's "works dissolve those bonds of sympathetic attachment that storytellers traditionally strive to attain," his "corrosively" ironic obliteration of this book's moral center, in particular, undoubtedly added to his audience's confusion (Billy and Orr 189). In fact, J Hillis Miller (1966), U.C. Knopfmacher (1971), H. M. Daleski (1977), Daniel Schwartz (1980), Arnold E. Davidson (1984), Aaron Fogel (1985), Avron Fleishman (1985), Anthony Winner (1988), Beth Sharon Ash (1999) and Leonard Orr and Ted Billy (1999) have been at pains to explain its moral ambivalence in a moral fashion. For example, while Davidson maintains that

⁴ Part of this chapter is to be published in Conradiana 3 (35) 2003 as "'The inexplicable mysteries of conscious existence': Masochism in Joseph Conrad's The Secret Agent."

Conrad's "grossly imperfect" and "insane" Victorian London makes his characters, "as much victims of their own imperfect view of reality as they are victims of life itself" (66), Northrop Frye refers to it as, a "blasted world of repulsiveness and idiocy" (238-239).

For this reason, much of the novel's criticism in the past few decades has been rooted in its political elements. For example, while Fogel insists that the novel is "an inquiry into the destruction of one marginal family by politics" (152), Christopher GoGwilt contends that, "Conrad's rewriting of the Greenwich bomb outrage makes his plot the mirror image of Vladimir's ambition to simulate an anarchist plot" (177). Be that as it may, Conrad implores all but those readers who "love the obvious" and "shrink from explanations," to interpret the pseudo-political commentary of his text emblematically, as but one ingredient of a narrative about Winnie Verloc (38). Likewise, Orr and Billy remind us that that the novel's political satire, "collapses the clear oppositions . . . that structured most late-Victorian accounts of political anarchism" (179), and is, in fact, bereft of any "coherent political philosophy" whatsoever (176).

Fortunately, recent psychopathologically based commentaries on the work -- like those of Catherine Rising (1990), Susan Jones (1999) and Ash (1999) -- deliberate on the merits of its extraordinary psychological ingenuity; most notably when attempting to explain the savagery that accompanies the violent destruction of the Verloc family. As psychopathological notions of masochism centre on those social customs by which ontology (or autonomy) is sanctioned, as well as those events delineating the downward spiral from traumatic event to masochistic self-destruction, they can establish genuine

empathy in a committed reader. Having said that, let us begin with Winnie Verloc.

Though it may take a good deal of “investigation” to realize it, Conrad insists that Winnie’s “utter desolation, madness and despair” does explain her “anarchistic end” (38). In fact, he grounded Winnie’s “credibility” in “surroundings” that reflect her “humanity,” precisely so as to “disengage” her from the “obscurity” of late Victorian London (41). But why should we trust his assertion that the novel has no political “philosophy”? (*Letters* 3 354) or, that he “meant it,” when with “some irritation” he “insisted” that this is “the story of Winnie Verloc”? (Seymour-Smith 29) For, though Winnie’s “actions are fundamental to the outcome of the story,” Jones complains that they are “obscured” by the topics that inhabit the novel’s criticism “i.e., pornography, political will and morality at the end of the Victorian era, biographical similarities, imperialism etc.” (16).

Moreover, we should consider Winnie’s proximity to other Conrad female characters who “comment on the way in which women are denied access to the action in the masculine world,” such as Jewel (Lord Jim), Flora (Chance), Aissa (Outcast of the Islands), and Mme. Levaille (“The Idiots”) (Jones 10). In other words, Conrad’s claim is hardly substantiated on the simple grounds of Winnie’s tormented inner life. Yet, it is especially difficult to ignore Winnie’s emotional adolescence when she marries Verloc, or that she is too unsophisticated to recognize, as her mother does, that his “gentlemanliness” is of the kind “exhibited by the patrons of private-saloon bars” (48). True, she does notice that Verloc “never offered to take [her] to theatres” in their courtship as did a butcher’s son to whom she was once engaged (48). But she still seems

extraordinarily naïve when she agrees to marry Verloc, or at least too young to realize what a sacrifice she actually made for the sake of her brother when she agreed to marry him. However, even if she did, why is this tale, hers?

To establish a basis for such a claim we must differentiate the Winnie that was from that Winnie that is when we are first introduced to her in some detail. For instance, we are told from the start that Winnie's agonizing, if misunderstood, sacrifice has left her "looking very dull" (72) and a woman "of singularly few words either for public or for private use" (219). Tellingly, her affectively entrenched muteness is also cognitive: she has real difficulty grasping the conceptual inwardness of the word "Shame," or why gratuitously beating a dying animal might be considered "shameful" (166). One must note, however, that her "philosophical . . . incuriosity," as our narrator calls it, is but a veneer of emotional stupidity which hides the pain of her resignation (219). Indeed, any intellectual creativity would only compound the squalor and melancholy of her wretched life. As one might expect, the "foundation" of the Verloc familial "accord" (216) stands as much on Winnie's tacit agreement to never enquire into the "facts and motives" of her husband (222) as it does on Adolf's "fascination" with her sexual propensities (47). Therefore, the title, "Mrs. Verloc," signifies the forfeiture of her intellectual and emotional lives, just as much as the physical and sexual labour she performs in the service of guaranteeing Stevie's safety.

As this exchange of Winnie's "fascinations" for the safety of her brother Stevie is the one constant in the Verlocs' domesticity, it seems incredible that Adolph never comprehends it (47). Wurmser defines "affect defence" as "anger instead of anxiety or

mourning,” or “sexualization as a cover for painful affect, especially traumatic terror” (*Power* 54), and well describes Winnie’s “anxious,” “sexually animated” requests to her husband that Stevie be treated as “a useful member of the family”; requests that are always stained with an “ardour of protecting compassion exalted morbidly in her childhood by the misery of another child” (86). At one point, for example, Winnie refuses Verloc’s proposal that they emigrate from London because of the difficulties it would create for Stevie (186). Indeed, even Winnie is surprised by her “perversely inspire[ed],” if “unkind” retort, though she quickly reasons that she is “no longer ignorant” of what pleases a man and can use her sexuality to regain Verloc’s favour (186).

How telling it is, however, that Winnie exploits her sexuality in order to erase (or “make”) the reality of any event (“as if it had not been”) (186). Granted, Winnie now “playfully” chortles that Verloc “loves her too much” to leave them, but her following “grave” and “motionless” seduction is accompanied by the coldness of a “glance of which the Winnie of the Belgravian mansion days would have been incapable, because of her respectability and her ignorance” (186). Thus, Winnie never condoned the contractual logic that resulted in her becoming Verloc’s wife, nor what she underwent in her adolescence to shelter Stevie. As we shall see, Winnie’s ignorance has the most catastrophic of affects when it is transformed into knowledge, or experience.

In the words of Helen Funk Rieselbach, Verloc is bereft of the “ideological or humanitarian considerations” necessary for a “moral landscape,” he is a “complete opportunist, devoted only to his own well-being” (1). Our apprehensively ignominious

and “easily intimidated” agent provocateur is both a simple shopkeeper of pornographic goods, as well as a contemptuous facilitator for the comical anarchists with whom he meets weekly. In fact, the “air of moral nihilism about him,” we are told, is akin to that found in the “keepers of gambling halls” and the “inventors of patent medicines” (52). As one might expect, he can “get himself to believe anything,” just like Kurtz in Heart of Darkness (115).

As his traumatic humiliation at the hands of Vladimir confirms, however, Verloc is much more complex than he seems initially. For instance, as Knowles and Moore point out, Verloc understands himself to be a victim of “everyday life and the constraints of bourgeois morality,” an anti-hero, “whose subsequent struggles with an unsympathetic world inevitably [will] end in defeat” (119). His subservience to the “philosophical unbelief in the effectiveness of every human effort” (53), moreover, is symptomatically consistent with those self-identifying aggressors that Wurmser tells us “live a life deeply inimical” to pleasure, joy or happiness (*Power* 68 - 69). Verloc’s ongoing negativity, in other words, makes him ripe for the mortification he now suffers at the hands of Mr. Vladimir.

Orr and Billy maintain that it “remains intriguingly obscure” how “bureaucratic secrecy” could “induce” Verloc’s “vision of a nightmare city” (173 -174). Yet they do consider how Verloc’s “susceptibility” to Vladimir is a function of his obsessive concern for reputation; the result of having his present failure framed by way of those which previously have been most painful to him. For, even though Vladimir categorizes him in their interview as “stupid,” “corpulent” and “susceptible” (57), his review of Verloc’s

five years in “rigorous confinement” (for the theft of a prototype of a French field gun) is what decisively wounds him (58) ““Ah yes,”” Vladimir hisses to him, the ““unlucky attachment -- of your youth. She got hold of the money, and then sold you to the police - - eh?”” (58)

Though Verloc fails to respond to his inquisitor, his “drooping” physiognomy nonetheless “confesse[s]” the truth of his “regrettable case” (58). In fact, Vladimir’s style of interrogation so deeply “startles” and “alarms” (62) Verloc that he must “react with all the force of his will against that sensation of faintness running down [his] legs” (61). Verloc’s “proud humility” is still intact after such mortification, we are told, though he mounts his defence with dampened pants and “quivering lips” (59 - 60). Accordingly, Verloc is now susceptible enough to understand the teleology of Vladimir’s “philosophy of bomb-throwing,” or what Conrad names in his introduction, the “logical processes” of “perverse unreason” (39).

The perversity of Vladimir’s logic is inscribed in its manipulation of the frailty of reason. It is the logical outcome of living in an age in which “[e]very newspaper has ready-made phrases” for dismissively “explain[ing]” away virtually any acts of violence (66). Verloc’s ““philosophy of bomb throwing,”” we come to understand, is a logical response to the social apathy of late Victorian London, and symptomatic of what we now refer to as desensitization, or dissociation:

““The sensibilities of the class you are attacking are soon blunted. Property seems to them an indestructible thing. You can’t count upon their emotions either of fear or pity for very long. A bomb outrage to have any influence on public opinion now must go beyond the intention of vengeance or terrorism. It must be purely destructive. It must be that and only that, beyond the faintest

suspicion of any other object. You anarchists should make it clear that you are perfectly determined to make a clean sweep of the whole social creation.” (66)

Despite the tone of his sentiment, however, Vladimir is not a homicidal advocate of mere “butchery,” to use his term (67). Rather, such an “attack against learning - science” is symbolically affective, and must be understood by the public as an explicit manifestation of violence without reason (67). And yet, to be politically expedient, Vladimir maintains, people must consider the act to be the work of a specific *type* of madman. For although “[m]adness alone is truly terrifying,” Vladimir suggests, its highest pitch cannot be communicated unless its presentation is inscribed with a “shocking senselessness of gratuitous blasphemy” (67). What he requires of Verloc, therefore, is nothing less catastrophically absurd than his, “blowing up of the first Meridian” (67).

Regardless of the justification for his philosophy of bomb throwing, however, Vladimir’s perverse logic is nothing short of pathological: the ends justify the means. Though Vladimir “wants Verloc to make it look like there has been an anarchist attack so that the British authorities will crack down on all revolutionary groups, including the exiled enemies of the Czar living in London,” he is no doubt also aware of the other effects his plan will also have on British society (Granofsky, *Private Correspondence*). Only acts of total madness, Vladimir well knows, will make the public paranoid enough to change their minds about egalitarianism and equality: public violence only becomes personal when its consequences illogically strike out at anyone, at any time. But the fact that he fails to discuss with Verloc what arguably is the explosion’s most profound

consequence -- the transformation of a democratic society into a fascist collective insensitive to legitimate proclamations of social injustice, as well as the media sources that dare to report it -- in fact, it shows Vladimir's awareness of his plan's amorality. Beyond exploding the laws that stop him from arbitrarily arresting anyone he wants, we now realize, what Vladimir really wants to explode are the Western metaphysical notions upon which modern democracies are built: egalitarianism, autonomy and a free press.

Given how detailed is Vladimir's plan to blow up the Greenwich Observatory, however, it seems particularly counterintuitive for him to choose Verloc to be the captain of his campaign, particularly because the latter is physically, as well as ideologically, incompatible with any revolutionary zeal whatsoever. In fact, notwithstanding Verloc's birth to humble "industrious parents," he disdains the "shallow enviousness of unhygienic labour," and is "constitutionally averse [to] every superfluous exertion" (52). The logic of *this* perversity, however, is much more straightforward. Verloc is as inconceivable a witness as he is an excellent patsy: his being a pornography merchant, in fact, only exaggerates his past sins (i.e., his conviction for gun smuggling), as well as succinctly frames his present ones (such as his association with anarchists like Yundt).

No doubt Verloc is starting to grasp his actual damnation, in fact, just subsequent to his departure from Vladimir's office, when he feels as if his "mortal envelope" has been "detach[ed]" from the "material world," and if he is trapped in an "angry dream" (70). His present incapacity to speak, moreover, parallels his physiognomic disparity;

one “resembling a state of collapsed coma -- a sort of passive insensibility interrupted by slight convulsive starts, such as may be observed in the domestic dog having a nightmare on the hearthrug” (68). No doubt Verloc wishes he was entrapped in a nightmare from which he could awake - but he is not.

At any rate, this strange Vladimir episode changes our view of Verloc. For example, given that he allegedly judges others solely for “what they are in themselves,” and routinely attributes their contempt for him to their own stupidity, it is curious that Vladimir breaks him with such ease (213). And yet, Verloc’s ongoing motivation is clearly rooted, thereafter, in the “sudden,” “painful,” and repeated “recollections,” or flashbacks of Vladimir he begins to suffer subsequent to this degradation (82). Clearly, Verloc suffers what Adamson calls “searing humiliation,” a condition in which one “builds up violent feelings of shame until they express themselves in envy, hatred and resentment,” or “avoids feelings of shame through an over-valuation of oneself” (*Melville* 17). Accordingly, Verloc’s most disparate thoughts are now regularly transformed into odious “visions” of Vladimir, so that,

even the merest derivative of the word science (a term in itself inoffensive and of indefinite meaning) [now] had the curious power of evoking a definitely offensive mental vision of Mr. Vladimir, in his body as he lived, with an almost supernatural clearness. And this phenomenon deserving justly to be classed amongst the marvels of science induced in Mr. Verloc an emotional state of dread and exasperation tending to express itself in violent swearing. But he said nothing. (77)

Though incapable of speech in the matter, Verloc’s self-flagellating hyperarousal is manifest in these recurring hysterics. The narrator suggests that Verloc’s later “inconsistent” behaviour results, “not from any desire to make himself unpleasant but

because of an unconquerable restlessness” (172). Further, Verloc’s “anguishing” “vision” of a “clean and witty” (84) Vladimir soon, thereafter, in fact, leaves him, “discomposed and speechless” (86), as well as “violently” engaged with a Venetian blind in his bedroom (84).

Rothschild suggests that trauma survivors often suffer “shame for freezing or ‘going dead’ and not doing more to protect themselves or others by fighting back or running away” in a traumatic situation (11-12). Verloc’s re-experiences are similarly intense and uncontrollable as are the irrationally self-indulgent justifications he now provides for his behaviour. “Loafing was all very well for these fellows, who knew not Mr. Vladimir, and had women to fall back upon,” he thinks to himself at one point, “whereas he had a woman to provide for” (82). How ironic, then, that those “usual remed[ies]” (84) for stress relief are now ineffectual (84). We are told that Winnie’s attempt to “recall[] him to himself,” seductively, only adds to his growing disassociation from her, so that their charms seem to emanate from “the other side of a very thick wall” (86). Verloc’s attempt to complete Vladimir’s plan to the best of his ability, in short, actually strips him of the self-possession to be either an agent or a lover, even as the latter spends his time fantasizing about his forthcoming revenge.

Tellingly, the moral antidote in the novel to Verloc’s vindictive selfishness is Stevie’s incorruptible morality, which is best reflected in his intellectual idiocy, as well as his remarkable affective sensibility. For that reason, Daniel R. Schwarz conjectures that Stevie is the sole character in the novel, “who idealistically observes the world with the expectation that right and wrong should exist” (170), and Irving Howe characterizes

him as, “the humanitarian impulse in its most vulnerable form” (45). Avrom Fleishmann similarly proposes that Stevie’s “optimism” represents that affectivity necessary in order to resist treating fellow human “beings,” “as things” (*Politics* 202).

It is interesting that so much of the plot revolves around Stevie, given that his death, as well as his remarkable affectivity is censoriously rebuffed when it is even acknowledged. For example, because of his past tendency to become agitated, and to speak truthfully, though at times offensively, about society, Winnie often hides newspapers from her brother. Moreover, his affective complexity also “divert[s]” him “from th[at] straight path of duty” that ensures one’s “great success” as an errand boy, as well as empowers his ill-fated detonation of those pyrotechnics that virtually “ruin” the business of a family friend (49). Little wonder, then, that most of Stevie’s time is “occupie[d]” by drawing endless patterns of circles while his melancholic, “maternal[ly] vigilan[t]” sister looks on (50).

Though nothing in Winnie’s appearance would “lead one to suppose” her “capable of passionate demonstration,” we soon discover that she has always gone “mad” whenever the “boy,” Stevie, was “hurt” (71). This symptomology most likely is the consequence of submitting to her violently abusive father’s whims in order to protect her brother. While such distraction no doubt stalled his “propensity” to deliver “brutal” punishments on his son, it likely never would have relieved him of the paternal “humiliation” in being the father of such a “very peculiar boy” (72). Suffice it to say that the “considerable consolation” Winnie experiences subsequent to her “irascible” father’s death is in no small part due to “no longer need[ing]” to “tremble” for “poor Stevie,” at

least at home (71).

In fact, after his death Winnie still shields him from those who would consider his “queer” (107) behaviour to be “retarded” and “incoherent” (Schwarz 170). For that reason, Winnie is much more affected by the trauma of her domestic life than her brother, for whom it results in the remarkable capacity to “sympathize with the suffering of others,” even as he “trust[s] only to experience” (Rieselbach 48). Consider, for example, Stevie’s infuriated reaction after he and his sister witness their cabman gratuitously thrash his dilapidated horse, an event that “symbolically” illustrates both, his unvarying impulse (or “longing”) to arrest any suffering he finds, as well as those events which shaped his deep capacity for empathy (165). Though it may seem “mad” to us, Stevie’s “bizarre longing” to take both the cabman and the horse “to bed with him” signifies only his genuine “desire” to protect them and make them “happy” (165). Given that this rescue fantasy parallels a method by which Winnie rescued him in his youth from their father’s monstrous malevolence, this fantasy is poignantly comprehensible

Conversely, Winnie’s apprehensions that Stevie’s “passion[ate]” accusations of “[s]hame” might “end” with him somehow “turning vicious,” are unjustifiable (166). The reader should not ignore (as Winnie does) the fact that Stevie is not violent once in the novel, and that even on the two occasions that he is a party to acts of violence (i.e. as the detonation of the firecrackers and the bomb), it is because others have chosen to exploit his intellectual frailty. Furthermore, Winnie’s tendency to shield him from “anything” that might “directly or indirectly” arouse his “morbid dread of pain” reveals that symptomology which has, heretofore, severely retarded her capacity for genuine

emotional contact (166).

For example, although Winnie always considers Stevie to be an “amiable, attractive,” and “affectionate” human being, it never stops her from also perceiving him as the “salt of passion in her tasteless life,” as well as the “indignant” corporeality of her “self-sacrifice” (170). Her general neglect of Stevie’s “psychology,” in fact, includes failing to “investigate” his emotional well-being on the evening that their mother “departs” from this “life” (goes to the almshouse) (167). At the same time, Winnie’s dismissal of her brother’s personality is neither malicious nor calculated, which perhaps explains why the extent of Winnie’s masochism is exposed only after Stevie’s death.

J. Hillis Miller suggests that Conrad perceived the city as a “house of cards built over an abyss,” a space in which an “arbitrary set of rules and judgements” is taken for truth, and this description well captures the opaque, silent grammar of the Verlocs’ marriage prior to Stevie’s death (6). Though Winnie’s silent melancholy contrasts vividly with her husband’s self-serving nattering, both of their reactions are emblematic of the individual forms constituting their collective defensiveness. Verloc’s predilection for universally ignoring the feelings of others, for example, explains his appalling ignorance of Winnie’s hopes and dreams. In fact, Verloc would have to “ceas[e] to be himself,” the narrator contends, in order to be capable of “understanding” the affection Winnie has for her brother (213). At any rate, transporting Winnie “into his confidence” for the “first time in his life,” Verloc finds, is almost unattainable because of his preceding superciliousness (218). As “Mr. Verloc was a humane man,” the narrator suggests acerbically, “he had come home prepared to allow every latitude to his wife’s

affection for her brother. Only he did not understand either the nature or the whole extent of that sentiment” (213).

Accordingly, Verloc’s perpetually dismissive attitude toward Winnie’s ambitions and desires, now “strip[s]” her of the “philosophical reserve” and passive “temperament” which routinely suppressed her violent” childhood memories (174). Winnie’s defiance of his pathetic explanations includes an appropriate reversal in their power relations. ““I don’t want to look at you as long as I live,”” she shrieks at her husband who will soon equate Stevie’s actual death with his own possible death. ““Do be reasonable Winnie,”” he entreats her with vexation, ““[w]hat would it have been like if you had lost me?”” (214)

Despite the malignantly grandiose nature of Verloc’s personality in general, he is legitimately obscured from his wife’s overwhelming anguish by that maddening memory of his humiliation at the hands of Vladimir. Indeed, even as her devastating silence would have made any man nervous in his position, Verloc is preoccupied with whether or not his “premature explosion” (212) was “a failure,” even if it was “not exactly the sort of failure he had feared” (214). His absurd view that the explosion was a “near success” if it at least “terrified” Vladimir enough to halt his “ferocious scoffing” is a vivid illustration of his masochistic fidelity (214).

Indeed, even as he absurdly fantasizes about humiliating Vladimir subsequent to his release from jail, he still inadvertently employs his counterintuitive callousness: “a little jail time,” he muses to himself quietly, “and then a life abroad” (214). His sanctimonious charge that he sacrificed Stevie for them (meaning her), then, really does

exemplify the extent to which his most basic human affectivity has been absorbed into his unconquerable grandiosity: “if I hadn’t thought of you,” he tells Winnie after completing his self-congratulatory narration of the events in Vladimir’s office, “I would have choked the life out of the brute before I let him up” (218). How apposite that such cowardice is soon followed by the bathos of his outrage.

That Verloc’s talk of self-sacrifice initiates Winnie’s recognition of all she has already sacrificed, as well as all she will, could hardly be more fitting. For it is Verloc’s behaviour in general, rather than simply on this occasion, that raises her long-repressed memories of the selfishly myopic manner of both her father and Verloc, which associates Verloc’s indifference with those mercilessly callous “battles” she had once fought in defence of her brother, “even against herself” (223). In effect, these memories trigger the same type of traumatic sense behaviour as that manifested during the animal abuse incident with Stevie; Winnie, too, retains a “faithful memory of sensations” even in those situations when she is “apt to forget [the] facts” (165). Her exceedingly bleak memories of Stevie “cowered in a dark corner scared, wretched, sore, and miserable with the black misery of the soul,” and waiting for her to “come along and carry him off to bed with her, as into a heaven of consoling peace” are not happy ones (165). How telling it is then that Winnie is presently returned to the traumatically shameful childhood in which her father’s beatings accompanied his verbal abuse, in which Stevie was often referred to as a “slobbering idjut,” and she as a “wicked she-devil” (220).

Winnie’s “instinctive wisdom” that “things do not stand much looking into,” we now realize, is but a manifestation of her original trauma defences rather than

intellectual insipidity (219). Though symptomological subterfuge successfully masked her previous disordered affectivity, Stevie's death now resurrects past traumata into desire for brutal reprisal in the present. Psychosomatic signification correlated with past traumata is devastatingly confusing, van der Kolk tells us, because the "unmodulated" nature of these shame affects impede one's capacity to presently identify "what is going on" (*Unpublished Lecture*). In fact, unmodulated sensations so severely disrupts one's sense of having "survived" one's trauma (Caruth 12) that one is often irrationally overwhelmed by guilt, and confident that one would have been able to avoid the crisis if one were only, to use Wurmser's phrase, "strong and good enough" (*Power* 378). Winnie's realization that nothing can bring back her brother or her wasted life, for example, finishes her life-long tendency to erase tragedy in her life by way of making events "seem as if they never happened" (186).

Tellingly, she now concludes that Verloc "'murder[ed]'" (221) Stevie, which contrasts starkly with his suggestion that all he has received for providing her and her brother with a home is, "damnation" (220). "'Don't you make any mistake about it,'" he roars at her in frustration, "'if you will have it that I killed the boy, then you've killed him as much as I'" (231). Undaunted by facts, Verloc implores Winnie to "'get over it,'" so that they can return to domestic bliss through sexual intercourse (234). The fantastic "resemblance" Winnie's "face" takes on as she walks toward him "lying on his back" and "staring upwards" fittingly concludes with her "brutal" penetration of him as he stares at the mask of a slobbering "idjut" (234).

In short, Verloc sees the entire situation from a totally disassociated perspective;

his conclusion that his wife has “gone raving mad,” for example, is slow, deliberate and controlled, and his wife’s “leisurely” stabbing motion does not meet any “resistance” as the knife is “planted in his breast” (234). “He saw partly on the ceiling a clenched hand holding a carving knife,” we are told, its “movements were leisurely” as it “flickered up and down” (234). The entire scene is plagued by apathy, as if even this most destructive of acts is performed out of weakness rather than strength. Perhaps this explains why Winnie kills herself even though her murderous act provides her with the opportunity to enjoy genuine autonomy for the first time in her life? Some argue that Conrad simply has a very cynical picture of human behaviour; for example, Ash suggests that he, “deferred the process of thinking through disillusioning recognition; and when he could no longer defer it, he was captured by it, since the only way out was mourning. . . . He was not free to organize his perception of the sociohistorical reality into a fresh vision, a newer and perhaps, more radical, perspective that could meet the changed meaning of existence” (181 - 182). Davidson agrees, and insists that the best anyone “can achieve” in Conrad’s world “is to counter the absurdity of existence with some equally absurd palliative” (70). By the same token, Winnie’s decision to take her own life after killing Verloc would fulfil this requirement of absurdity.

Yet, suicide, as Conrad sees it, *can* be heroic if it is a necessary requirement for honour or autonomy. In a letter to Marguerite Poradowska (December 1894), the author remarks that one “talks” about committing suicide, but then one “lacks the courage” to do so; for, “there is always something lacking, sometimes strength, sometimes perseverance, sometimes courage. . . . What remains always cruel and ineradicable is the

fear of finality. One temporizes with Fate; one seeks to deceive desire, one tries to play tricks with one's life. Men are always cowards. They are frightened with the expression 'nevermore'" (*Letters* 1 191). These thoughts are much like those of Winnie who repeatedly sees a vision of the gallows before she meets up with Ossipon. Knowles and Moore add that in Conrad's work there is often "a powerful wish to defend or justify the act [of suicide] as a legitimate response to unbearable life, or a positive act of self-sacrifice" (358).

As Winnie takes her own life only directly after being fleeced and deserted by "her saviour," the incorrigible rake Ossipon, the concept of a positive, "self-sacrifice" is precisely what is of interest here (260). That she leaves one situation of gross confinement only to ingratiate herself into another demonstrates convincingly that she is unable to control her Non-Freudian masochistic lust for unsympathetic men who never care for her, and with whom she, nonetheless, attempts to constitute the meaning of her being. For example, consider the way in which Winnie pathetically pleads with Ossipon before he finally leaves her: "I'll work for you. I'll slave for you. I'll love you. I've no one in the world . . . Who would look at me if you don't?" (253) Her confession, thereafter, produces not just a coherent explanation for what she has done, but more importantly, what she yet must do. Winnie laments that although her life was "without grace . . . charm" or "decency" it nonetheless retained "an exalted faithfulness of purpose, even unto murder" (260). Her confession is directed as much to her father and Verloc as Ossipon, for she needs such men to demean, degrade and steal from her. This pathological requirement of fatal illusions, Davidson suggests, characterizes an aspect of

all the characters in the novel; for they “live in a grossly imperfect world, in an insane world that they do not understand, and in which they are, in one way or another, victims of their own ignorance. Because the world is incomprehensible, all characters also live largely by illusions and can be as much victims of their own imperfect view of reality as they are victims of life itself” (66). But Winnie’s victimization, as Ossipon well knows, is horribly self-inflicted. How could Ossipon not know when one of her last statements in the novel is her explicitly summarises her total subservience to him: “‘Tom, you can’t throw me off now,’ [Winnie] murmured from the floor. ‘Not unless you crush my head under your heel. I won’t leave you’” (255). Of course, at least figuratively speaking, that is exactly what Ossipon does immediately thereafter.

Therefore, Winnie’s suicide can be read as a genuine act of redemption, not least because it is both, the first, and last, autonomous act she performs. The horrible price Winnie pays for her brother’s safety, and her final liberation, moreover, explains the novel’s “impenetrable mystery” so that it may cease to “hang forever over” Winnie’s “act of madness and despair” (266). For, Winnie’s suffering is not at all mysterious; her suicide is much like Jim’s in that it is fuelled by self-destructive tendencies, though it contrasts with his, in that her suicide will not cause anguish to those who loved her. When Winnie terminates her life, moreover, she clearly believes that her decision will not devastate anyone else. Indeed, as she tells Ossipon, her mother will have little use for her now that Stevie is no longer alive. The contrast between Winnie and Jim’s suicides, then, is clearly moral, and predicated on considering the fate of others in making a decision of such finality.

It is still strange to speak of a suicidal ethos, and not least because Christianity regards it as a sin of damnation. Evidently, Conrad viewed the issue as morally complex, which is logical given his own predisposition towards the kind of mental anguish Winnie faces here. After all, he once attempted “to take his life with a revolver,” as his uncle Tadeuz Bobrowski tells us (as qtd Najder, *Poland*, 177). Even if this action was, “essentially a desperate plea for attention and help rather than a serious attempt to end his life,” as Knowles and Moore suggest, the experience must have provided Conrad with a sense of the hell Winnie undergoes as the novel closes (358).

Given Conrad’s first hand knowledge of the authentic complications mental and physical suffering bring a person it is rational to assume that he would not have passed judgement on Winnie. Rather, the ethos of The Secret Agent is revealed when readers question the multifaceted motivations for acts of desperation, and consider the extreme dejection that underscores decisions to end one’s life. Conrad preaches in A Personal Record that, “the ethical view of life involves” so “many cruel and absurd contradictions” that only a fool would “suspect” its “creation” is anything other than “purely spectacular” (22). He seems to use the word “spectacular” as a way of explaining the need for novelists to construct ways in which they can communicate with us about amoral ideas. As Michaelis says at one point in the novel, “[a]ll idealization makes life poorer. To beautify it is to take away its character of complexity -- it is to destroy it” (73). In addition, in “Autocracy and War,” Conrad insists that “[d]irect vision of the fact or the stimulus of great art” penetrates “the saving callousness which reconciles us to the conditions of our existence”; for only great art engenders the

“sympathetic imagination” necessary to engage the “ultimate triumph of concord and justice” in one’s life (*Notes* 84). Thus, one can legitimately state that using a non-Freudian masochistic methodology to read Lord Jim and The Secret Agent facilitates one’s recognition that both novels are as much masterpieces of empathy and understanding as of irony and form.

Chapter Four: Forster

Masochistic masculinities in E. M. Forster's Howards End (1910)

Although the relation between imaginative literature and psychology may be directly evident from an author's reference to a particular work, it is difficult to make such an absolute relation when discussing the novels of Forster. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that Forster rarely communicated to friends or relatives what intellectually interested him. Nicola Beauman, one of the novelist's biographers, has lamented that when discussing the author's "intellectual development . . . it is almost now impossible to discover detailed information" (77). Compounding the task of discovering what influenced Forster, is the novelist's taste for creatively fabricating his own history. Beauman states that it was "not that he was one of those writers demanding a biography called 'A Hidden Life' or 'The Truth Behind the Mask;' but he manipulated the truth if it suited him" (110).

Moreover, Forster rarely disclosed his influences or his ideas during the creation of his novels and this has baffled biographers and critics alike. When discussing the time period in which Forster wrote his second novel The Longest Journey, a mystified Beauman tells us that,

[i]t seems almost impossible, certainly mysterious, that a great novelist can live a domestic, harmonious life with other people, can keep a diary, can have a sense of self-esteem and of the possibility of future success -- and yet produce a novel as if it were out of nothing. It makes the task of

biography almost dispiriting. All one can say is that a novel that seemed to have been started in the early summer of 1905 is known to have been finished by 1906: there is nothing more to do go on. (179)

And although Forster did make selective comments about A Room With A View, they concern his manuscript changes and what Beauman describes as Forster's literary intent for the work: "Morgan wanted, in a way, to write a romantic novel: not because he wanted the sales (then, as now, literary novels sold far less well than romantic) but because he would have liked to subvert the convention" (204). Likewise, Beauman tells us that Howards End is "unmentioned in Morgan's letters and diary, [although it] gradually neared completion: this was his inner life, part of the one that was never mentioned" (222). Thus, a critic or biographer will inevitably be frustrated when attempting to locate the ideas which influenced Forster.

Forster also never stopped denigrating the "pseudo-scholar" who "relate[s] a book to the history of its time, to events in the life of the author, to the events it describes" (*Aspects* 31). "Pseudo-scholarship is, on its good side, the homage paid by ignorance to learning," Forster argues later in his career, the biographical critic is "pernicious because he follows the method of a true scholar [i.e., a philologist or historian] without having his equipment. He classifies books before he has understood or read them" (*Aspects* 29).

Though Forster seems to have been very interested in psychology, for example, the most explicit reference one can find on the subject is actually in a letter from his friend G. M. Trevalyn who writes in an unpublished letter to Forster (9 May 1902) mocks Forster's desire to immerse himself in the study of "intricate psychology" though

he has no practical career in mind: “[y]our intricate psychology will (insensibly, indefinably) become interesting and healthy (not necessarily passionate) if you yourself have lived,” Trevalyn seems to sneer, although “[t]here are so many signs of life, of which however Pension Life is not one” (as qtd. Beauman 124). Forster kept this letter even though he discarded many of the letters he received during this period in his life; perhaps, because he often wondered if he had fulfilled the criteria that had been set out by Trevalyn’s good-hearted, if constructive, advice. “I believe in your powers, I applaud your zeal for psychology and your desire to do it,” his friend wrote, “but I believe some study or employment (whether in the ordinary course of your literary work or outside it) will be of great value to you, and will eventually lead you to do psychology in the right way e.g. reviewing, or business, or as study of a historical period with a view to a novel, or teaching” (as qtd Beauman 124). How Forster actually went about discovering what psychology is, however, is unclear. “I couldn’t read Freud or Jung myself,” Forster protested in an interview with P. N. Furbank in 1952, they “had to be filtered to me” (*Writers at Work* 26-27).

At any rate, Forster’s psychological conflict between the peril of narcissism, on one hand, and the revelation of imagination, on the other, was well established in his work by the time he published his third major novel, Howards End. For instance, Rickie Elliot’s aesthetic grandiosity in The Longest Journey (1903) underwrites his spiritually tragic death in a strikingly similar manner to that reflected in Cecil Vyse’s degenerative myopia in A Room with a View (1907). By comparison, Stephen Wonham’s and Lucy Honeychurch’s capacity to think in a creatively independent manner allows them to

overcome their potentially suffocating environments. It is in Howards End, however, that this psychological dialectic is most impressively presented through the masculine masochism of Leonard Bast and Henry Wilcox which is causally related in the novel to their eventual “collapses” at Howards End.

Having said that, it is hard to overlook how traditional criticism’s concern with the novel’s representations of class and gender has assured that its carefully constructed psychologies remained of secondary importance. Though the emergence in the 1980s of critical methods such as distinctive forms of feminism, post-colonial and queer theory criticism placed Forster’s work under fresh scrutiny, it was always politically and economically satirical in nature. Indeed, this is likely why Mike Edwards’ (2001), J. Bristow’s (2002) and Phillip Gardner’s (1997) recent critical treatments focus upon close reading of the texts, rather than dense theoretical concepts. J.H. Stape’s E.M. Forster: Critical Assessments Vols. 1-4, for example, is part of the “Critical Assessments of Writers in English” series, which strives to provide complete collections of previously published, formative critical assessments covering the whole work of individual writers. This is also the modus operandi of Aviar Singh’s The Novels of E.M. Forster and Jeremy Tambling’s edited collection (1995), both of which preceded Stape’s work by two years, despite sharing its conventional views of the novels. For example, note the inclusion of Paul Delany’s “Islands of Money: *Rentier* Culture in Howards End,” a traditional money versus metaphysics essay that would expect to find in most critical collections on Forster’s work.

Furthermore, whereas the novel’s psychological dimensions have not been

entirely ignored; most discussions of them are less than enthusiastic. Despite their differences in methodological approach, for instance, Frederic Jameson (1990), Stephen K. Land, Michael Lynn Stern (1995), Brian May (1997), and Kenneth Womack (1997) all stress Forster's attention to psychology. Predictably, Jameson argues that Forster's "imperialism" is manifest in the novel's "apparatus[es]" of "human psychology" and "dead philosophical abstraction" (*Howards End* 454-455). Most Marxist and Post-Colonial commentary is equally critical of the novel, primarily because it satirises the idea that "social or economic action" is always "desirable" (Rosecrance 415). Less ideologically focused critics, however, find the psychopathological interpretation of Howards End to be of more importance than its political caricature.

At any rate, the critic of Howards End need not "obliterate" its political element to evaluate its "radical psychological ironism" (May 76). According to one recent critic, the "psychic" states of the novel's "events and characters," reveal more about its allegory than the "social conditions the narrator so frequently dilates upon" (Stern 19). Furthermore, excellent psychological readings of the novel have surfaced in the past decade. We have May's post-Freudian deconstruction of Forster's "tragedy of preparedness," for example, or Womack's "narrative therapy" approach, both of which represent engaging intelligent close readings of the novel that are based in psychology (80). Proceeding from their approaches, I investigate the masochistically complex psychology of Bast and Wilcox because I find their pathological impulses analogous, even though their social position and intellect are not. In fact, though Bast's neuroses are literally fatal while Wilcox's are a function of being an Edwardian businessman, both

men still end up forfeiting everything of value to them because of masochistic masculinity.

Citing Bast's demise as proof that, "[n]o easy atonement is available," in Forster, "to those not born in the ranks of the elect," Wilfrid Stone describes him as one of the novel's "most interesting and least convincing characters" (*Howards End* 399). As Bast is not destitute initially, however, it is exceedingly presumptuous -- not least because Bast follows this logic himself -- to assume that his counterintuitive behaviour is a function of his social origins. The narrator explicitly tells us, in fact, that this "story deals with gentlefolk or with those who are obliged to pretend they are gentlefolk" (35). The word "pretend" is indispensable here; for though Bast is not as "[h]igh born" as the Schlegels or Wilcoxes, he goes to great lengths to pretend that he is (18). Forster's model of pretension in Bast has generated much derisive criticism over the years; Stern's charge that he is not a "believable character," in fact, has been made countless times since the book's initial publication (30). I argue instead that Bast's pretension is symptomatic of his masochism whose teleology rests in his pathetic attempts to transcend his social position, rather than in his social position itself.

In short, Bast's relation to others is determined by an "internalized," "form of self-reproach," to use the words of Melvin R. Lansky and Andrew Morrison, and revealed in his hyper-anticipation of others' "disapproval and rejection" (8). Accordingly, he is always anxious about revealing any facts about himself to the culturally elite for fear of becoming an object of contempt to them; though he would "admit" to his poverty if pressed, we are told, he sooner would "have died than confess

any inferiority to the rich” (35). Still, Bast’s resentment demonstrates his ever present belief in the inferiority of the poor. In fact, his counterintuitive searches for, as well as his attraction to, what are clearly tormenting and humiliating environments are a function of his ongoing impersonation of them.

Nevertheless, Rosecrance insists that the “significance” of our protagonist is rooted both in his “origin,” as well as in his “pivotal position as cause célèbre for the liberal intellectuals” who hypocritically gather to condemn capitalism while living off it (411). This duality illuminates well the difficult position Bast is faced with: with one foot in the past and the other in the future, he is an exile in his own present. “Had he lived some centuries ago in the brightly coloured civilizations of the past, we are told, he would have had a definite status” to which his “rank” and “income . . . corresponded” (35). Magda Stroinska tells us that, “[e]very exile faces the dilemma of whether to adopt a new identity or whether to adapt to a new environment, while trying to hold on to one’s old self” (97). In contrast, Bast clings to an illusion of self-improvement and blames most of his ills on his social background, even as he fails to join either congregation. Remaining alienated from both groups provides him with an expedient pretext for his general incompetence.

Bast traces his disadvantages back to the poverty and ignorance of his ancestors who were rural migrants who moved to London during the Industrial Revolution. Having been “underfed” in his youth, he believes that it is logical that the growth of his “mind” and “body” were retarded (35). Also, this explains why Bast consistently rates below “average” to his peers when it comes to intelligence, health, and charm (35).

Rosecrance's proposal that Bast's depiction consists of "a mixture of compassion and condescension," then, is not without merit (411). More importantly, it describes Bast's dark ambivalence towards his peers which is illuminated by his faith that his superiority will be revealed after he ingests the "modern" "food" he so greatly "craves," or, at least, whatever it is that will make him "better" than they are (35). "Better" is the operative word here: for Bast believes that he will cease to be "inaudible" or effortlessly dismissible after his natural "superior[ity]" is recognized by the culturally elite (35).

Tellingly, Bast fixates upon the elite's cultural grammar, just as he fixates on most high-society cultural phenomena that "elude all that is actual and insistent in his life" -- such as the Queen's Hall concerts, John Ruskin's prose and the paintings of George Frederic Watts (38). He stops himself from "let[ting] on" about his indifference to politics, moreover, by proxy, as when he dodges the issue of the birth population decline in Manchester even as Mr. Cunninghame is questioning him about it directly (37). Bast's "gentility," therefore, is neither the product of breeding or nature, but his apprehension that doing otherwise inevitably lands one in a social "abyss where nothing counts" (35).

Little wonder, then, that Bast's "energies" are habitually depleted in the service of "defending himself against the unknown," which, in turn, is behaviour generated by his having been "overwhelmingly" "had" in the past (29). How he was hoodwinked, or what he lost is never revealed to us, but the umbrella incident at Queen's Hall fundamentally reveals what an impact having been cheated has had on his general behaviour. In fact, his sense of misappropriation so distracts him during the Beethoven

symphony that he is unable to enjoy either its music or the refined “talk” of the symphony patrons which he greatly covets (31). Though he reminds himself that he should “think about [the] music instead” of his “appalling” umbrella (28), he cannot shake his conviction that he has been “play[ed]” for his umbrella by way of a “confidence trick” on him (31). Of course, we soon learn that the umbrella was accidentally taken by Helen, and that his intuitions were wrong. As there has “always been something to worry” Bast “ever since he [can] remember,” his hypervigilance is understandable; his supposition that “something” has always “distracted” him from his “pursuit of beauty,” however, is a non sequitur (31). Be that as it may, his enjoyment of culture is clearly paralyzed by social anxiety -- but why?

“To trust people is a luxury in which only the wealthy can indulge, the poor cannot afford it,” we are told by the narrator (28). Yet, one quickly realizes that it is exposure, rather than larceny, that worries Bast most -- the umbrella’s absence insinuates his actual poverty (28). If conducted in the spirit of playfulness or creativity, then, Bast’s pretension to pedigree on a scale with the Schlegel sisters might have revealed a brilliant mind rather than the abhorrence of his class. Unfortunately, however, this does not happen. For example, after staging an absurd comparison between the ugly, spiteful prose that describes his life well, with the beautiful, noble “voice” of Ruskin, Bast defensively reminds himself of Ruskin’s wealth, which ensured that he was “never” “dirty or hungry” (38). The only words tailor-made for him and his “dark and stuffy” life with Jacky, he bitterly reflects thereafter, are too ugly and uninspiring for him to pay attention to (38).

Though this discursive restriction vexes him, momentarily, it does not force him to cease looking to critics like Ruskin, or painters like Watts, whose stylishly conventional portraits of Victorian personalities were very popular in England during the Edwardian era, for inspiration. Both cultural icons are of great value to Bast because he can insinuate an educational pedigree he doesn't have by making reference to them. His desire to "push his head out of the grey waters" so that he can "see the universe," we soon learn, is but a prerequisite for what he hopes is his impending cultural baptism (38). This is to say, of course, that Bast's quest for knowledge is rooted in facilitation of his public façade as an educated, middle-class member of London's cultural elite, rather than a genuine love of learning. Nor is such subterfuge an anomaly. For instance, he feigns interest in Manchester's population decline in order to avoid telling Mr. Cunninghame of his political indifference, and he routinely lies to Jacky, as well as the Schlegels, whenever it suits his façade. How ironic is it, then, that what most differentiates Bast from the cultural elite he so desperately wants to be part of, is the offhand manner in which he uses cultural knowledge to further his social agenda. Indeed, Margaret immediately forgives Bast's poor manners, incessant moodiness, and an almost comical wardrobe, but what she cannot forgive him is his dilettantism.

Bast's dilettantism is most dramatically revealed, however, in his resolution to marry Jacky even though he will never invite her into the cultured life he covets most. Bast's supposed love of intellectual discourse, in fact, makes his proposal to a woman who has "never been a great talker" and who readily admits to her unsuitability for the "difficult and tiring art of conversation," is very strange (40). His choice is stranger still,

when one considers that he has acquired a “habit” of publicly “confiding secrets” to total strangers because he has no confidante in whom to confide (90). In fact, the sheer dominance of Bast’s “instinctive” (90) defence against being “inaudible” (35) actually subsumes his habitual “fear” and “suspicion” of others (90). Thus, though Bast’s proposal stands in honourable contrast to Henry’s gross exploitation of Jacky, it is nonetheless rooted in “pretence” rather than love or respect, and perilously ignorant of what is necessary for building a successful marriage (41).

Bast’s self-sabotaging “promise” (39) to “go against the whole world” (41) to “make it all right” for a frumpy fiancée who speaks “rarely” of anything other than his “promise,” then, clearly defines the crippling illogicality underscoring his self-flagellation (39), as does his practise of waiting on, and cooking for, Jacky despite her “indifference” to “his moods” or his “bitter” “complaints” about her tendency to question “his word” (41). How appropriate, then, that on one occasion Bast cites examples in defence of his “trust” -- most notably, his “preten[ce]” to be her husband in public, and his penchant for evading “the truth” whenever he now writes “home” --serve only to expose the falsehoods he routinely relates to his friends and family in the interest of not speaking about the marriage (41). Tellingly, Bast is not disheartened by how paradoxical it is that Jacky is too busy eating the food he prepared for her to pay attention to him. ““That’s what I am,”” continues Bast to his bemused fiancée, ““I don’t take heed of what anyone says. I just go straight forward, I do”” (41). Unfortunately, Bast’s stomach is the only thing “convinced” by his absurd rationale, though it is of the falsehood that the meal he has just consumed was “nourishing” (41). How easily Bast

convinces himself of this falsehood about nutrition is pointed; his frailty as an adult, he always claims, is a consequence of being denied proper nutrition in his youth. We come to understand that Bast's failure to consider his own complicity here is only symptomatic of his tendency to externalize through accusation what is obviously an internal conflict.

Adamson tells us that individuals who suffer from traumatic humiliation often attempt to "avoid feelings of shame through an overvaluation of oneself or of others" (*Melville* 17). Such an overvaluation is clearly at work here, as Bast's rationale for proposing proves only too well. "'That's always been my way,'" resumes Bast, unabated by the continued lack of interest of his fiancée, "'I'm not one of your weak knock-kneed chaps. If a woman's in trouble, I don't leave her in the lurch. That's not my street. No, thank you'" (41). Bast's mandate to "make it right" for Jacky, in other words, is driven by an assumption of future recognition; the action of a self-centred "boy," as our narrator likes to call him, rather than an act of charity by a compassionate gentleman (42).

In contrast, Womack more generously argues that Bast "intuitively recognizes" the "perilous nature of the 'fallen woman' in his society's class structure," and, does what he can to salvage Jacky's name because of his "romantic commitment to her" (259). Clearly, Bast receives some sort of gratification beyond his pseudo-status as a martyr, even if it is nothing more than the conviction of his superiority over Jacky. Consider, for example, how the eventual value of Margaret's card for Bast always was entrenched in its capacity to deviously "symbolize" that "life of culture that Jacky should never spoil," its presence reminds him of his superiority over her (90). In fact, Bast's proposal and his behaviour apropos Margaret's card are both examples of what Wurmser

designates as “externalization” (*Power* 71). Externalization refers to the pathological exteriorization of repressed “inner conflicts” onto objects, as well as other people, for pre-emptively engaging potential “attackers” (*Power* 67). This is not to say that Bast’s book fetish, or his behaviour over Margaret’s card, indicates his fear of Jacky. Rather, his horror is of slipping into a public arrangement in which he no longer is superior to Jacky. Demeaning those feeble enough to need him, we soon learn, is “typical” behaviour for Bast who, on one occasion, “greet[s]” Jacky’s curiosity with “peals of laughter” before asking her insultingly, “‘don’t you wish that you knew what that card was?’” (90) As the card gets “dirtier and dirtier,” we later learn it symbolically changes from the objective form of a naughty “grievance,” into the “battlefield” upon which the Basts subconsciously “contend” for authority (90).

The vindictive melodrama of these acts, moreover, constitute Bast’s only escape from the “squalor and petulance” of his life (90). It is almost logical, really, given that Bast is incapable of “hit[ting]” or “leav[ing]” (90) his fiancée, and neither his job nor his marriage are capable of “generat[ing]” the money or the “inclination to violence” needed for “tragedy” (120). For instance, Bast fastidiously leaves Margaret’s card “lying about” in places where he promptly can “guess” its whereabouts, such as in his favourite book by Ruskin (90). Moreover, he enjoys knowing that Jacky will “draw[.]” only “one conclusion” when she finds it there, and will thereafter seek him out at Wickham Place. For, it provides him with yet another opportunity to show his superiority to her. “‘I know where you’ve been’” Bast pompously charges when Jacky returns from Wickham Place, “‘but you don’t know where I’ve been’” (91). Bast remains with Jacky, on the whole,

then, because, regardless of how pedestrian he sees himself to be, she will always remain his inferior because of her dependency upon him.

The narrative satirizes Bast's myopia in various ways. For instance, by "increasing" the "irony and distance" of Leonard's "interior monologue" to the point of "deletion," as well as severely limiting his "use of pronouns," Mary Pinkerton tells us, Forster "isolates" Leonard from the "personal relationships of the novel" (237). In the manuscript, furthermore, fifty-four of the one hundred and ninety-three pronoun deletions made by Forster refer in some way to Leonard or Jacky (Pinkerton 238). Pinkerton hypothesizes that Forster used pronouns this way in order to "convey their intensified alienation from each other," as well as "from others in the novel and from society at large" (238). Accordingly, she argues that Bast "tries to maintain his dignity in the face of few options," and should "not be blamed," for being "a victim of economic and social forces which he is unable to comprehend" (239). Pinkerton raises an important point: it is curious that, though he is an insurance clerk, Bast seems still incapable of comprehending the economic forces that control his life. Indeed, when asked by the Schlegels about the continued feasibility of the Porphyryon, Bast is "tempted to say that he knew nothing about the thing at all" (102). As Bast cloaks himself in a pretension of ignorance whenever he is attacked in the world of romance, however, it is hard to know whether this thought is genuine or not. But his ignorance is not always part of a charade. His unawareness of fashion protocol, for example, is so often underscored in the narrative that it cannot simply be explained by his poverty.

Not having been raised in a middle-class family, it is only reasonable that Bast is

oblivious to the middle-class conventions of certain social situations. His blindness towards how he appears to others, however, is less forgivable. For example, when he first visits Wickham Place, Bast is insensible to the Schlegels' recognition of his earlier false pretensions, and fails to realize that they see that he is "obviously lying" to them when he explains how it was Jacky who had "mistakenly" arrived there the day earlier (86). In fact, Bast even fails to recognize how his "colourless" anaemic skin and his "mournful," "accusatory" face would make him look dangerous to the locals (84). To be fair, his myopia is likely attached to his strange conviction that the culturally elite notice him, and even respect him. "I think you will recollect," Bast "pretentiously" declares as he produces Margaret's card from his shabby suit, "when I tell you that it included a performance of the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven" (85). His numerous social miscues are soon thereafter recalled by Margaret, subsequent to her informing him that she attends it "every time it is done" (85).

True to form, Margaret straight away becomes more accommodating in tone than Helen, even though she cannot stop from making basic observations about her guest. "Culture had worked in her own case," Margaret reflects as she beholds his dilapidated outfit, "but during the last few weeks she had doubted whether it humanized the majority, so wide and so widening is the gulf that stretches between the natural and the philosophic man, so many good chaps who are wrecked in trying to cross it" (85). As the two continue their discourse, moreover, Margaret "wonders whether it paid to give up the glory of the animal for a tailcoat and a few ideas," after detecting his "mental dishonesty," "vague aspirations" and "familiarity with the outsides of books" (85).

Margaret is not just being an intellectual snob here: it is obvious to the entire Schlegel clan that Bast's pretension is strange. The moment Tibby makes his acquaintance, for example, he "knows" that Bast is incapable of "attain[ing] to poetry," and "prefer[ring] his comedy undiluted," decides to not "hear him" at all (87). Bast's awkward, sloppy and defensive comments thereafter prove Tibby right. In fact, his opinions about even basic literary concepts reveals an ignorance that is virtually impossible for his hosts not to comment on -- as when he states his belief that the travel books of Edward Verell Lucas are as philosophically profound as Henry David Thoreau's transcendentalist vision of nature in Walden.

In the presence of the cultural knowledge he most covets, therefore, Bast is an exile. Eva Hoffman points out that exiles "notice things" about a culture that those "embedded in it, simply do not" for reasons of sheer practicality (67). In fact, they are often forced to become "amateur anthropologists" of their new environment, owing to their growth in awareness of it (67). This metamorphosis begins with observations about "surface differences" and "gradually" matures into an "understanding" of the "large" and "intimate values" that constitute the "inner life" of a culture (Hoffman 67). Bast's anthropologic skills work well enough when he is dealing with those of his class and education, like Jacky, but he is lost in the world of romance.

By the same token, the idealistic terms with which the Schlegel sisters initially interpret the lives of those like Bast make them similarly unaware of their complexity. "A thrill of approval runs through the sisters," for instance, after Bast notifies them that he has been out walking around Wimbledon. "I [walked] all night and being out was the

great thing,” he tells the sisters, though “I did get into the woods, too, presently” (87). When Helen asks him if his trip included walking “off the roads,” however, reality meets fantasy; he “always meant to go off the roads,” he tells the sisters, but decided against it after realizing it would only make his trek “more difficult” (87). He now “wishes” he had “never” engaged in such adventures, the sisters learn, as he found the woods filled with “awful” gorse bushes and strange sounds (86). The only cheer Bast felt on the trip, in fact, occurred when the dawn finally lit his way back to London: the “dawn was only grey,” Bast adds unromantically, and was “nothing to mention” (88). Clearly, Bast’s journeys into the land of enculturation might also have been as damage free as his trip into the woods had they been conducted in the spirit of playfulness or creativity, rather than inferiority and malice. But as he masquerades as a middle class gentleman without fully ever having attempted to understand what such social elevation would mean, he never advances his quest. For that reason, Helen could not know just how ironic she is when she congratulates Bast thereafter for not having been “content to dream” about the world (89).

So as not to “spoil” the memory of his present visit, Bast presently decides “not to risk a second interview” with the Schlegel sisters, and melodramatically states so as begins to leave, “I shall always look back on this talk with you as one of the finest things in my life,” but “[w]e can never repeat it” (89). Tellingly, such grandiosity is humbled after Helen asks Bast to provide good reasons for his decision, and both sisters reflect on the way his reply attempts to “mingle[] true imagination and false” (89). The narrator makes it clear that what Bast “said wasn’t wrong, but it wasn’t right [either],

and a false note jarred" (89).

A major problem for Bast, then, is his misapprehension of how others see him; he thinks he fools others with his hollow recitations of quotations, when it is he who is a fool for believing as much. More seriously, Bast suffers from the delusion that "all" the people "he passes" on the street regard him with an "unconscious" "hostility" after he departs Wickham Place, which inspires him to don an absurd top-hat which must be worn "a little backwards" because it is "too big" for him (91). Traumatically identifiable "features," or effects, Jack Katz tells us, are more "visible" when one "appreciate[s] that manner, style, grace, and other ways of acting" are necessary for "the process of sustaining the identities of the others with whom we interact" (258). A predisposition to believe that one is thought of negatively by others, for example, is often a consequence of more generalized feelings of inferiority, or of what is often referred to as a generalized anxiety disorder. Bast's aesthetic blemishes, for example, reveal that he is often oblivious to how others see his clothes and mannerisms. How right Stern is when he suggests, then, that the narrator "does not explain" the meaning of certain events, but only "rationalizes" them in a grammar conducive to the character (21). "Thus equipped," our narrator quips sarcastically about Bast's choice to wear the hat, he "escaped criticism" (122).

The strongest links between our internal life and who we are on the one hand, and the way we function in the outside world and interact with fellow human beings on the other are generated through cultural grammar (Stroinska 95). Likewise, Bast goes to great lengths to ensure that his reality and his life of romance never intersect. For, his

“denizens of Romance,” he realizes, must “keep to the corner he had assigned them” and never “walk out of their frames” (90). “That the Schlegels had not thought him foolish became a permanent joy,” of course, and though he is “at his best” when thinking “of them,” he will not risk having them change their mind (90). What he will not risk, then, is his impression of their impression.

Nevertheless, the truth is that Bast cannot contain himself and visits Wickham Place as soon as he is called for. His nervousness is not unfounded, given that his response to questions about his job security at the Porphyryon, result in his comical misquotation of a scene from Act Four of Henrik Ibsen’s masterpiece, An Enemy of the People: ““As Ibsen says,”” Bast exclaims, ““things happen”” (102). There, Dr. Stockmann specifically characterizes pathologies like Bast’s, and concludes by stating, “that’s how it goes when plebeian descent is still in one’s limbs and one has not yet worked oneself up to spiritual nobility” (98). The narrative ironically intimates that Bast is the “plebeian” by way of pointing us toward his abridgement of the phrase, “that’s how it goes” into the even more banal, “things happen.” The issue of Bast’s spiritual deficiency figures more broadly in the novel, however, when one understands that the same books which initially underlined his ignorance of literature at Wickham Place, are the same ones that subsequently crush him to death at Howards End.

Though most of the slurs levelled at Bast’s ignorance in the novel accentuate his intellectual, rather than his affective, shortcomings, we are fortunate enough to see examples of both when he revisits Wickham Place. Barraged by questions from the Schlegel sisters since his arrival, the demonstrably “sour” Bast “rudely” tells his hosts

that he will refuse any future requests since this present interview turned out to be the “failure” he had earlier forecast (103). In fact, Bast’s early departure results from his incapacity to argue with those who challenge his unquestioned, self-destructive belief in naturalized class relations. Before leaving, however, he corroborates Mr. Wilcox’s absurd belief in naturalized class divisions, which in turn shows his tendency to the ideology in arguments if they might be useful in the service of defending his pathetic life.

““There will always be rich and poor,”” Leonard mutters defensively to Margaret during their conversation at Evie’s’ wedding reception, because, when ““a rich person fails at one profession, they can try another. Not I. I had my groove, and now I’ve out of it. I could do one particular brand of insurance in one particular office well enough to command a salary, but that’s all”” (163). Although Bast now recognizes the material differences between himself and those he previously emulated, he is nevertheless blind towards the way in which his need to impress others prevents him from learning to appreciate values that are not economic. ““Poetry’s nothing Miss Schlegel,”” Bast states sombrely to Margaret, “if a man over twenty loses his own particular job, it’s all over with him” (163). Bast’s resignation from the Porphyryon, we now realize, eventually engendered a spiritual resignation as well. In short, he has simply lost the will to live. ““I have seen it happen to others,”” he now reports coldly to Margaret, and “in the end they f[e]ll over the edge. It’s no good. It’s the whole world pulling” (163).

This nihilistic element in Bast’s psychology is more clearly exposed when he and Helen repair to her hotel room following their departure from Evie’s’ wedding. In fact,

the contrast between their metaphysical views of existence delineates the major thesis of the novel. For example, consider how Helen's metaphysical vision is dramatically juxtaposed to Bast's selfish fixation on the vocational system that only recently has banished him to the abyss of the unemployment line. "I don't trouble over books as I used to," Bast continues matter-of-factly, for "I can imagine that with regular work we should settle down again" (170). When Helen responds that one's imagination is created for higher vocations than labour, in fact, Bast self-defensively protests in a passive-aggressive, complaining tone.

"Walking is well enough when a man's in work," he answered.
 "Oh I did talk a lot of nonsense once, but there is nothing like a bailiff in the house to drive it out of you. When I saw him fingering my Ruskins and Stevensons, I seemed to see life straight real, and it isn't a pretty sight. My books are back again, thanks to you, but they'll never be the same to me again, and I shan't ever again think night in the woods so wonderful." (170)

Bast's self-deceptive manipulation of his memory here is striking. Of course, he never did think the woods were wonderful, so his resignation at his loss refers to a positive state of affairs that never existed. "Woven of bitter experience," moreover, Bast forcefully "resist[s]" Helen's repeated attempts to "cut" that "rope" which "fasten[s]" him to the "earth" (172). But why does Bast resist Helen's attempt to free him from his pitiful existence? For one thing, Bast's stains the "diviner harmonies" of life with an all encompassing bitterness (171). Just as his "umbrella had [earlier] spoilt the concert at Queens' Hall," we are told, Bast is now "obscured" from Helen's empathy by his "lost situation" (171). The extent, to which Bast has regressed, however, is best illustrated by his readiness to plead with Mr. Wilcox for a job even though the latter has repeatedly

insulted him, as well as sexually compromised his present fiancée. “Death, Life and Materialism were fine words,” Bast thinks to himself as Helen pleads with him, “but would Mr. Wilcox take him on as a clerk?” (171).

At any rate, Bast clearly pursues people who are unsympathetic, when they are not hostile, to him, which is why I cannot concur with Pinkerton’s claim that Bast’s end is “resigned but admirable” (242). What better explains his behaviour rather, is realizing that he will never have the forcefulness of purpose he now sees in Helen, though he has coveted it all his life (172). By accepting the self-damning role of seducer and rake, Bast gains hold of a seemingly unconquerable situation. For Bast, it was “as if some work of art had been broken by him,” we are told, as if “some picture in the national gallery [had been] slashed out of its frame” (225).

Although specifically used for overcoming legitimate danger by hyperbolizing one’s omnipotence, narcissistic fantasies also serve as a protection against more general feelings of helplessness. Wurmser tells us, for example, that what makes these projections problematic is the manner in which they are stockpiled, mnemonically, as if they were real experiences, and in some cases, actually stipulate one’s complicity in traumata that never happened (*Power* 378). Constructing (and then substituting) one’s complicity for the chaotic nature of fate allows for subconscious evasion of genuine feelings of helplessness associated with traumata. For that reason, although disassociation initially “saves the self from suffering,” it all too often “exact[s] a [very] high price in return” (Rothschild 13).

Bast’s inability to negotiate the parameters of his world of romance, and his

actual life is hampered by his having sexual relations with Helen. In the weeks that follow, for example, Bast is often “rent into two” synonymously accusatory and self-defensive people, so that he begins to “cry out” in the “midst of other occupations”: ““Brute -- you brute, I couldn't have”” (224). What halts him from seeing Helen’s decision to sleep with him as the act of sympathy it is, then, is his pathological sense of inferiority. In fact, Bast’s fears are so acutely ordered along hierarchical lines of gentility that any “recall” of her “talents and her social position” makes him desire that strangers would “shoot him down”; in consequence, he is reduced to being “afraid of the waitresses and porters at the railway station” (225).

Though Bast’s reluctance to accept Helen’s money is understandable, the same cannot be said about his decision to “degrade himself to a professional beggar” (225). His “realiz[ation]” that he and Jacky “need never starve because it would be too painful for his relatives,” marks a new level of humiliation for Bast, whose decision to “blackmail” his brother makes him finally and fully reliant on a cultural “system” that loathes parasites like him (225). Tellingly, Bast develops a “strange new tenderness” for Jacky based in self-contempt rather than equality, and so looks upon his fiancée with the assurance that that there “is nothing to choose between [them] after all” (225). A “clever wastrel” can “exploit” this game of self-degradation the narrator snidely remarks, “indefinitely,” and it is hard to deny that Bast does so (225).

Pinkerton, on the other hand, suggests that “[c]ruel circumstances” are what transform Bast “from a dreamy ineffective romantic into a more pragmatic materialist” (240). What is missed here, however, is Bast’s own complicity in his slide from

pretentious charlatan to self-flagellating paralytic. Bast “did not suppose confession would bring him happiness,” we are told, it “was rather that he yearned to get clear of the tangle” (226). Whether or not Helen has been sinned against, therefore, is irrelevant; his confession is rooted in his need to restabilize the broken parameters of his sense of self. While Helen and Jacky have been Bast’s means to damnation, its teleology is rooted in his acute sense of inferiority.

Bast’s sense of identity reflects a Non-Freudian masochistic obsession with his inferiority manifest as an overwhelming pathology of self-hatred. For example, following reflection about the numerous contrasts between his flat and Wickham Place, he resigns himself to only, “go in for whatever comes easy,” because “continual aspiration,” is “not good” for those not “born” into culture (42). Ironically, Bast’s end might have been avoidable if he actually accepted the truth of this sentiment. His absurd confessions to Margaret just prior to his death at the hands of Charles punctuate how fatalistic this moral gibberish actually has been to him -- ““Mrs. Wilcox,”” Leonard says as he now refers to Helen, ““I have done wrong”” (321). The reintroduction of Bast’s dilettantism here clearly indicates that it is his masochistic pathology, rather than the Wilcoxes’ extreme prejudice, that kills him. His heart may very well be compromised by his struggle over the sword with Charles, but what fatally wounds him are the seemingly tons of books that fall “over him in a shower” after he has already collapsed (230). As mentioned earlier, these same books previously underlined Bast’s lack of knowledge about literature at Wickham Place. His non-Freudian masochistically cultivated self-destruction, therefore, is engendered in the months previous to his death at Howards

End; his refusal to accept Helen's money is simply the culmination of what was always his Achilles' heel.

In Greek mythology, Porphyryon is a figure of upheaval, a giant whose attempt to ravish Hera is halted when he is slain by Zeus. The Porphyryon myth, in other words, is an ironic foreshadowing of Bast's fatal obsession with being punished by the law for his sin. His uninspired job as a clerk at the Porphyryon Insurance Company, and his unglamorous life with Jacky, are as much consequences of his pathological belief in his inadequacy, as his attempts to discuss art, music or fashion with the cultured. Henry Wilcox, on the other hand, epitomizes masculine power in the novel, and he suffers in turn, from what are surely pathological feelings of superiority.

How curious, then, that the novel concludes not with Bast's death but Wilcox's "collapse" at *Howards End*, subsequent to his realization that the philosophy of injustice that now sends Charles to jail for years, is none other than that on which he has built his empire. Such moral ambivalence so radically affects his nerves, in fact, that he is relieved soon thereafter even of that anxiety that initially motivated his life-long pursuit of capital. So what factors contribute to Wilcox's collapse, and how does our consideration of it lead us to the work's moral structure? For, any consideration of Wilcox's character should explain both the emotional disorder behind his collapse, as well as the way in which it facilitated his economic success. This is not to say, however, that anxiety is exclusive to the Wilcoxes, or even to Edwardian masculinity as a concept. We are repeatedly told, for instance, that masculine imperialism has decimated England's pastoral farmland, and that Bast's predisposition to fatality is a function of his

having sustained “too much anxiety” over the course of his short life (225).

The concept of anxiety in this text is disseminated on many levels through various settings and characters. Anxiety about being “had,” or taken, for example, “affects culturally dominant types” in the novel “just as grievously” as the Basts” (May 78). The “Wilcox manner” may appear “breezy” on the surface, but “underneath” such “manners lurks . . . a virtual terror” capable of destroying the “romances” of both men (May 78). The word romance is particularly apt here because Henry’s grandiosity reaches its apex at *Howards End* just as much as Bast’s does, though for reasons that are both similar and different. For, although this “man of business” prides himself on having “almost doubled his income since his wife’s death,” he is nonetheless deeply dissatisfied with his life as he continues to struggle to build a legacy that will survive his death (96).

At first glance, however, Wilcox’s life appears complete: “life had treated him very well,” and the “world seem[s] in his grasp” (96). Well known to all as a triumphant “capitalist,” he takes pride in being “an important figure at last,” and recognized as “a reassuring name [for] company prospectuses” (96). His legacy already seems to be assured, in fact, for he “helped to shorten” the “long tidal trough” of the River Thames, and “if he and other capitalists thought good,” he muses, “someday it could be shortened again” (96). Having his “hands” on “all the ropes of life,” Wilcox considers knowledge he is ignorant of “not to be worth knowing” (96).

Wilcox’s short-sightedness or “obtuseness” (as Margaret calls it) is symptomatic of his general insensitivity towards even those whose attention and affection he solicits (135). He “never notice[s]” Helen and Frieda’s hostility,” for example, because their

concerns fails to register with him at all; nor does he perform small courtesies such as ceasing to talk about “currant plantations” after Tibby has made it clear to him that he is “not interested” in the topic (135). Like Bast, Wilcox’s interest in others is practical rather than emotional; his philosophy of life is “concentrate,” which he does with a “vengeance” whenever dealing with anything or anyone who resists him (135).

For Wilcox, the word “concentrate” is clearly synonymous with the word “evasion,” but what is a man with such power and wealth circumventing? Asked another way, what grandiosity is cultivated in his “romance,” and what does it allow him to evade? The answer would seem to be legacy and the affective growth characterized by the narrator as the maturation of one’s soul or, rather, that vision of life a person follows who does not accept the sustainability of the Christian concept of a soul. Having “neglected” his emotional life since childhood, Wilcox’s affective retardation has become what our narrator calls “an incomplete asceticism” (134). By incomplete, we soon learn, our narrator means unsuccessfully ascetic, as well as excruciatingly repentant. Though generally embarrassed about even speaking of fornication, Wilcox is totally mortified by the prospect that his past indiscretions could make him seem pathetic, corrupt or even discreditable. Whether or not such behaviour is ethical, however, is irrelevant to Wilcox -- his only consideration is how he is perceived publicly.

Thus, although his public persona is “cheerful, reliable and brave” in most situations, we soon learn that his affective life at some point “reverted to chaos” (134). It is difficult to gather exactly what caused such chaos though surely it is associated in

some way with his “concentration,” or repression of physical desire. In fact, Wilcox has “always” retained a “sneaking belief that bodily passion is bad,” “whether as a boy, husband or widower” (134). Given the stringency of Edwardian public morality, Wilcox’s association of sexuality with shame is not surprising, although his being “ashamed of loving [his] wife” is another thing altogether (134).

Wilcox’s pathological anxiety refers more to the public expression of love, however, than to women, and is rooted in his genuine horror of appearing weak before others. Males are not provided with a discourse of affectivity through which to conduct investigations of their own emotions, and consequently “tend to be,” on the whole, “somewhat unembodied in their usual, non-sexual interpersonal relationships” (Jourard & Rubin 47). “Unembodied” is a good word to use when characterizing Wilcox’s “relations” with the world, as well as with the people in it. Indeed, this is one reason, among many, why he sees himself perfectly justified in being faultless in regard to Bast’s demise. “I am grieved for your clerk,” states Wilcox placidly when called upon to answer for his bad advice about the Porphyryon, but “it’s all in a day’s work,” as well as “part of the battle of life” (137). Pathetically, this cliché acutely provides a snap-shot of the philosophy of life that Wilcox has used to resist affectivity: it comprises a cornucopia of incorrigible references to science, philosophy and religion. Consider the logic by which he debates the flaws in compassionate conservatism with the sisters, by deferring to the status quo. “There have always been rich and poor,” Wilcox argues but, “our civilization is moulded by great impersonal forces . . . and you can’t deny that, in spite of all, the tendency of civilization has on the whole been upward” (138). By

exposing this pseudo-philosophy of “science and religion” for the metaphysics of neglect it actually is, Helen exposes how this philosophy of life actually ensures that emotional affectivity is perpetually repressed into a compulsion of consumption (138).

Men “like Henry,” states Helen, “stunt the independence of all who may menace their comfort, but yet they believe that somehow good -- it is always that sloppy ‘somehow’ -- will be the outcome, and that in some mystical way the Basts of the future will benefit because the Basts of today are in pain” (138-139). Helen shatters three illusions here that reveal Wilcox’s attitude towards himself and to others. First, she proposes that his ideology of progress is as illusory as his mercilessness towards resistance is hypocritical. Second, being ambivalent towards the needs of others is always blameworthy, but being so under the guise of providing future benefits to them, is especially reprehensible. Thirdly, if their actions genuinely are, “on the whole upward,” why employ false empathy while denying personal accountability?

We now begin to comprehend what such a philosophy has actually cost Wilcox. Unable to control how others see him, Wilcox naturalizes the often unpleasant consequences of his compulsive capitalism with seductive metaphysical concepts like “progress” and “advancement,” or accounts for them by way of ideas displaced from the work of Charles Darwin. This view of the world is as integral to Wilcox as it has been to many of England’s other great men. Indeed, Margaret “scape-goats” her husband’s obtuseness, as Womack suggests, by considering it “as by-products of what she defends as his essential role in England’s ongoing process of nation-building” (261). This process of nation-building, in fact, is grounded on patriarchal lineages of gentility, which

ensures that the inner chaos of the male psyche is kept intact. Wilcox's repression of sexual and emotional affectivity is sustainable as long as the social classes, as well as the sexes, are segregated. Likewise, May contends that Wilcox's "regard" for gentility is "very similar" to the irrational "regard" or sexualization commonly observed in "archetypically male fetishists" -- for both types of masculine "reaction-formation[s]" in Freud are myopically self-destructive (80-81).

When one considers that Wilcox "never admit[s] to being wrong," to use Stone's phrasing, the "case against Henry is a strong one" (*Howards End* 400). "I know all Mr. Wilcox's faults," Margaret, at one point, tells her sister: he is "afraid of emotion" and incapable of "sympathy," and "cares too much about successes" and "too little about the past" (126). In short, he invalidates without consideration any aspersions in his character that conflict with his grandiosity. For example, he neither shows remorse for initially trying to cheat Margaret out of *Howards End*, nor consults her when he sells Oniton. Further, he shows no genuine remorse for his infidelity to Ruth, nor does he pay Jacky so much as an afterthought, following his relations with her.

At the same time, he is also unaware of the qualities Margaret claims to covet: humility, kindness, forthrightness, honesty, and the capacity to forever "love people rather than pity them," as well as always "remember[ing] the submerged" (55). Perhaps, it is these final two actions that are hardest for Wilcox to perform himself. It is not uncommon for the "cruelty" of a masochist's "conscience" to become "reexternalized" and focused on others so that they are treated with "the same scorn and are punished with the same pitiless harshness" as that used when judging oneself (Wurmser, *Power*,

379). Likewise, the “cruelty” of Wilcox’s behaviour is undeniably shaped by the mercilessness of his inner judge. Consider, for example, the desperation with which he begs Margaret for forgiveness following her discovery of the Jacky affair, as well as his irrational dread that she will tar his reputation and not marry him. ““I was very very lonely and longed for a woman’s voice,”” pleads Wilcox to Margaret, ““I have been through hell”” (176).

Predictably, the Wilcox honeymoon is “devoted,” in Stern’s words, “to regretting passion” (29). Tellingly, the groom’s regret, however, is reserved for his exposure as an adulterer; the fact itself, as Margaret observes wryly, ““never seem[s] to strike him”” (176). In fact, given that the “skies would have fallen” if Wilcox ever discovered her “faint” physical “attraction” to his butler (136), his insistence that she can “save” him from “panic” only by way of the stipulation she will never again speak of his infidelity, is repugnantly hypocritical (176). His initial paranoia reflects, in short, the condemning, evasive, selfish manner in which he, rather than Margaret, thinks. How apposite that his later attempt to disregard how similar his past infidelities are to Helen’s sexual behaviour provokes him to his greatest hypocrisy. It shows his social Darwinism, as well as his incapacity to show compassion or respect to anybody including himself.

Though virtually nothing about Henry’s youth is supplied in the narrative, much is indirectly relayed through the character of his oldest son Charles, who “convey[s] very little joy,” for a “warm-hearted man” (233). “The Wilcoxes were not lacking in affection,” we are told facetiously, “but they did not know how to use it” (233). In refusing to express the intense anxiety he feels because of his position in the family,

Charles is very much his father's son; not least because his horror that Howards End will eventually be surrendered to Margaret is obvious to everyone but him. Sadly, he is also as obtuse as his father, and concentrates too much on his status as a gentleman to recognize his own melancholia. As he "watch[s] his father shuffling up the road" after Margaret's "defection," for instance, he has a "vague" sense of "regret," as well as "a wish that something had been different somewhere" (233). He "wishes" he had been "taught to say 'I' in his youth," we are told, "though he did not express it thus" (233). As is now clear, saying "I" refers to the capacity to admit weakness, fear, or even love; it means having the courage to protest the affective sacrifices that males routinely make, paradoxically, to gain the recognition of others. Subscription to the masculinist philosophy of Wilcox business shows his capacity to share genuine relationships with even one's siblings, spouse or children (137).

Wurmser suggests that certain types of grandiosity most affect those "tormented human beings who have sacrificed more to family and civilization than is compatible with competence and efficacy, and thus live a life deeply inimical to any pleasure, joy, and happiness" (*Power* 68-9). Likewise, Wilcox men repress anxiety by exclusively thinking of existence through masculinist discourses of consumption and control. For example, though "Charles need not have been anxious" about the will to Howards End, as Ruth never told Margaret of her final wish his anxiety about losing it to her overrides every other consideration (75). His enmity also blinds him to his father's growing reliance on his step-mother, whom he continues to see with enmity even though he does not necessarily need or want the property. His obsession with appropriation is a function

of the Wilcox “colonial spirit,” we are told, which dismisses even fidelity to one’s immediate family: “[t]hough presenting a firm front to outsiders, no Wilcox could live near, or near the possessions of, any other Wilcox” (146). The incapacity to say “I” results in radical affective alienation from one’s internal life, and makes one reliant on that which is external to oneself. No wonder, then, that Wilcox cares so dearly about image management; it is the only evidence of a legacy he has. Similarly, Womack argues that Wilcox “seethes with rage at the prospect of a fallen woman sullyng Howards End’s social class and upper class demeanour,” for he is incapable of understanding “her desire to be among the soothing presence of her family’s books and other sentimental belongings” (263). “Understanding” is the critical term here, for empathy would make it unfeasible for him to sustain this absurd charade of denial. “I cannot treat her as if nothing happened,” Wilcox reasons to Margaret in defence of his cruel behaviour, “I should be false to my position in society if I did [so]” (321)

“He has worked very hard all his life, and noticed nothing,” states Margaret to Helen after Henry’s demise, and “[t]hose are the people who collapse when they do notice a thing” (238). What Wilcox finally notices, of course, is how vindictive, not to mention injudicious, is the Darwinian law he has always championed. Accordingly, one finds his response to the murderous action of Charles to be one of ignorant affirmation; ignorance, that is, to the excessive anxiety his son suffers because of his refusal to surrender control of the family business, and exaggerated by his suspicion that Howards End will eventually be given to Margaret. “Right, my dear boy,” echoes Wilcox in advance of his response, “I don’t know. But you would have been no son of mine if you

hadn't" disciplined Bast (232). It takes a charge of manslaughter, in other words, for Wilcox to recognize that his ambition for a great legacy has crippled his oldest son (237). The "law" that decrees his son's sentence may very well go "against all reason," but its uncompromising obtuseness is "made in his own image" (237). Wilcox suffers a similar damnation to his son and Bast, therefore, because all three are like the "thousands who have lost the life of the body" without having "reach[ed] the life of the spirit" (84). The masochistic tendency in males to retard and repress the growth of their affectivity, in other words, results in a masculinity in which alienation is *self-imposed*. Wilcox similarly realizes that he has been "broken" by a world he is "eternally tired" of, and implores Margaret "to do what she [can] with him" (237).

The power of construction in a Meredithian plot, Forster claims in chapter five of Aspects of a Novel, results from the method whereby "[i]ncident springs out of character, and having occurred it alters that character" (90). Successful change comes only for those who live at Howards End, where Henry now patronizes his disgruntled family in their irritation over his legal transfer of the property to Margaret. "I don't want you all coming here later," he warns them, "complaining that I have been unfair" (241). Though clearly confused by his solicitation of their opinions, Paul angrily responds in a tone previously characteristic of the Wilcox male: "[i]t's apparently got to suit us" (241). Paul's jumbled renunciation of the property thereafter is clothed in an "ill-tempered" frown, and justified on the grounds that Howards End is neither in the "country," or "the town" (241). More importantly, we now see that Paul's anger towards Margaret is likely a pretence for demanding that his family recognize the enormity of

sacrificing an “out-door life that suited him” for one of business that clearly does not; he is simply incapable of asking for it in a straightforward manner (241).

“The book ends with the two girls” in “undisputed possession of *Howards End*,” Stone comments wryly, “with all the human creatures they connected with maimed, imprisoned or dead” (*Howards End* 406). Yet, the fact that Paul’s resentment is not so different from the masochistic tendencies that killed Bast illustrates the seemingly impossible task of triumphing over Edwardian masculinity. Put another way, the males here may very well appear steady on the surface when, in fact, they are not, while the females appear unsteady but are not. Consider Helen’s confession to Margaret that the death of Bast has made her psychologically “steady”: “I shan’t ever like your Henry, dearest Meg, or even speak kindly about him but all that blinding hate is over” (238). Yet, Forster, also, seems to suggest that steadiness is a function of one’s internal life rather than simply a case of gender. “All over the world men and women are worrying because they cannot develop as they are supposed to develop,” Margaret responds to her sister in this moment of insight, and all because they continue to “pretend” to be something they are not (239). The only “comfort” to such anxious panic, moreover, is through talking “the matter out” with those people one most cares about (239). Communion with a loved one over an intense anxiety, in fact, constitutes the ability to say “I” or “me,” as in the phrases, “please help me out” or “please believe in me” -- both of which were impossible for Leonard, Henry or Charles (238).

Furthermore, Margaret “see[s] clearly” now that she is incapable of providing a baby with the “real” love and commitment, it needs most, and “thankful” that her lack of

desire to produce offspring is reasonable (239). Though she loves their “beauty and charm,” confesses Margaret to Helen, she does not feel, “one scrap of what there ought to be” (239). Helen similarly confesses the substance of her life’s most pressing anxiety; she, too, is grateful to have discovered that her refusal to marry “isn’t” rooted in “shame or mistrust,” but revelation (239). “I used to be so dreamy about a man’s love as a girl, and think that for good or evil love must be the great thing,” Helen now acknowledges, knowing the vision, “itself,” is but a “dream” (239). Pretension, they now realize, all too often conceals the anxious inferiority and desperate alienation of men like Bast and Wilcox. “It is no good pretending” Bast was a stronger, healthier person than he truly was, says Helen now with poignant conviction, and so “I am forgetting him” (239). “Don’t drag in the personal when it will not come,” responds Margaret candidly, “[f]orget him” (239).

In “The Time of the King,” Jacques Derrida suggests that a subject pursues “through the gesture of the gift to constitute its own unity and, precisely, to get its own identity recognized so that identity comes back to it, so that it can reappropriate its identity: as its property” (11). Likewise, Bast and Wilcox are destroyed because they are unable to proffer recognition to another person, even though it would ease what is all too often ruthless inferiority and excruciating disaffection. The summary our narrator provides previous to the Basts’ demise also describes his counterpart. After being “driven straight through” self-imposed “torments,” we are told, a “pure, but enfeebled” Bast “emerges,” a “better man, who would never lose control of himself again, but he is also a smaller man, who had less to control” (230). Thus, the inability to say “I” ends, in

due course, in an obliteration of identities, through the material/ intellectual property that is substituted for such identification. The gift neither man can internalize, in other words, is none other than that most unassailable, primal desire in every human being: the gift of empathic recognition, or what the Schlegel sisters come to call “love” (239).

Chapter Five: Lawrence

“To be nothingness and yet not a nothing.” D. H. Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers (1913).

Despite being “one of the most psychoanalysed of all literary texts,” Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers, according to Berman, is also for many reasons “one of the most problematic” (*Narcissism* 201). Fortunately, for us, however, this difficulty is for the most part rooted in the predisposition of readers to correlate the novel with the life of the author, or to correlate the novel’s seemingly Oedipal structure with Lawrence’s infamously negative view of Sigmund Freud. Though time forbids me from dealing here with the perils of bio-criticism, I will deal with Lawrence’s polemic on what he believed to be Freudian psychoanalysis.

Married to a self-proclaimed “great Freud admirer” (Frieda), Lawrence was undoubtedly familiar with Freud’s models of sexuality but did not subscribe to them. Admittedly, this point may seem anachronistic, as Lawrence had finished most of Sons and Lovers previous to his meeting Frieda, though his final version was published subsequent to beginning of their relationship. It is hardly surprising, then, that Lawrence unequivocally rejected early Freudian readings of his Sons and Lovers (such as one published in the Psychoanalytic Review), and argued that Freudian “complexes” were nothing more than “vicious half-statements” (*Letters* 2 655). “When you’ve said Mutter-complex,” Lawrence sneers in a letter, “you’ve said nothing -- no more than if you called

hysteria a nervous disease” (*Letters* 2 655). His conclusion that hysteria is neither a “simple . . . sex relation,” nor a case of “nerves,” moreover, suggests that, on the whole, he rejected Freud’s ideas (*Letters* 2 655). Countless Oedipal interpretations of the novel’s allegory, nonetheless, more than demonstrate that Freudian readings are powerful hermeneutical tools in reading Sons and Lovers. In contrast, however, I follow Berman’s suggestion that Paul Morel is a “troubled Narcissus,” and explain Walter and Paul’s “troubles” as the consequences of masochism rather than Oedipal fixation (204).

The incapacity to stop oneself from ruining everything dear is a staple of non-Freudian masochism, even if manifestations of the behaviour are as specific as those individuals suffering from it. Walter’s grandiosity is rooted in an unquenchable need for approbation. This is one reason, among others, that Walter fails to properly distinguish the chasm between Gertrude’s intellectual and societal standing, and his own, when they first meet. “Walter Morel seemed melted away before her,” we are told, Gertrude “was to the miner that thing of mystery and fascination, a lady” (2). Though both Gertrude and Walter are initially attracted by their ignorance of the other’s heritage, Walter’s immediate translation of Gertrude into fantastical terms foreshadows the pathological nature of his attraction. When the two become involved in conversation, for example, he “instinctively . . . forget[s] everything” and fabricates information about himself (2).

Exhibitionism is often a manifestation of “traumatic narcissistic injury”; it consists of “chronic” shame over one’s supposedly “defective or flawed” social status and manifests itself in behaviour in which one “draws attention to oneself in a particularly painful manner” (Adamson, *Melville*, 74). Such a description fits the

behaviour of Walter Morel well, especially as his tendency to lie often overwhelms his immediate powers of comprehension so that he is later made out to be liar. Previous to his wedding to Gertrude, moreover, he wears the “blue ribbon of a tee-totaller,” and deceives his fiancée about his finances, as well as his love affair with alcohol (3).

Walter’s behaviour is as much a product of his breeding as anything else, as is made evident by his mother’s failure to inform Gertrude about her son’s sorry finances before the marriage. True, whereas Walter’s mother seems to have escaped the poverty of her class by virtue of her resourcefulness, he has done so by virtue of being a tireless worker (9). But his penchant for playing the “gallant” among his friends is as much a function of his grandiosity as is his predisposition to rage and violence: all of which are anticipatory scripts based in narcissistic injury. Accordingly, it is confusion, rather than malice, that makes him lose control when confronted with threatening situations. For example, his “bad conscience” is externalized onto the latch of his front gate one night when he believes it “resists” him (12). Externalization is an “interpersonal” defence Wurmser tells us, “whereby external actions, things, and human beings are” assailed “in order to deny an inner conflict,” and consists of pre-emptively engaging one’s (potential) “attacker” (*Power* 67, 71). Walter’s externalization, regrettably, applies to people, as well as objects that “resist” him.

Undoubtedly, Gertrude’s justified complaints about his and Jerry’s drinking habits, as well as her insolent conjecture about what she might have had she “never” met him, are understood by him to be such resistance (13). Her accusations, in short, compound his sense of shame over the truth she speaks and fuel his rage:

“Go, then,” he shouted, beside himself. “Go!”
 “No!” She faced around. “No,” she cried loudly, “you shan’t have it all your way; you shan’t have it all the way you like. I’ve got those children to see to. My word,” she laughed, “I should look well to leave them to you.”
 “Go,” he cried thickly, lifting his fist. He was afraid of her.
 “Go!”
 “I should only be too glad. I should laugh, laugh, my lord, if I could only get away from you.” (13)

Here Gertrude expresses to Walter the shame his behaviour brings his family and how this should make him feel alienated in his own home. Her reference to “those children,” rather than “your children” or “our children,” for example, symbolically denies his authority over the household, which in turn humiliates him to the extent that talking becomes difficult for him.

It is important to note, however, that this cycle of frustration, anger, and violence turns over the course of an hour into rationality and an intense remorse that is expressed in his body language. “It dawned on him what he had done,” and his “head dropped, sullen and dogged” (36). Thus, though Walter “hurts himself most” by acting brutally, he seems unable to escape the cycle of shame and alcohol which fuels his anger and violence (41). Accordingly, Morel grows increasingly estranged from his family, as the chapter title “The casting off of Morel” suggests. In an incident involving the disciplining of William, for example, Gertrude screams, ““Only dare, milord, to lay a finger on that child! You’ll regret it forever”” (41). Being “afraid of her,” he sits down “in a towering rage” despite feeling that his wife and children are “particularly against” him (48). The children are “like yourself,” he screams at her, ““you’ve put ‘em to your own tricks and nasty ways -- you’ve learned ‘em in it you ‘ave”” (49).

Despite his painful awareness of his family's contempt for him, Walter cannot do what is necessary to solicit their forgiveness. His rhetorical attacks are little more than dysfunctional cries for affection, a means of attracting, at least, negative attention from his family, since positive attention is unavailable. Morel's attempts to reach out to his children are also crippled by his limitations as a parent. When he cuts William's hair, for example, he "timidly" tolerates his wife's insults, but is angered to the point of near asphyxiation when she peremptorily dismisses his request, that his sons emulate him, at least in appearance (5). "Morel sat with his elbows on his knees, his hands gripped together till the knuckles were white . . . he gazed in the fire, feeling almost stunned, as if he could not breathe" (5). Despite his good intentions he is frustrated at every turn by the "impossibility" of joining in a genuine dialogue of forgiveness with his children who progressively see him as an "outsider" (53). Walter addresses Paul during his bronchitis, for example, using names of affection ("duckie," "darling," and "darlin"), which intimates a period in the past of emotional closeness with his children (56- 57). But his son's present rejection of him forces him to realize that any future acceptance will have to be solicited from those outside his immediate family (57).

Gertrude's role is important in relation to Paul or Walter for her own emotional conflict exaggerates the neurotic behaviour of the Morel males. Clearly, Paul sees his father's limitations with clarity but seems blind to those of his mother, who is incapable of loving a human being with whom she cannot identify. Even when Walter is severely injured in an accident, for example, Gertrude cannot feel love for him. "She was grieved, and bitterly sorry for the man who was hurt so much," we are told, but "in her heart of

hearts, where the love should have burned, there was a blank” (11). Worse, Gertrude is aware of her incapacity to love her husband but is loath to acknowledge it. “Somewhere far away inside her she felt indifferent to him and to his suffering. It hurt her most of all, this failure to love him, even when he roused her strong emotions” (111). It is this failure, which she never admits to her husband that helps to turn him into an acrimoniously dispirited man.

Morel fell into slow ruin. His body, which had been beautiful in movement and in being, shrank, did not seem to ripen with the years, but to get mean and rather despicable. There came over him a look of meanness, and of paltriness. . . . Moreover, Morel’s manners got worse and worse, his habits somewhat disgusting And Morel persisted the more because his children hated it. He seemed to take a kind of satisfaction in disgusting them, and driving them nearly mad. (141)

Although his degeneration is hastened by his vindictive wife, it is inevitable given his self-destructive need for recognition.

Although physical is often accompanied by emotional development, the reverse is true in the case of Paul’s relationship with his father. Despite having “loved” and “worshipped” him as a youth, Paul’s attitude changes from acceptance and love, to hostile contempt (“detest”) (141). He is also ambivalent towards his father’s emotions; when Walter tells him about the death of his brother, Paul is impassive, and responds by seeing “everything, except” his father’s sorrow (187). Paul’s affective conflicts, also, are manifest in other aspects of his behaviour, and although his violence is rarely acted out it, nonetheless, follow a pattern that recalls his parents. After he destroys Annie’s doll, Arabella, for example, he claims he “couldn’t tell it was there,” meaning its

“invisibility” somehow excuses his action (82). Annie knows her brother’s “intense” “hatred” for the doll did not precipitate its destruction, however, and that his request they “burn” or “sacrifice” it is just an attempt to evade responsibility through violent instigation (82).

Parents with non-Freudian masochistic tendencies often (inadvertently) educate their children to follow their self-destructive behaviour which detrimentally affects their children’s life-long psychological well-being. The enmity between Morel and his son is as much the consequence of Walter’s physical violence as his wife’s emotional vacuity, both of which humiliate the father in the eyes of the child. A child typically realizes in such a situation that s/he may also be exposed as not worth loving. A “wife who actively despises her husband,” Berman notes, “generally inspires fear in her young children who recognize she may also attack them”; this is because the “threat to withdraw love” is “more devastating” to the child “than actual physical abuse” (*Narcissism* 207). Gertrude’s aggressive withdrawal of affection from her husband, which humiliates him to the point of violence, demonstrates to her children the repercussions of threatening her dominance.

Predictably, the children’s fidelity to Gertrude goes hand in hand with their abhorrence of their father. Walter fails to secure any type of real engagement with his children, while Gertrude demands a crippling fidelity that eventually destroys Paul. Granted that, from time to time, Paul does resent the power his mother holds over him, he cannot escape compulsively repeating her behaviour in his adult relationships. As the following passage makes clear, Gertrude believes her never having had a “husband”

should correspond to an analogous deficiency in the sexual life of her son:

“I can’t bear it. I could let another woman -- but not her [Miriam].
 She’d leave me no room, not a bit of room --.”
 And immediately he [Paul] hated Miriam bitterly.
 “And I’ve never -- you know, Paul -- I’ve never had a husband --
 not really -- .”
 He stroked his mother’s hair, and his mouth was on her throat. . . .
 “Well I don’t love her, Mother,” he murmured, bowing his head
 and hiding his eyes on her shoulder in misery. His mother kissed
 him a long, fervent kiss. “My boy!” she said in a voice trembling
 with passionate love.
 Without knowing he gently stroked her face. (252)

Her request that Paul replace her husband is explicit here, as is his erotic caressing of her throat, hair, and face, however unconscious on his part. Paul’s sexual repression is clearly connected to his fidelity to his mother, and her fears that Miriam (or any woman) may provide her son with the one thing she cannot, a sexual relationship.

This attachment to his mother comes into conflict with his need for autonomy and his ability to enter future relationships. Children in such situations often accept “the stereotypical role assigned to them,” and, thus, collude with their parents in “the massive denial of their own identity, wishes, [and] feelings” (Wurmser, *Power*, 76). Paul’s “internal mother” represses any type of stimulation that might foster in him sensations of autonomy; by internal mother I mean the part of his psyche that privileges her needs over his own. The stimulation need not be sexual: after fighting Baxter Dawes, for example, Paul experiences a sense of freedom unlike any other. Rather than reflect on this excitement, however, he returns to his mother, as if worried such stimulus might challenge her control over him. Though individuals like Paul occasionally “pose up in brief . . . revolts,” in short, they inevitably end in a reversion to “docility” (Wurmser,

Power, 76). “He had forgotten Miriam,” we are told on one such occasion, and he sees only that his mother is “somehow . . . hurt” (197). This hyper-awareness of his mother’s sensibilities, in addition, vividly contrasts with his older brother William’s combative attitude towards her. Ironically, Paul’s impotent expressions of autonomy are most like those of his father who also occasionally rebels against his wife’s power only to later punish himself for having rebelled.

Miriam soon discovers that Paul is “best” loved by women who are “strong” like his mother, and unlike her (174). Their relationship survives only because of their penchant for self-deception and sexual restraint, though Miriam’s desire is more spiritual than physical and enshrined in sexual celibacy. Templeton refers to their relationship as “ethereal sex,” or “sensuous spirituality”: “the desire to have the profound enjoyment of sex, but without the crudity of intimate touch, the bestiality of actual physical intercourse -- and sensuous spirituality -- the desire to be titillated by ethereality in a way that is sensuous even physical, rather than philosophical and abstract” (73). Miriam’s suppression is, specifically, a consequence of her Christian faith. She restrains, rather than obliterates, her sexual desire; she “coils into knots of shame” at the very thought of being touched, and sublimates the “torturous,” “disgraceful” “serpent” of her sexual knowledge to her Christian “agony” (208).

Paul also undergoes a “violent conflict” (197) when they are together, although his attempts to “forget” his sexual desire engender him a “cruel” lasting “resentment” toward her (209- 210). Whenever he desires Miriam “as a man wants a woman,” his feeling is “suppressed . . . into a shame” (216). Sex “occasions shame,” because “as

experiences of forces that transcend one's control," they often "evoke each other" (Katz 245). Paul's and Miriam's sexual discomfort, likewise, is the result of their mutual incapacity to efface fidelities to church and mother. As such, Paul's incongruous thinking about Miriam's love is grandiose. He convinces himself of her inability to "realize him" as he is, and believes that Miriam desires his "soul" rather than his "body" (231). The disassociation of which he accuses Miriam is an apt description of his mother's blindness toward him, even if, as the following passage makes clear, both parties "objectify" their partners as "things":

"Yet you [Miriam] always do it. You switch me off somewhere, and project me [Paul] out of myself. I am quite ghostish, disembodied."

"Don't," she pleaded.

"Even now," he continued. "Even now I look at my hands, and wonder what they are doing there. That water there ripples right through me. I'm sure I am that rippling. It runs right through me, and I through it. There are no barriers between us."

"But--!" she stumbled.

"A sort of disseminated consciousness, that is all there is of me. I feel as if my body were lying empty, as if I were in the other things -- clouds and water -- ."

She looked at him, and saw that strange look, as if he were a thing and not a person, which fascinated her so, and which she feared. (232)

Paul's "disembodied consciousness" is consistent with what Wurmser calls a "radical" "denial of perceptions," an affective disorientation where everything "appears suddenly without meaning" (*Power* 74). That Miriam sees Paul as "a thing and not as a person" shows that she is, also, enmeshed in her own masochistic fears of "deficiency" (260). Indeed, her "infinitely subtle shame" (named by the narrator as the "deepest motive of her soul") originates in her Christianity but manifests itself in her sexual rejection of men (260). Miriam's insecurity, in other words, results as much from a failed negotiation

between her desire and her faith, as from Paul's rejection of her. His shame, in contrast, threatens to develop into a psychosis where "death," "stillness," and "inaction" are substituted for "being," and life fades into a "shadow" (330).

The foremost conflict for the pair concerns Paul's metaphysical celebration of self-annihilation, his inclination to "melt out into the darkness and sway there" (334). This yearning for aporia is consistent with popular Victorian fin-de-siècle Schopenhauerean notions of existence, which many artists suffered as tuberculosis or consumption (Snodgrass 3). Paul "identifies" his sense of non-being (or what the narrator calls the wish "not-to-be") with a "Great Being" (230), seemingly following Arthur Schopenhauer's idea that "suffering" is the "purifying process" through which the "crime of existence itself" is "sanctified" (328). This pseudo-Buddhist denial of the ego also demands sexual abstinence, and can culminate in the taking of one's life. Paul associates sexual satisfaction with "failure and death" and so convinces himself that refusing to deal with Miriam in any capacity constitutes an effacement of "his desire" (334). With the "thought of death so sweet and consoling," it is not surprising to see that Paul "wishes he were sex-less, or dead" (334).

This is especially true as his being a successful artist allows him to work in isolation and ensures his extrication from everyone except his mother and her surrogates, Miriam and Clara Baxter Dawes. Paul "alternates between a frenzied pursuit" of Clara and his subservience to his mother during this time, so that he "splits his feelings toward Mrs. Morel into the good mother, whom he idealizes, and the bad mother, whom he devalues and then projects onto Miriam and Clara" (Berman 205). Paul's myopia,

however, prevents him from realizing the similarities between the marriages of his mother and Clara. As is suggested by his inability to paint, the impending death of his mother is “almost too much to bear” (430). Paul’s refusal to “analyse” or “understand” his depression is not helped, moreover, by Gertrude’s penchant for fervently expounding all “the things” in her life “that had been . . . most bitter to her” at those times he is with her (429).

Paul tells Clara at this point that his mother “will never give in” to death, although it is difficult to ascertain if this statement is one of admiration or horror (431). He finds the company of either Clara or Miriam to be deeply unsatisfying, most likely because he sees his desire for either woman as a betrayal of his mother. On one occasion, for example, he “submits” to Miriam’s kisses only to discover that her contact is even more “torturous” than usual (435). The narrator makes it clear that this torture is associated with his mother’s death. “She could not kiss his agony. That remained alone and apart writhing with the agony of death. And she kissed him and fingered his body, till at last, feeling he would go mad, he got away from her. It was not what he wanted just then -- not that” (435).

Thus, Paul refuses the empathy of women other than his mother because he relates her impending death to his future crisis. His crying fits and inability to paint foreshadow the nervous breakdown to which he will later “submit” (430). His choice to assist his mother’s death is both the action of a loving son as well as the final phase of masochism: now he kills the individual whose recognition he needs most in order to exist, his mother.

Assisting his mother's death with an overdose of morphine is traumatic, and helps to explain Paul's behaviour when he comes across his mother's lifeless body. Paul "whispers" to his dead mother in one of the novel's most powerful scenes, "[m]y love -- oh my love'" (442) and ceases to apply his "passionate" kisses to her face only after the "coldness against his mouth" makes him "bite his lip in horror" (443). As is evident from his assertion that he can "never . . . let her go," Paul's failure to see himself as anything other than a function of his mother's will is now complete (443). Despite the end of some of his emotional complications following Gertrude's death, his cessation of all familial and social relations signifies his incapacity to enjoy life when his mother is no longer there to direct him.

Thus, Paul justifies his decision to leave both Miriam and Clara on fantastical grounds which ignore his present automatic repression of his feelings for either of them. That he continues to oppose his mother to Clara despite Gertrude's death, moreover, shows how even Gertrude's death fails to loosen her grip over him. He muses as the novel ends, for example, that he must leave Clara because of his shame before her. The narrator links shame and recognition here as earlier when discussing the destruction of Arabella. Such repetition emphasizes that one's importance is a consequence of being recognized by others.

Clara could not stand for him to hold on to [his mother's memory]. She wanted him but not to understand him. He felt she wanted the man on top, not the real him that was in trouble. That would be too much trouble to her, he dared not give it [to] her. She could not cope with him. It made him ashamed. So secretly ashamed because he was in such a mess, because his own hold on life was so unsure, because, feeling unsubstantial, [he felt] shadowy, as if he did not count for much in this concrete world. (451)

Paul explicitly associates shame, then, with the phantasmatic which also reveals his ambivalence toward life. His choice of “nothingness” suggests how his earlier inability to express autonomy has now grown into a permanent facet of personality (454). Such ambivalence is normally exercised by those “people who as children” have “been exposed to great brutality or other severe traumata and who now, in the form of that identification with the victim and with the help of manifold affect reversals,” convince themselves of a desire for their own destruction (Wurmser, *Power*, 69).

Paul's conviction that life without his mother is worthless, in short, is what fuels his journey from self-destruction to tortured apathy. “Doggedly” shifting between arguments for life and death, he identifies within himself, only “a stroke of hot stubbornness . . . resist[ing] his annihilation” (456). His “real agony” derives from his sense that he has “nowhere to go, nothing to do, nothing to say, and [is] nothing himself” (456- 57). Indeed, in this discombobulated state he sometimes appears to himself as if he is an alien or a madman (456). He oscillates between someone who acts as if he is “mad” and one who actually is mad. “Sometimes he ran down the streets as if he were mad,” we are told, and sometimes “he was mad: things weren’t there, things were there” (456-457). In short, the emptiness of his existence is discombobulating.

Paul now sets aside Miriam and justifies his self-imposed exile from her and Clara on grounds better suited to his mother than to either woman: “you love me so much you want to put me in your pocket. And I should die there smothered” (461). It is because Miriam still loves him enough to let him go that, in contradiction, he refuses her, while his abandonment of Clara’s desire eventually resigns her to his cruel

ambivalence: “[s]he had borne so long the cruelty of belonging to him and not being claimed by him” we are told (462). Further, his emotional evasion is so deeply rooted that Miriam finally yields to it. “It was the end between them,” we are told, she “could not . . . relieve him of his responsibility to himself” (462). Paul recognizes that his detachment inhibits him from being able to make intimate contact, but neglects to do anything about it. How fitting, then, that many numerous biographical, psychoanalytic, and/or ideological methods have been similarly unable to explain why the novel is considered a *bildungsroman*, when the subject of maturity documented in the novel is grossly counterintuitive; in fact, its vague possibility is not even intimated until the final sentence of the novel, and even then, its hardly definitive.

One only understands why the novel is a tragedy in acknowledging that Paul’s problem is rooted in his incapacity to differentiate his own will from that of his mother. Instead of discovering real freedom for the first time after her death, he becomes a living monument to her. He thinks to himself as the novel closes, for example, “[w]ho could say his mother had lived and did not live? She had been in one place and now was in another that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone abroad into the night, and he was with her still. They were together” (464). Clearly, Paul ends in the novel, then, as much a “nothingness and yet not a nothing” as he was previously, when he and his mother were corporeally, “together” (464). Worse, Paul’s yearning to be with “her” never subsides; moreover, it is logical that the words he finally “whimpers” refer to his mother rather than to himself. Indeed, as Gertrude’s spirit is “the only thing” that holds Paul “up” after her death, it is not surprising to see that he will

always long (“want”) to be “alongside” her (464).

In considering the contentious final scene in the novel, Templeton offers only a vague speculation vis-à-vis Paul’s prospects, insisting that “perhaps . . . within the city” he “will be able to support himself, emotionally and psychologically as well as financially” (102). Paul’s redemption “will not be easy,” Templeton insists, but it is necessary for the growth (or “evolution” as he phrases it) of Paul’s “consciousness” (104). The problems Paul encounters after his mother’s death, in other words, are the stages of overcoming necessary for the novel to be a *bildungsroman*. Templeton argues passionately that the novel delineates, through “a series of very significant steps,” Paul’s “development or maturation to a point of self-realization” (104).

Lawrence’s point, however, is that Paul’s life is a tragedy. The severe trauma and shame he has suffered at the hands of his parents in childhood explains why Paul is forever unable to discover, let alone live, the autonomous life necessary for him to be a successful human being. His determining belief that “only” his mother’s “touch” can sustain him even after her she has been dead for sometime, in fact, is proof of his permanent affective retardation (464). While Paul’s troubling duplicity -- of being “nothingness and yet not a nothing” -- powerfully substantiates the contingency between his yearnings for his mother, and the total arrest of his identity, it is not the only signification that Paul ends in the text as little more than the externalization of his mother’s hatred for his father (464). The most compelling proof, of course, is the novel’s conspicuous absence of any discussion, whatsoever, about what might be included in Paul’s treatment.

Unluckily, the exclusion of such treatment from Sons and Lovers does not explain why the novel is considered critically even now as a *bildungsroman* when, by definition, it should be exempted. Hoffman, Templeton and Berman, for example, generally agree with Shapiro's assumption that "Paul renounces a limitless narcissistic identification with his mother," as the novel ends, and "in so doing discovers a limited self" (52), even though their work accentuates dissimilar aspects of the novel's conclusion, than she does. Lawrence's infamous loathing of the literary criticism in his day, moreover, would not necessarily occlude him from being fascinated by today's non-dogmatic psychopathological readings, where Freud's ideas are of less importance than psychological behaviour, such as one finds in Berman's, for lack of a better term, "narcissism" analysis, or the currently popular, "object relations analysis" that is paradigmatic of the masterful readings of modernist texts by Schapiro.

Whereas the first part of this chapter has shown how Paul's affective retardation is constitutive of his masochistic tendencies, as well as the quandary of cataloguing the novel as a *bildungsroman*. Both conclusions were necessary to underscore the immense heuristic divergences between Paul Morel, and his masculine protagonists in Women in Love, which is both Lawrence's true *bildungsroman*, as well as the sole in text in which he seemingly provides, for lack of a better term, a rejoinder, to Morel's malignant neurosis apropos his staging of blutbruderschaft.

“A fate dictated from the outside”: male masochism in Women in Love (1920).

Whereas the first part of this chapter demonstrated the perilous nature of social development, and used Paul Morel’s ambivalent conclusion in Sons and Lovers as a basis for denying its classification as a *bildungsroman*, the second part of the chapter investigates how creative metaphysics surmount masochistic fatalism in Women in Love, where Lawrence contrasts Gerald Crich’s nihilism and suicide with Birkin’s metaphysical vision and consequent transformation, to provide genuine answers to debilitating existential questions. Accordingly, the moral here is not that Gerald’s masochistic behaviour could have been managed if those around him were more empathic, but that imagination and hope offers recourse from the metaphysical or existential anxieties that make suicide a desired end. This examination scrutinizes the destiny of Gerald and Birkin, focussing on the chapters, “The Water-Party,” “Gladiatorial,” and “Snow.” The analysis of Gerald particularly addresses how he deals with the deaths in his immediate family, while my reading of Birkin concentrates on his existential perturbation, as well as on his radical confusion about the seeming absurdity of Gerald’s suicide.

Before discussing the novel, however, I will review the multifaceted nexus between traumata, shame affect and non-Freudian masochism. Trauma is, by definition, a manifested neurosis, although it usually refers to an individual’s physiology. The psychological affects that accompany traumata, however, often take the form of shame,

particularly in regard to mistrusting one's own reality, or ontology. Traumata and shame psychology are generally two sides of the same coin; two different ways of talking about the psychosomatic affects individuals suffer after dealing with intense crisis. Further, shame is "the central affect" associated with narcissistic rage, most pointedly where one's humiliation "erases" the event "from consciousness" and "triggers" its congruent behaviour (Bacal and Newman 79). The complex relationship between trauma and shame affect, therefore, encompasses what is normally understood to be the basis of neurosis: a return of the repressed. In this case, that return takes the form of masochism, defined by Wurmser as "the need to seek suffering, pain or humiliation in order to obtain love and respect and to sabotage one's chances of success" (*Nietzsche* 113).

Symbolically exemplified as a kind of Dionysian chthonic gnome, Gerald is romantically emblematic of a turn-of-the-century England narcissistic romanticism earlier characteristic of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818) or Lord Byron's Manfred (1816). On one occasion, for instance, Ursula, Gudrun and the narrator all comment upon Gerald's mythological or Wagnerian nature, as he parades his Adonis-like body on the pier. Ursula refers to Gerald as a Wagnerian "Nibelung" -- an underworld gnome -- on seeing him dive into his family's lake (97). This mythological association between Wagner, the underworld and Gerald suggests that his dive is as much into a fantastic freedom as into cool water. "Alone and immune" in his own "watery world," Gerald moves beautifully through the water, and "exult[s]" in "the new element, unquestioned and unconditioned" (97). He is afforded temporary reprieve from the social "bond[s] or connection[s]" that otherwise stop him from lustfully "thrusting" his body about in any

way he chooses (97).

As Gerald's fatality emanates from his incapacity to construct an identity for himself, such fantasy is an important indicator of what follows in his life. Robert Langbaum characterizes Gerald's "explosive self-objectification" as the driving force within him (334). Gerald's stunted interior life shifts spuriously between his insatiable need to be a hero (or, at least be very well respected) and the overbearing humiliation he suffers for having to be someone he is not. What eventually moulds him into a callous businessman is the resentment he feels towards society because of who he is forced to be, regardless of whether or not it suits him. Gerald regiments his life, in short, by sacrificing emotion to the demands of efficiency. Worse, his masochistic pathology demands that, even when making life-changing decisions, he consider the needs of others before his own. His relationship with Gudrun is pivotal in this regard, for it clearly illustrates how Gerald solicits the company of people who will inevitably disappoint him. For example, consider how Gudrun runs from him when he is most mortified and on the cusp of suicide. This happens for various reasons, not least because his seemingly imperious aggressive masculinity blinds those around him from the real suffering he endures.

The chapter fittingly named the "Water-Party" frames the spectre of Gerald's past trauma in the second great calamity of his life, the deaths of his sister and her fiancé. As new trauma radically stimulates the memory function of those suffering PTSD, it is particularly fitting that the opaque circumstances in which Gerald accidentally killed his brother are presented to us in this chapter. Gerald's guilt over the

event, we soon learn, has resulted in his genuine belief in his own damnation, and heightened the intense emotional alienation he always has felt from his family. Positively, Gerald's transformation of some of this pain into a façade of professionalism and respect has provided him with the opportunity to seek others through whom to heal. Negatively, this façade has hardened over time into a masochistic judge who torments him whenever he is anything less than the perfect lover or industrialist. On this occasion, he feels as if he is a "striding, mindless body" (238), even as his cryptic declarations about the "great space between" him and Gudrun, are elegantly staged in the setting of the lake's dangerous, hypnotic beauty (238). Tellingly, his first admission of love to Gertrude makes him feel completely disassociated, as if "something" wants to "speak out of him" (243).

The drowning crisis exposes how Gerald's tendency to mediate his emotional suffering by enveloping it in a grandiose rhetoric of damnation is a result of the trauma he suffered in the past. "He suffered badly," we are told, he "had killed his brother when a boy, and was set apart, like Cain" (238). Whereas Cain is banished by God because of his murder of his brother, however, Gerald has banished himself for reasons that are self-imposed. Dramatically, Gerald illogically concludes that his present failure to save Diana and her lover from drowning, is evidence of his general impotence, or incapacity to have "been [of] much use" to his family (251). Significantly, he takes upon himself the task of telling his father so that he will have the opportunity to broadcast his failure. "Well father, I'm sorry," he says more than once, "I'm afraid that it can't be helped" (251).

Emotionally stultified because of the loss of his brother, Gerald has persistently held affection at bay, as is evident in his discussion with Birkin about the death of his sister. Gerald admits to being “shocked” by her death but also confesses that he is unable to “account” for the “coldness” he feels towards the terrible tragedy (274). “I do not feel it [her death] very much, really,” he tells Birkin dispassionately, “I can’t feel any grief you know” (274). Though our narrator exposes Gerald’s pretentious “indifference” for the defence mechanism that it is, we are never told the substance of the “great[er] fear[s]” that haunt Gerald’s psyche (274). Nor will it be elucidated by Gerald, whose “belie[f] in education through subjection and torment” (276), makes him unsympathetic to even his general anxieties which he considers a “family failing” (275).

Where others “fall to pieces” over the death of siblings, Gerald is the picture of calm resignation, albeit because of his irrational acceptance of what he refers to as the family curse. “There’s one thing about our family,” he tells Gudrun cryptically, “[o]nce anything goes wrong, it can never be put right again -- not with us. I’ve noticed it all my life -- you can’t put a thing right, once it has gone wrong” (251- 252). It is strange, then, that he valiantly tries to look for his sister until it is clear that he cannot save her. In other words, he must still have reserved some fantastical hope that he could have saved her -- a reflex, inevitably existing from his unintentional murder of his brother. Wurmser suggests that, “many impulsive . . . actions aim at establishing magical, omnipotent control over what is not controllable. One braves extreme danger, dares the risks of separation, humiliation, and physical injury, in order to prove, counterphobically, that the fear of those threats is unfounded” (*Moral Masochism* 71-

72).

For that reason, Gerald assumes blame here not because he is answerable for the deaths of the young lovers but because he needs to feed his personal mythos of a damned existence. He accepts the family curse because it provides the façade of an explanation for his failure to save his siblings. In his subsequent conversation about death with Birkin and Gudrun, he momentarily strains the veneer of his unaffected impartiality, and reveals a fierce nihilism. ““If you once die,” Gerald queries, “‘it’s over, it’s finished. Why come to life again?’” (257). Though Birkin would normally be the one to ask such a question, here he is tentative about the decadent notion that the value of art and life lies in one’s capacity to “waste” it, which suggests that contrary to the rhetoric each normally espouses, it is Gerald, rather than Birkin, who is the nihilist of the pair (257).

As the indifference of Gerald’s mother towards the death of her first daughter makes clear, Gerald’s inheritances are as positively economic as they are depressingly disturbing. For despite fulfilling his father’s expectations to run the company he loves, Gerald has always met his father’s “real dislike” of him with “fear,” contempt, and disavowal (290). His father’s “refusal to acknowledge” their hostility, moreover, reinforces the sense of worthlessness Gerald suffered in his youth because of his father’s tendency to “ignore” him, when he was there at all (290). Corresponding to his own double life, then, there is the split reality in his childhood: hidden behind a veneer of joviality and friendliness are strife, violence and unhappiness. In such situations Wurmser suggests that children either take over the stereotypical role assigned to them and “join[] in with the parents in the massive denial of their own identity, wishes,

feelings,” or they briefly resist “in desperate anger and defiance, only to succumb soon again to their sense of guilt and revert to their docility” (*Power* 76). Likewise, never having received the love and support he needed, Gerald now externalizes his resentment of his father onto the company he built, rising “in reaction against it” (291). In “spite of the deeper, more sullen hostility” he had always felt towards his father, “pity,” “grief” and “tenderness,” nonetheless “overcome” him when he hears about his father’s death (291). He does not express his hatred toward his father as openly as Paul Morel does, but only because his subservience to convention makes him defer his rage until it is a component of the masochistic violence that destroys him.

The incapacity to provide others with the depth of love and care they need most is only one of the ways in which Gerald pays for denying his own vulnerability. “Gerald really loved Birkin,” we are told, “though he never quite believed in him. Birkin was too unreal” (272). And this is true; Gerald demeans his “impractical” feelings for Birkin by equating them with his friend’s “whimsical” conduct (272). His tragic decision to degrade Birkin’s masculinity precludes him as much from the genuine spirituality that underlies Birkin’s eventual conversion, as from his compulsion to circumvent emotional affection (272). Gerald’s homophobic anxieties, correspondingly, are, in point of fact, a non-sexual, self-protective aggressiveness. Wurmser suggests that such antipathy toward others is often the inverse result of one’s tyrannical “self-aggression” (or “turning . . . against” the self); a terrifying acuity where one believes one’s “sexuality,” rather than one’s body, is under “attack” (*Power* 83). Curiously, such hyperarousal manifests itself as sexual anxiety, regardless of whether or not the trauma that created it initially was

sexual in nature.

Comparably, Gerald's need for male empathy is transformed into the specious estimation that Birkin does not "count as a man among men" because of his effeminacy (272). In order for one's manliness to be "taken seriously," Gerald believes, one must initially "appear" as a "man among men" (272). More importantly, if "serious" men do not discuss isolation, loneliness and emotive torment, neither should those working towards equally serious ends, such as business (272). Waltersheid observes that, in general, Lawrence's men "typically discuss politics, current events, and jobs rather than feelings and relationships" (82). Gerald's emasculation of Birkin, therefore, results from his incapacity to unequivocally articulate to him his dire need for affective intimacy. However, Gerald's deep cynicism is counterbalanced by genuine affection for Birkin. "You mean a lot to me Rupert, more than you could know," he tells his friend almost immediately after he learns of the death of his sister, "[w]e're all right, you know, you and me" (257). "I may be alright," Birkin tells Gerald harshly, "but I'm sure you're not" (257). Tellingly, this exchange foreshadows Gerald's eventual narcissistic absorption into suicide, and that moment of revelation provides Birkin with a new philosophy of life.

Birkin's ongoing depression and cynicism, on the other hand, is more melodramatic than real, as is evident from his perpetual failure to amalgamate his paradoxical beliefs in either a fin-de-siècle pessimism, or authentic rebirth. "He lay sick and unmoved, in pure opposition to everything," we are told at one point, Birkin "knew how near to breaking was the vessel that held his life. He knew also, [however,] how

strong and durable it was. And he did not care. Better a thousand times to take one's chance with death, than accept a life one did not want" (269). Gerald, in contrast, cannot adequately negotiate the emotional landmines involved in any relationship; it is not that Gerald cannot love people per se but that he loves in a limited fashion.

Gerald's intense identification with Birkin's suffering persona is but one facet of his emotional limitations, and includes his incapacity to properly infer the grandiose nature of his perceptions of others. For example, whereas Gerald's fixation on Birkin's capacity to "forget and not suffer" could help him learn how to conceptualize the immediacy of his own anxieties, it is instead transformed into "bitter unbelief" after he irrationally concludes that his friend will forget him (277). He sees Birkin's "deep" and "important" melodrama, accordingly, as little more than "hypocritical" "lies," and accuses him of dissembling -- being able to "change as easily as if [he] had no soul" (277). If Birkin knew what genuine suffering was, Gerald seems to deduce, he would have recognized Gerald's weaknesses and provided him with the friendship he needs. To be fair, Birkin brings to their relationship in the mode of a new type of symbolic gesture, a blutbruderschaft. As Waltersheid defines it, "blutbruderschaft is a term that describes a deep friendship" between men, though "many men would characterize [it] as feminine because of its physical and mental intimacy" (87).

Birkin's talk of an "impersonal union that leaves one free," however, seems spurious to Gerald who predictably hesitates to become involved in any such communion (278). This rejection is more a function of Gerald's temperament, however, than Birkin's capriciousness: "Gerald could never fly away from himself in real

indifferent gaiety,” we are told, “[h]e had a clog, a sort of monomania” (278-279). That the object of Gerald’s mania is himself, then, is not unanticipated, as it provides him with the opportunity to “wobble on the tacit assumption of [his] social standing” (280-281). So while Gerald does not “claim” social “intrinsic personal superiority” over Birkin, it is only because Birkin has no interest in such a game (280). Conversely, when Birkin fails to notice how his dismissal of Gerald’s “social honour” and “principle” wound him, it hurts him deeply (280). Regrettably, neither man fully grasps the offence taken by Gerald at Birkin’s behaviour, nor what it signifies about Gerald’s degenerating psychological state. “He did not inherit an established order and a living idea,” we are told, the “centralizing force that had held the whole together seemed to collapse with his father, the parts were ready to go asunder in terrible disintegration. Gerald was as if left on board a ship that was going asunder beneath his feet, he was in charge of a vessel whose timbers were all coming apart” (293). Lawrence suggests a parallel here between Gerald and Joseph Conrad’s Jim. In contrast to Jim who also faces an obliterating horror, however, Gerald lacks the desire to make the plunge. He passively sacrifices his potency, dignity and beauty, to grandiose visions of damnation, where, like Byron’s Manfred, he waits “on the verge of inheriting his own destruction” (293).

As his “insanity,” for lack of a better word, is manifest in his ruthless actions as a coal magnate, however, others do not perceive his “torture[s] by a furious and destructive demon” (302). There is a direct correlation, nonetheless, between his authoritarian overhauling of management policy at the mine, and his emotional state. His growing desperation corresponds to the cruel labour conditions he now imposes in the

name of efficiency. The new regimen is so “terrible and heartbreaking in its mindlessness,” in fact, that it “reduces” miners to “mere mechanical instruments” (304). Tellingly, no one ever realizes that the inspiration for construction of a “perfect[ly]” self-sufficient administrative labour system is an overwhelming desire for self-annihilation rather than good organization (305). Sadly, no one cares.

As his parents used a similarly unsympathetic, efficiency-oriented discipline to raise their children, it is not surprising that Gerald feels ambivalent about his own business success; especially as he no longer “reacts” to fear because his “centers of feeling” have already “dry’d up” (306). Accordingly, he feels “strangely indifferent” to everything at this point, and “dares” not remove his “composition mask” for fear of discovering the aporia it conceals (306). His “faint, small but final sterile horror” results from his awful realization that the “mystic reason” that once held his life together, is presently disintegrating (306).

As Gerald is unable to communicate his overwhelming anxiety, and Birkin is generally myopic, it is foreseeable that blutbruderschaft will not be possible. The ritualistic nature of the blood bond suggests a permanence and fidelity neither young man yet knows, as is demonstrated by Gerald’s silent rejection of Birkin’s hand; an event that appears almost scripted. Birkin “put out his hand to steady himself. It touched the hand of Gerald, which was lying out on the floor. And Gerald’s hand closed warm and sudden over Birkin’s, they remained exhausted and breathless, the one hand clasped over the other. It was Birkin whose hand, in swift response, had closed in a strong, warm clasp over the other. Gerald’s clasp had been sudden and momentaneous” (351).

Tellingly, Birkin immediately comprehends the “deep meaning” of this contact and proposes they become “physically intimate,” since they have already been “mentally” and “spiritually intimate” (351). How significant is it, then, that Gerald does not respond to Birkin’s proposal though he “slowly” removes his hand? (351). Walterschied, for one, argues it is this action more than any other that, “foreshadows Gerald’s ultimate downfall” (88).

Even though it includes rites of blood rather than sex, blutbruderschaft, nevertheless, provides a model of intimacy that each man unwittingly needs in his life. That Lawrence names the chapter “Gladiatorial,” is suggestive; for intimate male relationships were a necessity for gladiators, their sacred nature marked in blood. It is not anticipated, then, that Birkin’s invitation to intimacy is treated with suspicion by Gerald who knows all too well what it is to lose a blood brother. This dispersal of “blood consciousness,” as Walterschied calls it, would allow men “to share something that is deep and intimate while not erotic” (87). Like E. M. Forster’s, Lawrence’s biting criticism of English masculinity is warranted, disciplined as it is by homophobia and xenophobia. Walterschied suggests that Lawrence “rejected the traditional male stereotypes of competition, homophobia, and restrained or ‘masculine’ emotions” (82) when he constructed a friendship many would characterize as “feminine because of its physical and mental intimacy” (87). That notwithstanding, Birkin rejects the pact because he fears the physical pain in the ritual while Gerald rejects it because he is not familiar with the custom. Gerald’s claim of ignorance is ironically astute; for it is as if his loss of a blood brother has made him incapable of genuine affective intimacy.

At the same time, S. M. Jourard and J.E. Rubin inform us that even in today's society, males are not provided with a grammar through which to investigate their own sexuality. And if a "male experiences only traditional [Western] male touches, he learns only what his body feels like when it is poked, smacked or crushed. If he does not have a sexual partner, they suggest, he is unlikely to experience his body as it feels to be touched or caressed' (47). As being "touched and being watched are ways of acknowledging embodied being," males, on the whole, "tend to be somewhat unembodied in [their] usual, non-sexual interpersonal relationships" (Jourard and Rubin 47). Similarly, Gerald never shares what Walterschied refers to as, "a fruitful, healthy relationship" with Birkin because he cannot speak the language of genuine intimacy (88). That he physically removes his hand from Birkin's in silence, therefore, indicates the apprehension and dissatisfaction he feels in his life. Therefore, Gerald's incapacity to overcome his traumata is manifested in the numerous pathological, disassociative states he suffers until his death.

Ross suggests that Gerald undergoes a "progressive alienation from society, family and friends," during this period, and that his eventual "accidental death [is] a form of suicide" (36). At any rate, severe psychosis is what results for Gerald after the disintegration of his relationship with Gudrun, and the loss of his family and social contacts. As mentioned earlier, the process of sublimation can add sexual overtones to one's perception of events, so that one's sadness is externalized through sexual desire. The pair's co-dependency is tumultuous for each of them, but it "exerts a powerful and ultimately, self-destructive will" over Gerald (Ross 33). Still, Gudrun appropriately

diagnoses the subject of their mutual shame when she accuses him of being incapable of “love” (561).

Sadly, neither of them genuinely loved the other, and their mutual attraction is based as much on their affective emptiness as their physical attraction. Gerald’s paralysis of “arrested desire” is nevertheless inflamed greatly by Gudrun’s ambivalent, when not aggressive, behaviour (567). For example, he often sits silently “for long periods” on the side of her bed, “his head dropped on his breast” (567). The potential for shame is a prerequisite whenever we apprehend the recognition of others. Jack Katz reminds us that the “features of shame are more visible” when we “can appreciate that manner, style, grace, and other ways of acting” are necessary for “the process of sustaining the identities of the others with whom we interact” (258).

For even if Gerald’s sexual psychosis is as much “desired” as it is “hated,” to use Ross’ formulation, his increasing alienation from his friends, as suggested by the use of a third person perspective at this point, is insufferable (35). “Then he looked up and realized that he was going to bed. He was cold. Soon he was lying down in the dark. But what he could not bear was the darkness. The solid darkness confronting him drove him mad. So he rose, and made a light. He remained seated for a while, staring in front. He did not think of Gudrun, he did not think of anything” (597). Gerald’s disassociation here is quite similar to that Paul suffers after the death of his mother, and it is the latter’s refusals to marry Miriam or Clara that is analogous to Gerald’s rejecting blutbruderschaft. It is poignantly fitting that Gerald meets death amongst the race of people that generated blutbruderschaft, for it reiterates what is wasted because of his

incapacity to bring together the novel's dichotomy between Germanic warrior-like action, and the rhetoric of British passivity, within himself; in effect, transforming his self-destructive psychosis into the transcendental revelation that convinces Birkin's to change his attitude towards his life.

It seems noteworthy, then, that the novel virtually reaches its conclusion without any transcendental moment being reached by Birkin. It arrives without fanfare, and accompanies Birkin's recognition that the "criterion for success" in nature is irrespective of human desire (580), and that the extinction of species occurs because of its cumulative, instinctive bankruptcy. Just as the ichthyosaurus and the mastodon were destroyed because they "failed to develop," Birkin realizes that, "God, the creative mystery" will also "dispose" of humanity, so as to "replace him with a finer created being" (580). This imaginative understanding of humanity's place in the universe, in other words, inspires Birkin to overcome his myopia and embrace a new metaphysics. As Birkin is no stranger to conversions, however, it is hard to tell if Gerald's death finally makes him realize the impending fate of those individuals sorry enough to lack a metaphysical vision of existence. Ursula, for example, erroneously supposes that Birkin's feelings for Gerald were sexual, and implores him to realize the impossibility of pursuing two loves (583). At any rate, Birkin's concluding utterance in the novel -- "I don't believe that" -- would be incorrigible if it signified anything but his new belief in the transformative potentiality of existence.

The "lesson of classic modern fiction," argues Eugene Goodheart is that "[w]riting expresses and testifies to a life that cannot be truly lived, or can be lived only

at great peril” (Goodheart 113). Certainly, a major reason that D. H. Lawrence’s novels are studied psychologically is because much of his work highlights the troubled rearing and consequent combative inner lives of his characters. A “fate dictated from [the] outside, from theory or from circumstance, is a false fate,” Lawrence suggests in his “Foreword” to Women in Love, because only imaginative will can refashion individuals by healing them (*Unpublished Forward* 4). While Lawrence’s Sons and Lovers ends in a virtual aporia in which Paul Morel’s future is uncertain, Women in Love celebrates the necessary hardships involved in overcoming psychological disorders. Lawrence clearly shows us that as much as Paul Morel, Walter Morel and Gerald Crich are individuals with legitimate psychological problems, they are participants nonetheless in their masochistic destinies. Importantly, Birkin’s capacity to establish the basis for what may be genuine happiness is causally related to his revelation about life and relationships. This can hardly be a coincidence. A non-Freudian masochistic hermeneutic is valuable when probing these works by Lawrence, then, because they allow us to understand the traumatic complexity of human suffering and the real effects it has on subsequent behaviour.

Chapter Six: Woolf

The non-Freudian masochism of everyday life in Virginia Woolf's Jacob's Room (1922)

E. M. Forster's Howards End, Virginia Woolf wrote in 1917 is, "an important, if unsatisfactory piece of work," and "may well be the prelude" to another novel that is "less anxious" (*Howards End* 395). It is her own anxiety, however, that is manifest in scribbles upon the first page of her manuscript of Jacob's Room; thoughts consumed with the technical difficulty of narratively "h[o]ld[ing] together," a "free" subject matter solely by way of a "Room" (1). Such anxiety is also present in her later worry that the novel's incorrigibly "experimental" form might disguise its technical "merit" (*Diaries* 2 573). Though the novel's "shadowy" characters are "obscure," she admits, her fault is not so much one of "method" as "ignorance of how to use it psychologically" (*Diaries* 2 588).

Woolf "explain[s] a little of [her] own psychology" in "A Sketch of the Past" (1920), where she documents the violent epiphanic "shocks" of recognition she underwent whenever shifting between states of "being" and "non-being," a process that often made her painfully aware "of some real thing behind appearances" (70 - 71). Though such shocks were quite painful in her youth, Woolf argues, her "shock-receiving capacity," on the whole, had been a blessing, particularly because she had become a

writer as a consequence of it (*Sketch* 72).

Perhaps this helps explain why Woolf's first "reflect[ions] on the conditions of the narrative voice itself," occur in Jacob's Room, principally, apropos "what it means to speak for a silent other; and whether that speech is inevitably a form of displacement and destruction" (Raitt, *Early Novels* 43). When we look to Woolf's diary entries from the period, however, things seem much less bleak. Her unwritten novel seems to be "dancing in unity" with her mind, writes Woolf in 1921, though, "[w]hat the unity shall be [she] has yet to discover" (*Diary* 2 14). As the completed novel's narrative sequence is "choppy, fragmented and discontinuous," however, critics continue to insist that its "formal and philosophical" teleology is dramaturgically invested in depicting those contingencies between "the language of mourning and the hopelessness of voice" (Raitt, *Early Novels* 43 - 44).

Woolf consistently "attempted to break through" most of the established genres of their day, hoping finally to "touch realities denied by accepted forms" (Beer 77). "I have to some extent forced myself to break every mould & find a fresh form of being, that is of expression for everything I feel and think" (*Diary* 4 233). "Jacob's Room abandons the project of developing its protagonist's voice altogether," Raitt suggests, "and instead experiments with the voices of others speaking in his place, even down to the creaking of his empty chair" (*Early Novels* 31).

Yet, Woolf's diary entries also concede, however, that others such as Leonard Woolf saw the manuscript as "very strange" and bereft of any "philosophy of life"; a world inhabited only by "ghosts," and "puppets, moved hither and thither by fate"

(*Diaries* 2 186). Moreover, critics have tended to agree with him. David Daiches, for example, suggests that Jacob's representation is performed, principally, "for the sake of style" (61), while Suzanne Raitt feels that the narrative is so "undercut . . . by its own uncertainties" that Jacob "has no identifiable voice" (43). "In the course of the chronicle that presumably concerns him," Herda Newman observes in like manner, no "reliable sense" of Jacob ever "emerges": ultimately, he is "more confounding than suggestive" (40).

Further, Quentin Bell proposes that Jacob's highly stylized portrait is revealed more through Woolf's "packaging" than her "content"; when situating the meaning of Jacob in the narrative, he advises, look to the ironic distance between the protagonist and narrator, rather than to its plot (viii). Likewise, Raitt adds that the novel's "language of mourning," and "hopelessness of voice" (*Early Novels* 44) constitutes a debate about the "the ontology of voice itself," and impels a reader to "reflect on . . . what it means to speak for a silent other"; most notably, when "speech is inevitably a form of displacement and destruction" (*Early Novels* 43). From this investigation of form emerges the masochistic anti-*bildungsroman* of Jacob Flanders, whose nebulous reality concludes in a radically alienated obliteration.

To understand Jacob's dilemma, however, requires a short review of that dizzying process by which the human ego is conditioned through manipulation of its projective and introjective frameworks, that are further classified into attachment clusters that have positive (love, compassion, and empathy), or negative signification (fear, alienation, invisibility). For that reason, the environmental state of affairs in which

ego formulation occurs, as critical as its biology, both of which are reflected in the ego's various predispositions towards various smells, touches, and sounds. Self-object interaction with the primary caregiver is so fundamental that the latter's capacity for empathy and attention is replicated in the self-object verbatim. Put simply, primary caregivers forever prejudice their babies towards treating themselves as they have treated them

Primary caregivers also predispose their charges, then, towards the manner in which they expect to be treated in the future. The same reason holds for why Wurmser considers the primary characteristic of masochistic pathology to be irrepressible "identification" with an "aggressor," "against" oneself (Wurmser, *Power*, 68- 69). For, though aggression can take form in any aspect of socialization, distinctively masochistic pathologies fixate on that defensive grandiosity that best secures its survival. The alienation and invisibility inscribed in Jacob Flanders by a morally corrupted and emotionally exhausted mother predisposes him to an impossibly self-destructive quest for a lineage that might validate him. Jacob's attempts to fabricate a lineage for himself in the tradition of Cambridge University and Platonic philosophy, for example, foreshadow his later travels to Greece and Europe for the same purpose.

Furthermore, Woolf's extended allegory about the impact that negative social interaction has on oneself-concept includes the assertion that socially traumatic events can be as debilitating as those sustained in war, even if their manifestations are only subtly identifiable through their pathology, or through the juxtaposition of presence and absence in a narrative. That no one ever speaks about Jacob's father in the text, for

example, implies that there is something traumatic or shameful about him or his legacy. His presence is shored in our minds through his absence, as well as the curious methods by which Mrs. Flanders erases him from memory. John Katz acutely characterizes such “self-revelatory” shame constellations as “hover[ing]” dynamically “between exposure and cover-up” (234); and this disjunction in parental exposure is analogous to that manifested in the social “awkwardness” which taints Jacob’s “distinguished looking” countenance (150).

Like E. M. Forster’s Leonard Bast before him, such exposure irrationally manifests itself in an attachment to historical icons substituted for his lack of a recognized cultural heritage. Indeed, here, too, there is an association between cultural grammar and identity coherence; for the “ability to rationalize,” as Gunter Seidler suggests, is constituted in the ability to negotiate the distance between the intended and the intending subject (92). Indeed, the “modes of attentive, curious grasping and of expressing oneself in nonverbal as well as verbal communication,” Wurmser tells us, “are the arena where in love and hatred, in mastery and defeat our self is forged and moulded. If this interchange is blocked and warped, the core of the self-concept is severely disturbed and becomes permanently twisted and deformed” (*Moral Masochism* 18).

As the paternity of Jacob is never formalized, his existence is seemingly virtualized when compared to his alma mater. Nor is this lack of breeding rectified by a mother who wants him to attend Cambridge but does little to ensure that her sons are culturally dexterous enough to be successful. Her indifferent rejection of Reverend

Floyd's offer of marriage ends in his generous offer of a volume of Lord Byron's poems, which is appropriate considering they concern the journeys of young males -- such as Childe Harold, Manfred or Don Juan -- who are in pursuit of identity. In short, she facilitates the means by which Jacob substitutes romantic fantasies for a real family. Little surprise, then, that this Don Juan gorges on the tragic grandiosity of Byron's legend, while failing to realize the depth of his satire.

The human capacity to anticipate the security of one's environment is so fundamental, Edward S. Casey tells us, because it is the only protection humans have from the behaviour of others. When one is cheated of lessons in social mannerisms, one is cheated of the grammar by which to initiate the recognition and acceptance of others. This, in turn, often develops into pathologies or affective habits that indicate one's insecurities. Casey tells us that the "early stages in the creation of anything habitual -- whether it be character or virtue, or body memories themselves -- are definitive for establishing the form that will be continually re-enacted" (150). In fact, the "habitual in human affairs represents the continuing triumph of the early-established: not just its survival but its active continuance at later stages when its thorough establishment will help to guarantee its ongoing power" (150). Indeed, being able to affect certain poses and dialects is imperative when petitioning the favour of others. Language use and behavior, as Magda Stroinska proposes, is to a large extent defined by how one sees oneself "in the eyes of others" (103).

Predictably, the calculating temperament of Mrs. Flanders is not lost on sons raised to respond ambivalently to emotional matters. When Jacob's brother Archer is

weeping at one point, for example, she tells him to ignore his pain, and to think rather of “fairies” (10). Surely, it is the same grandiosity that hinders her from appreciating how registering their father as a “Nothing” will inevitably shape the way the boys think about themselves (10). Her grandiose indifference engenders Jacob’s pathological substitution of sexual gratification for true intimacy with women; though it was no doubt developed by way of his knowledge of what constitutes the subject of her relationships with men like Captain Barfoot, who, “having served his country,” is both “lame,” and in need of “two fingers on the left hand” (23).

Jacob’s denial of his mother’s behaviour has psychological affects that do not come to light until he attends Cambridge. Whereas other boys spent their youth playing football, cricket and rugby, Jacob spent his chasing “after butterflies,” which results in his incapacity to engage in sports with the vigour of his classmates (23). His enthusiasm is for the grandiose, for an impossible coalescence between the beautiful and the impossible. By virtue of his being an icon of marbled youth, moreover, Jacob is a canvas upon which the females in his life project their collective fantasies about masculinity. Roe argues that “[o]nce” Jacob is “lodged in the [female] memory, he becomes almost a part of the women who have lost, and who long for, him” (95). Betty Flanders, Mrs. Durrant, Clara Durrant, Florinda, and Fanny Elmer all share in this ritual of projection that paradoxically results in their collective incapacity to engage with him as an individual. Raitt agrees and adds that “none of the women who want Jacob . . . ever succeed in possessing him, so that [their] voices in the novel are always unsatisfied and unanswered” (44). Similarly, Roe argues that Woolf “came as close [here] as she ever

would to the possibility of articulating the desperation of desirous women, tormented by the emotional unreliability of men” (*Jacob’s Room* 112).

It is not unforeseen, then, that Jacob’s relationship with his mother might be strained, detached and passive-aggressive, especially as she does have a tendency to smother him. “Mrs. Flanders,” Roe suggests, “is never silent,” and, when “she cannot keep her son to herself by making her presence felt, she stakes her claim in writing” (*Jacob’s Room* 106). Accordingly, Jacob is weary of the power or presence of women when he attends Cambridge, as his comparison of women to dogs suggests both are “ugly as sin” (27). His insistence that they not be allowed to enter King’s College Chapel makes this clear. In fact, his squabble with Julia Eliot on the subject of whether or not he had seen a play at the Wortleys the previous year, further exemplifies his silent resentment towards women. Her quip that he had to “join [his] mother” at Harrogate and, therefore, could not have attended, evokes “nothing” but an end to their discussion (83). Jacob’s behaviour seems to personify Gersham Kaufman’s suggestion that severe shame functions verbally as a via negativa, meaning that it is experienced as “interruptions” or “impediments” to communication (17).

As is made manifest by his constant anxiety and anger while at Cambridge, Jacob’s subservience is as much an act of collusion as resistance. He discovers, for instance, how to affectively turn himself “off” in a manner predictably reminiscent of the grandiosity preached to him in his youth by his mother (31). Jacob’s room and dress also indicate his loyalty to two masters; so while his “shabby” slippers reveal the poverty, his “very English” room contains fin-de-siècle artifacts, such as the “Greek dictionary with

the petals of poppies pressed in silk in the middle” (33). Men, Woolf argues in Three Guineas, use distinctions of dress to symbolize rank and status, not unlike brand labels that advertise the quality of the goods (279).

Perhaps, this is why his room seems always deadened somehow, as if inhabited by ghosts. “Listless is the air in an empty room, just swelling the curtain; the flowers in the jar shift. One fibre in the wicker arm-chair creaks [now], though no one sits there” (33). Like Jacob, his room seems more phantasmatic than real. Roe similarly suggests, “home is not a space” in this novel but an “idea,” although readers inevitably, “construct spaces to represent” Jacob’s Room, it is important to remember that it is only “a psychological space” (*Post-Impressionism* 179).

As alma mater, Edwardian Cambridge is a brotherhood where the familial/business relationships of the future are generated. Sadly, Jacob has no such associates, however, and only aggressively appropriates the Cambridge tradition, which he fashions into his own history and reputation. His spiritual inheritance is tainted with indignation, however, as it is grounded in the recognized social stature of his “friends” rather than his family (39). In fact, with Trinity’s famous “clock . . . conveying” to him the genus of his “inherit [ance],” at one point, Jacob wonders if it has not simply been his fate “to receive this gift from the past” (39). To secure for himself even an illusory pedigree, in other words, Jacob participates in what Wurmser refers to as a “massive denial of his own identity,” where, hidden behind a “facade of joviality and friendliness,” are often signs of “strife, violence and unhappiness” (*Power* 76).

University is so destructive, Woolf argues in A Room of One’s Own, because it

is intrinsically enmeshed in “the art of dominating other people” instead of the art of fine expression; in short, the university genuinely only emphasizes “the arts of ruling, of killing, [and] of acquiring land and capital” regardless of whatever it morally claims to support (155). This synopsis could hardly be more fitting in describing Jacob’s university education, which is chock full of British history, and woefully lacking any attention to the local culture from which Jacob must make his history.

Nevertheless, it is relatively easy for Jacob to hide his actual view of the world from others; especially as his politeness is often misunderstood as care, and his acerbic silence as profound rumination. On one occasion, for instance, Jacob “looks” blankly at Mrs. Durrant “without moving” or saying “[any]thing” after she requests that he “not say he loves her,” and then walks away (57). However, Mrs. Durrant is only one of the many women who project onto Jacob as if he is a marble statue from a Greek garden; in fact, for the duration of the party he is described as strikingly, if quietly, statuesque. “Jacob came out from the dark place by the window where he had hovered. The light poured over him, illuminating every cranny of his skin; but not a muscle of his faith moved as he sat looking out into the garden” (55).

Not surprisingly, Jacob’s traumatic realization of his actual social position results in his subservience to Cambridge’s “magisterial authority” (76). So, despite harbouring “a violent reversion towards male society, cloistered rooms, and the works of the classics,” and a promise to “turn with wrath upon whoever it was who had fashioned life as such,” he retains, nevertheless, an intense “commitment to docility” (40). Moreover, his Sisyphus-like desire for a cultural immersion does not change the fact that he knows

“nothing” of “ancient history” and “no more Greek than serves him to stumble through a play” (71). Despite failing to “read one through,” Woolf’s dilettante participates in equally banal debates about the comparative “profundity” of Shakespeare and Plato (“the Greek”) (41). Any doubt of Woolf’s satirical intent, moreover, is provided by her own comments on Plato in an essay from the period. In “On Not Knowing Greek” (1924), for example, Woolf writes of her own experience reading Plato, which always assured her that even if the,

tired or feeble mind may easily lapse as remorseless questioning proceeds; but no one, however weak, can fail, even if he does not learn more from Plato [than] to love knowledge better. For as the argument mounts from step to step, Protagoras yielding, Socrates pushing on, what matter is not so much the end we reach as our manner of reaching it. That all can feel -- the indomitable honesty, the courage, the love of truth, which dr[e]w Socrates and us in his wake to the summit where, if we too may stand for a moment, it is to enjoy the greatest felicity of which we are capable. (*Essays* 4 45- 46).

How curious, then, that even subsequent to his advance on the Hellenic Parthenon steps Jacob does not achieve that felicity of which Woolf speaks, nor learns from Plato what it is to love knowledge, or anything else, better?

Like the fin-de-siècle aesthetes he resembles most, however, Jacob’s culturally manufactured affectivity is manifest in his appreciation of the music of Richard Wagner. The description provided of his attendance at Tristan and Isolde, for example, describes his intoxication in what he refers to as, “the sweetness of death in effigy,” the opera’s sentimental conclusion (62). His mother’s penchant for shrouding the unsightly aspects of reality in phantasmatic mythography is awake in his passion for the opera, as well as in the ironic description of England’s melancholic youth, whose fate is personified in the

imagery of her shores. ““Yes, the chimneys and the coastguard stations and the little bays with the waves breaking unseen by any one make[s] one remember the overpowering sorrow,”” we are told, but ““what can this sorrow be?”” (43). Like many of his generation, however, Jacob feels thoroughly inconsequential to the world in which he lives -- a dubious fiction that is “mostly a matter of guess work” (67).

David Bradshaw suggests that the narrator “calls attention” to England’s “acutely destructive and dehumanizing power” by illuminating how economies of individuality are moulded through the traumatic process of domestication (199). An individual’s worth, in other words, is measured by her/ his ability to uphold the masochistic economy of social relations, specifically the traumas of being rejected, laughed at, or intensely alienated. These daily traumas, if you will, obliterate feelings of security and confidence in parallel manner to the bodies obliterated on the field of battle; for it is not “catastrophes, murders, deaths, and disease that age and kill us,” our narrator reminds us, but, “the way people look and laugh, and run up the steps of omnibuses” (76). This “looking” and “laughing,” in fact, indicates the economy in which grandiosity substitutes for empathy and intimacy, and collateral damage is measured in the spiritual anomie of London’s young rather than the number of dead staining foreign battlefields. “In contrast to [Richard] Dalloway’s exaltation of the State,” observes David Bradshaw, “the narrator of Jacob’s Room calls attention to its acutely destructive and dehumanizing power” (198 - 199).

“Where the ordinary reader is concerned,” Woolf wrote in 1920, “it is his feeling, not the reason that he gives for his feeling, that is of interest” (*Essays* 3 235). This puts

the hermeneutic responsibility on a reader, making him the standard for what counts as art. “Even things in a book-case change if they are alive,” Woolf had written a couple of years earlier, in, “The Modern Essay,” (1919), for, in “wanting to meet them again; we find them altered” (*Essays* 4 220). Thus the importance of any “book itself,” Woolf insists in “On Re-reading Novels” (1922), is not a function of the “form” which one “sees,” but the “emotion” which one “feels” (*Essays* 3 340).

However, there is no transformative affectivity possible for Betty Flanders, Mrs. Durrant, Clara Durrant, or for Fanny Elmer. “For the beauty of women,” as our narrator reminds us, states, is evanescent,

it is like the light on the sea, never constant to a single wave. They all have; they all lose it. Now she is dull and thick as bacon; now transparent as a hanging glass. The fixed faces are the dull ones. Here comes Lady Venice displayed like a monument for admiration, but carved in alabaster, to be set on the mantelpiece and never dusted. A dapper brunette complete from head to foot serves only as an illustration to lie upon the drawing-room table. (110)

Like Jacob, His majesty’s female youth are appreciated most when they are as silently expendable as His majesty’s “young men”; at least those whose subservience is as combatants (112). Thus, the price of experience is emotional resistance, and affective unresponsiveness is reckoned to be a sign of potency.

Rather than being specifically divided along class and gender lines, then, England’s youth are united in their traumatic collective experience of social domestication. In the lengthy passage that follows here, the narrator illustrates how gender and class configures the mechanisms of hostility and violence in society, as well as the radical disaffection of its constitution. It

seems then that men and women are equally at fault. It seems that a profound impartial, and absolutely just opinion of our fellow-creatures is utterly unknown. Either we are men or we are women. Either we are cold, or we are sentimental. Either we are young or growing old. In any case life is but a procession of shadows, and God knows why it is that we embrace them so eagerly, and we see them depart with such anguish, being shadows. And why? If this and much more than this is true, why we are yet surprised in the window corner by a sudden vision that the young man in the chair is of all things in the world the most real, the most solid, the best known to us – why indeed? For the moment after we know nothing of him. (66)

Jacob's personal plight is, thus, comparable to his society's ennui toward the physical and emotional eradication of its young people. Consider, for instance, Clara Durrant's positive impression of his "unworldly" ethereality: "I like Jacob Flanders," she writes in her diary, "he is so unworldly. He gives himself no airs, and one says what one likes to him" (65). On the other hand, her intuitive "fear" of him is the impetus for her following ellipses: "though he's frightening because . . ." (65). As what makes Jacob frightening is surely his affective ambivalence, Clara is most drawn to his impenetrability.

Although opposition in a text to death drive (thanatos) is normally eros, or sexual drive, Jacob's grandiose misogyny, in fact, is fuelled by his sexual experiences. Jacob "doubt[s] whether" or not "he likes" sex "in the raw" (77), we are told, and uses the "power" of his "mind to quit" his "body" (87). Raitt insightfully proposes that for Jacob "[s]ex tells one nothing that one needs to know about the world" (45). Jacob is intrigued by the distorted self-identifications of his lovers, rather than their corporeality. Much like Joris Karl Huysman's infamous protagonist in A Rebours, des Esseintes, Jacob's hermetic sensualism is soaked in the Byzantine fin-de-siècle aesthetic so indicative of

the work of Aubrey Beardsley, Edward Burne-Jones, Gustav Klimt and Gustav Moreau. Just as he earlier botched his engagement with the works of Plato, Shakespeare and Byron, however, Jacob now fetishizes the technically impressive, albeit vacuous, artistic forms of decadence.

Like so many of his generation he is obsessed with the smooth asceticism inscribed in the texture of a Rodin marble, or the repetitive primadonnas of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's canvases, rather than with genuine intimacy with another human being. On the whole, then, Jacob's desire is analogous to Fanny Elmer's general, albeit "unconscious," attraction to emotionally sterile aesthetes (112). She seems drawn to their insatiable grandiosity: a quality she, too, has in spades. Fanny "behaves," in the words of Roe, "as if she can re-create" an "experience" from "the past," "in the present" (97). Because of her self-flagellating tendency to see "young men" as "dignified and aloof," however, Fanny never actually "knows" Jacob intimately, but only enjoys, "quietly . . . looking" at him (112). Tellingly, those "visits" to the Ulysses marble in the British Museum after he has left for Europe cease the instant she can no longer remember what his face looked like (167).

Jacob's emotional evasiveness is what fascinates the prostitute Florinda, who quickly realizes his sexual satisfaction is related to his malevolence towards his mother. His jouissance is rooted in awareness of how much contempt his hypocritical mother would show toward any prostitutes "with three children," that is, with any woman that is like her in every respect but name (86). As his mother's concern for his safety is irrelevant to Jacob at the best of times, it is especially telling that he speculates about her

forced observation of his copulation with a prostitute during intercourse with Florinda, who is one (86).

Surely, this revenge fantasy indicates the pain he felt when he became aware of his mother's barter of sex for money. For example, on one occasion he fantasizes that his "obscene act" makes her fall to the floor in "terror," as if in fear of "death" (86). At other times, he fixates on an object that reminds him of her, such as the letters on his kitchen table which he perceives as "phantom[s] of lying" (86). There is a malicious logic to the way in which he subconsciously links obscenity, money and lying: for his mother's sexual behaviour in his youth directly effects the "alienation" from the "deed" of fornication he suffers as an adult (87).⁵ In consequence, Jacob resents female nature more than female sexual power. For instance, even as he wants Fanny, Florinda, and Clara Durrant to be "faithful" to him, he equates their virtue with stupidity and vulnerability. While he understandably sneers at Florinda's "abominable" spelling and "infantile" sentiments, he also judges the letters by the intelligent and cultured Clara to be also like those of "a child" (88). Jacob's contempt for women, therefore, ensures that they will never genuinely love him; powerless to express to them his affective needs, he interprets their final defiance of him as insurmountable verification of the world's detestation of him.

We can consider, for example, Jacob's sentimental indulgence following his discovery of Florinda in another man's company. "It was as if a stone were ground to

⁵ Woolf's original manuscript had emphasized the ferocity of Jacob's resentment towards his mother -- "[b]ehind the door knives cut human flesh from the bone, or death alights" - as well as its association with his impending death (*MSS* 2 5).

dust; as if white sparks flew from a livid whetstone, which was spine,” we are told, “as if the switchback railway, having swooped to the deaths, fell, fell, fell. This was in his face” (88-9). Georg Simmel puts forward the notion that crippling shame is unambiguously expressed in one’s face, for shame,

causes a person to look at the ground to avoid the glance of the other. The reason for this is certainly not only because he is thus spared the visible evidence of the way in which the other regards his painful situation, but the deeper reason is that the lowering of the glance to a certain degree prevents the other from comprehending the extent of [one’s] confusion. The glance in the eye of the other deserves not only for me to know the other but also enables him to know me. (358).

In a like way, Jacob turns away from everything others thought he could be. As he “casts his eye over” a newspaper he cannot help but notice the limited scope of masculine activities available: a “strike, a murder, football, bodies found; vociferation from all parts of England simultaneously. How miserable it is that the Globe newspaper offers nothing better to Jacob Flanders” (92). What Flanders is not offered in this muddled myriad of representations, of course, are images of masculinity that do *not* evoke anxiety and death. What Jacob does see are the options available to those without a title: an easily expendable labourer, a sports hero, or a nameless, faceless body. It is not difficult to see, therefore, how Jacob might consider war the only means of establishing for himself a name, rank or title.

While reading the paper, he listens with dejection to the opulent voices of the London nightlife below him, and continues to think only of Plato, or, at least, his fantasy of Plato. Perhaps, it is because of this confusion that his fate is now so strongly associated with that of Fanny Elmer, who is described as “perhaps” twenty-two, and

“bright,” as well as “vague” and “shabby” (108). Despite her penchant for “noticing nothing,” Fanny, too, is mesmerized by aesthetics, as in her delight for hothouse “daffodils and the red tulips” (108). Though she is not especially beautiful, she does have a passing beauty that is socially valuable because of its easy objectification. “If you talk of a beautiful woman,” our narrator reminds us, “you mean only something flying fast which for a second uses the eyes, lips or cheeks . . . to glow through” (110).

Beauty is a general standard separate from any individual, we now learn, a mimicry standing in for the actual; as is so well illustrated by Fanny’s decision to keep a postcard from the British museum rather than an actual photograph of Jacob. Likewise, he worships (or “honours”) an image of Clara in his room, and considers her first “as a virgin chained to a rock” and only secondly as a person (118). Significantly, he perceives his soul mate in just such a grandiose fashion, just as he associates his destiny with that of Byron’s Don Juan and Percy Shelley’s Prometheus. For his trip to France and Greece allows him to justify the value of his existence in a progressively sentimental manner; he now fancies himself as an exiled poet/ philosopher who can return home only in a glorified triumph. He can only return as a new man with a new history, as a man tattooed with a new mythography. He now sees himself, for instance, as a Christ-like martyr and believes he can make it to Rome “on foot,” as long as he still has bread and wine (131).

Jacob’s grandiosity here is both habitually impulsive, as well as conscious of the peril involved (Wurmser, *Power* 36). The narrator seemingly agrees, and mocks Jacob’s attitude in a tone reminiscent of Woolf’s own ambivalence towards the dynamic nature

of disassociation. When working on Jacob's Room, for example, Woolf asked in her diary the following question. "Why is life so tragic; so like a little strip of pavement over an abyss? I look down; I feel giddy; I wonder how I am ever to walk to the end" (*Diaries* 2 72). Such giddiness stands in stark contrast to the severe mental collapse Woolf suffered after she finished the novel. No doubt it is because she knows that depression in literature is all too easily sentimentalized that she seeks for stability and coherence in her writing rather than the immanently romantic.

The "Greek spirit" that Jacob had so desperately wanted to identify with, however, is not to be found now even in Sarah's comparison of his physiognomy to that of the Hermes of Praxiteles (140). Nevertheless, Jacob soon realizes that he is paranoid about "civilization," and without any mythography that could resuscitate him (141). On the contrary, Jacob finds that Athens is very disheartening. Though he searches "accurately and diligently" for "truth," we are told that he still leaves the city "profoundly morose" (144). His subsequent failure to get to Rome, moreover, illustrates both, the transitory nature of his spiritual aporia and the inevitable destruction of his plans by the double betrayal ("illusions") of his two Athenas, the Parthenon and Clara (133). Tellingly, he condemns both "women" for failing to embody his absurd ideal of woman, and degenerates further into the aggrandizement and misogyny of "a man about to be executed" (133).

When Clara is exposed as the human being she is, rather than the Wagnerian heroine he wants her to be, Jacob simply refuses to accept that the "solution" to life must be "practised in the flesh" (145). In fact, Jacob now personifies the "decadent

artist” completely, for where the experimental clinician cures disease, the decadent artist simply studies it with a “cultured amorality,” as Ferguson puts it, in the hope that it might reveal “a glimpse of beauty in the path of its destruction” (467). Clearly, Jacob observes his own destruction with the same disassociated awe. It is critical that the reader realize the causal correlation between Jacob’s disappointment to erect a familial lineage, and his entry into the British armed forces.

Nor is it a coincidence that this final social erasure coincides with his actual disappearance from the text, or that he is present, thereafter, only in the memories of those he leaves behind. Fanny is never notified of his erasure, for example, and continues her daily visits to the British museum, awaiting the return of her Ulysses. Significantly, she will move on to another statuesque vision, for it is the image, rather than the person, that is imperative in her society:

[s]ustained entirely upon picture postcards for the past two months, Fanny’s idea of Jacob was more statuesque, noble and eyeless than ever. To reinforce her vision she had taken to visiting the British Museum, where, keeping her eyes down-cast until she was alongside of the battered Ulysses, she opened them and got a fresh shock of Jacob’s presence, enough to last her half a day. But this was wearing thin. (167)

Even Fanny’s worship of statues, thus, meets its end, and her dismissal of him subsequent to forgetting what he looks like clearly shows how he has always been little but a symbol for someone, or something, else.

Likewise, though Jacob speaks only a handful of words in the entire novel, critics still consider Woolf’s anti-*bildungsroman* mostly from the view of Betty Flanders.

Rachel Bowlby, for instance, stresses how the narrative “is told from the point of view of

woman as outsider: outsider both to the institutionalized stages through which the youth passes, and to the conventions according to which they are presented as natural" (112). Likewise, she never genuinely considers how Betty's refusal to re-marry, as well as her demand that Jacob attend Cambridge, predisposes her son to that radical invisibility he encounters at home, as well as at University. At any rate, such political "specificity" is "rendered irrelevant by the spectral nature" of Woolf's text, and which seems incapable of projecting a "stable or reliable interlocutionary" (Raitt, *Early Novels* 45). To be more precise, Woolf's hauntingly psychological narrative manifests her fixation with the representational "ontology of voice itself"; said another way, the narrative's "unreliability of voice" manifests the "figure" or "identity" that Jacob unsuccessfully seeks throughout the novel (Raitt, *Early Novels*, 46).

Herta Newman suggests, in this regard, that since "nothing can be concluded" from Woolf's depiction of Jacob, "the novelist's only recourse" seems to have been the attempt to "convey the indefatigable struggle" of life, "itself" (87). Jacob ultimately represents the debilitating results of feeling unrecognized by others, the shameful acceptance of one's worthlessness, and the masochism that ends, like a cancer, by destroying its host. His textual disintegration corresponds to the emotional obliteration of the Cambridge youth, as they disintegrate under a mountain of bereavement, suspicion and trepidation. In short, Jacob's disappearance from the text finally personifies his social invisibility. His phantasmatic presence is only delivered to us second-hand through cryptic, unverified "sightings" of him reported by Mr. Floyd and Clara Durrant, who believe they see him in the dizzying crowds in Piccadilly Circus.

That the novel concludes with fictitious sightings of Jacob by the two people who might have provided him with both a family and a lineage, therefore, is pointed, for he fails to embody the social invisibility assigned to his parents. Rather than a dead lie like his father, he is an alive nothing -- a something that faded away. He ends as a poltergeist of something he never could be, rather than the nonentity he always was. In bestowing life on Jacob through death, then, Woolf provides him with infinite opportunities for existence, each of which more meaningful than the empty, sterile one he lived. However, such resurrection is only possible when imaginative empathy unifies a reader's voice with that of the author, and together they create a vision of life capable of genuine testimonial.

The "skulls" that follow Jacob throughout the narrative, accordingly, are emblematic of his social invisibility. In the novel's opening scene, for example, Jacob stumbles across a skull on the beach subsequent to his discovery of the two lovers, and "over the doorway" to his room at Cambridge there is a skull "carved in[to] the wood" (64). David Bradshaw suggests the "strewn bones" in the novel "prepare the ground for the permanent absence which Jacob's narrative fleetingness, his skeletal presence in the novel portends" (197). Jacob's impending death is foreshadowed in the description of his personal possession box. "This black wooden box . . . upon which his name is still legible in white paint," we are told, waits close to "the long windows of the sitting room" that "shut" the "lid upon the truth" (64). This ghoulish image of a closed-coffin funeral provides the reader with a final denial of his paltry existence, and a poignant symbol for the illusion that was his life.

Woolf's "very strong" "bond" with her brother Thoby made his "sudden death" from typhoid after a trip to Greece "unbearable," long before he could have fought in the first World War (*Jacob's Room* 94). Violet Dickinson's has speculated that Woolf tried to "keep [Thoby] alive in writing" even days after Thoby's death, leads to the strong speculation that he is the model for Jacob (94). Even though the absence of corroborating evidence makes Dickinson's fascinating speculation difficult to prove, it nonetheless establishes that Woolf had already meditated on the power of elegy to give an individual in death a dignity that was not afforded in life.

Bonamy calls out for Jacob at the close of the novel, just as Archer did at its beginning, although the only response is an absence, pure silence. With his disappearance from the narrative complete, Jacob is emblematic of a generation that sees "everything" and says "nothing," a generation that fades into nothingness because of its incapacity to express its experience, or direct its collective fate. Woolf notes in her preliminary notes for the novel her intention to contrast the "intensity of life" with the paralysis or "immobility" of social representation, and she does so with triumphant success (*Manuscript* 1). For as the novel concludes, as Roe acutely suggests, we "see" even its "hidden things" by way of our own imagination (*Post-Impressionism* 180). And so,

we realize that all the interiors we wanted to feel safe in -- the college room, the British museum, the Embassy, the woman's body -- are, in some fundamental sense, semi-transparent. They contain what we visualize for them, and what we construct for ourselves. What we -- human beings, human forms -- really consist of is ever-changing, formless. We are the seers, in control of what is seen, and things only become fixed or offer complete containment once we have decided to select what we see. (Roe, *Post-Impressionism*, 180)

Thus, in order to engage desire Woolf needs the participation of her reader, for it is in this relationship that the intensity of her characters' lives, come to life. Woolf's text illustrates, in short, the heuristic elucidated by Wurmser when he reminds us that "enactment, or acting out, is both resistance against insight and [a] vehicle for insight" (*Power* 59). Indeed, Jacob's death by gradual obliteration from memory is a function of the paralysis that, itself, is a consequence of his fatalistic grandiosity.

At the same time, even if "[o]ne of the frustrations of the novel," as Raitt protests, is that its "theme is its form" (43), Jacob's progressive dematerialization from the novel is surely a brilliant "reflection on the speech of the bereaved" (42). British modernism is, similarly, "the attempt, after a loss of innocence about representation, to invent new forms which will determine their audiences, to project interiority onto a future unmediated by any form of economy" (McCabe xiii). Likewise, Woolf suggests, "there are ideas which fail to fit any form at the artist's disposal" (*Diaries* 2 288) but which, nevertheless, must be attempted. In an essay on Henry James' innovative narrative methods, for example, she maintains "it is the business of a writer to discover new" techniques when "bygone methods of writing have become obsolete" (*Diaries* 2 288). Woolf's novel, in short, can be apprehended as a series of narratives about the masochism in everyday life. As a novel it reveals, through an obliteration of its protagonist, the pain of progressive ontological disintegration.

One might say, then, that our narrator and her antihero complete this dualism differently, the latter failing to realize that conceptualization and acceptance of painful

events from the past is possible only through the reservoir of empathic imagination. Alternatively, as Woolf notes in a diary entry dated 14 October 1922, “‘Mrs Dalloway’ has branched into a book; and I adumbrate here a study of insanity and suicide; the world seen by the sane and the insane side by side – something like that. Septimus Smith? Is that a good name? And to be more close to the fact than Jacob; but I think Jacob was a necessary step for me, [for] working [myself] free . . .” (*A Writers Diary* 52 – 53).

“‘I think writing, my writing,’” Woolf notes in another diary entry, “‘is a species of mediumship’” through which, “‘I become a person’” (*Diary* 5 101). Yet, it would take her until the thirties, and her creation of her Pointz Hall manuscript (which subsequently became part of The Waves), however, before Woolf could articulate that contingency between the other’s recognition of one’s being, and its functional role in the affectivity of one’s ontology. In fact, Woolf now writes about the incredibly damaging silence of affective erasure. “Who noted the silence, the emptiness? What name is to be given to the presence which notes that a room is empty? This presence requires a name for without a name what has an existence? And how can silence or emptiness be noted by that which has not an existence . . .?” (*Pointz Hall* 34). Though no answer is forthcoming in Woolf’s work as a whole, that death follows from a non-Freudian masochistic erasure in her 1922 text, rehabilitates her belief that art alone transforms life’s “insolvable” fragments into the material of dignified elegies (76). That even if one’s self-worth hinges on the way in which people “look and laugh” at us, they don’t control the intensity of one’s imaginative creativity, or one’s infinite imaginative potentiality (76).

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

While my introduction focussed on the hermeneutical relationship between psychiatrically psychoanalytic views of shame and trauma, and their conceptual proximity to my non-Freudian masochist methodology, the body of the thesis has been dedicated to demonstrating various ways in which the methodology can be used. Methodologies must be inclusive to be anything but vainglorious, as each limitation placed on bearing witness lessens the potential of initiating participation from others. Thus, to be teleologically situated in empathy, compassion and love, psychopathologies must be performatively, as well as theoretically inclusive.

Epidemiology, like literary criticism, is a method of establishing the facts of a situation, whether these are inscribed on a body of flesh, or in a body of work. Likewise, each is constituted by a series of diagnostic procedures that are inevitably inclusive or exclusive of information coming from the body. A major charge made against Freudian psychoanalysis, for example, is that in the name of healing affectivity, it in fact ignores it. Likewise, literary criticism can be so ideologically entrenched in a particular hermeneutic that the text's inscription is lost in the process of interpretation. In both cases, the method of the investigation dictates what criteria counts as a proper performance.

Accordingly, the modern British novel "forces [its] reader to pass beyond the reported content of the novel, and enter into its form" (Fletcher and Bradley 396). For, the "human contingency" between psychology and ontology so thoroughly dominates

the British novel's formal "content," that the audience's reading practise, in effect, "generates [its] form" (Fletcher and Bradley 397). Conversely, an audience's ontological response to reading is profoundly changed by encountering its dramaturgical form, and not least in its therapeutic capacity. It was clear to Conrad, at any rate, for whom the "action" in James' text affects a prescriptive type of "rescue work" in his audience:

the creative art of a writer of fiction may be compared to rescue work carried out in darkness against cross gusts of wind swaying the action of a great multitude. It is rescue work, this snatching of vanishing phases of turbulence, disguised in fair words, out of the native obscurity into a light where the struggling forms may be seen, seized upon, endowed with the only possible form of permanence in this world of relative values the permanence of memory. And the multitude feels it obscurely too; since the demand of the individual to the artist is, in effect, the cry, "Take me out of myself!" meaning really, out of my perishable activity into the light of imperishable consciousness. But everything is relative, and the light of consciousness is only enduring, merely the most enduring of the things of this earth, imperishable only as against the short-lived work of our industrious hands. (*Notes* 87)

James' work instantiates a "permanence of memory," for Conrad, against the "perishable activity" of life; it contains redemptive features that bring meaning to one's life, and therefore, retains as well a heuristic lesson for his reader.

Likewise, the incredible success Maisie enjoys in her life journey adventure also illustrates vividly that part of subjectivity that is malleable and conducive to change. In effect, James' text, "directs us to the recognition that human beings must not only reckon with the relations that construct them, but also work to build new, more efficacious ones" (Freedman, *Moment*, 6). Maisie is the reason in James' satirical storm, in fact, because she actually "knows" by the conclusion of the novel how to distinguish between those individuals who will help her mature into the person she needs to be, and those

who will not. Thus, Maisie really is “rescue work” since she is heuristic of the means by which one identifies real autonomy.

Tellingly, Marlow is the medium that saves “us,” the audience, from the horror of Jim’s fate in Conrad’s Lord Jim, as well as the lens through which truth is revealed to “us.” By exposing Jim’s suicide for the masochistic reflex it is, Marlow functions as a pivotal hermeneutical tool for *our* realization that suicide really is a true act of autonomy for Winnie Verloc. The heuristically transformative power of art is also at work in Forster’s Howards End where the vulnerabilities of Bast and Wilcox are linked to their affective and imaginative deficiencies. “To connect,” we eventually discover, means to “make tragedy of squalor,” to transform the futility of Bast’s death into the real life carried within Helen.

Lawrence’s works, moreover, repeat scenarios from Conrad’s novels, though with a switch: while Gerald Crich corporealizes Paul Morel’s incapacity to love himself, Birkin escapes the same fate by developing a metaphysical worldview capable of providing him with genuine life. And even though Jacob’s form is as empty as his room by the conclusion of Woolf’s novel, he is transformed in the narrative into a poignant figure, and thus assigned a dignity in death that he was never afforded in life. Woolf’s “rescue work,” in other words, transforms Jacob’s previous invisibility, or life as a proto-experience, into a genuine narrative-event. Said another way, Jacob’s becoming-real, or ontological completion, “happens” only in the mind of the reader. Therefore all these authors use tragic circumstances to create opportunities for Tragedy, in the Hellenic Greek sense, as opportunities for catharsis.

Conrad reminds us of literature's capacity for catharsis, for example, when he reminds us that art's standard of hope, like that of imagination, is virtually infinite. To be "hopeful in an artistic sense it is not necessary to think that the world is good," Conrad insists, it is "enough to believe that there is no impossibility of its being made so" (*Notes* 8). Artworks capable of reintroducing hope through empathic imagination finds their curative equivalent in specific PTSD mnemonic therapies, where individuals learn new ways in which to contextualize meaning. The recreation of "[m]emory is everything" for the traumatized, reports van der Kolk and van der hart, because the traumata's "power over current experience" only lessens after a "flexibility has been introduced" (179). Clearly, the novelists examined herein somehow intuited the way to "soften" the "intrusive power of [an] original, unmitigated horror," is by "imagining . . . alternative scenarios" to it (van der Kolk and van der hart 179).

That notwithstanding, those with the severest cases of PTSD, and normally emanating from "prolonged exposure" to "patterns of abuse" are not well suited to projection stimulation therapies (Erikson 457). Simply stated, they are usually either too vulnerable to the horrors of retraumatization, or too dissociative to be reachable affectively. Their awareness that something is wrong with them, somehow, though they do not know what it is, or why, therefore, results in their incapacity to perform what they understand. Tellingly, this situation describes the tragic experiences of Jacob Flanders, Leonard Bast and Gerald Crich, none of who survive the novels' in which they figure as major figures. Yet, were we to think that the allegorical end of these three novels was simply our awareness of their deaths, we would be mistaken. Rather, they function as

actors or foils in plays from which they must be expunged, not unlike Oedipus who is banished from Thebes in Sophocles' masterpiece. Forster's formulation of the "rescue work" formula, for example, maintains that "death destroys a man but the idea of death saves him," and, therefore, must be translated into that transformative action in which squalor is turned into Tragedy. Said another way, Forster's female characters are heuristic of the means in which self-deprecating or masochistic elements within us, are expunged, from our bodies.

Though foreign to the critical canon of the modern British novel, traumata methodologies have been specifically used in this way by critics of modern and contemporary American fiction, especially those dealing with the painful typographies of such novelists as William Faulkner, Alice Walker and Toni Morrison. J. Brooks Bouson, for example, suggests that Morrison "seems bent on effecting a cultural cure both through the artistic rendering and narrative reconstruction of the shame and trauma story" (*Quiet* 5). The narrative of Beloved, for example, is *explicitly* "composed of bits and pieces of a memory that ha[ve] been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not yet settled into understanding or remembrance," and thus constitute what Felman refers to as a series of "acts that cannot be construed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition" (16). Morrison's "cultural cure," in effect, forges the author-reader relationship as a new psychopathological communiqué, Brooks Bouson suggests, for if "Morrison sees her role as to bear witness, the reader's role in reconstructing Morrison's narratives is not unlike that of listeners of real-life shame and trauma stories who must uncover the shameful secret and reconstruct the fragmented narrative of the trauma

casualty” (Brooks Bouson, *Quiet*, 223). Said another way, the unique empathy Morrison solicits in her audience, is constituted in their imaginative projection of its traumatic details.

It is commonly known that the distinction between sympathy and empathy is an empirical one and that where sympathy is a process in which one imagines the event happening to another person, empathy is a function of implicit or reflexive memory, and therefore is self-interested. For example, paying witness to the painful experiences of others is often mutually advantageous because in supporting another person, one is provided with a new way in which to regard oneself.

By providing specific reading strategies for teaching literature under conditions of duress, Berman’s last three works of criticism deal explicitly with this hermeneutical opportunity. Diaries to an English Professor: Pain and Growth in the Classroom (1994), Surviving Literary Suicide (1999) and Risky Writing: Self-Disclosure and Self-Transformation in the Classroom (2002), provide pedagogical techniques for communicating safely to students suffering emotional duress. Berman’s impromptu solicitation speaks to issues such as the mourning of a loved one, narrativizing familial disintegration, or understanding drug and alcohol abuse. To be more precise, Berman’s work constitutes the manner in which literature can retard mortification to the extent that elucidation is possible, rather than simply reiterating Freud’s work on mourning through yet another postmodern, psychoanalytic optic. Though my own belief in literature’s therapeutic hermeneutics is very close to that of Berman’s, my own rhetorical vehicles for freedom are inscribed in embodiments, or testimonials of departure.

Clearly, the modern British novels included herein, stimulate an interlocutor towards a special type of performative variation in the author-reader relationship, what Caruth refers to as “the challenge of the therapeutic listener” (10). “To listen to the crisis of a trauma is not only to listen for the event,” Caruth reminds us, “but to hear in the testimony the survivor’s departure from it” (10). Hearing such a departure is not simply an exercise in listening, however, but instead signifies an entire way of being that is constitutive of experience. This is why one’s authentic engagement with a person/ text’s testimonial departure requires an intimately personal experience of it, as much as the will to embody it. Appreciation of another person’s pain, that is, is simply *not* equivalent to knowing it, just as saying, “I *sympathise* with what you have been through,” is simply not identical to saying, “I *know* what you have been through.” Testimony is a uniquely, “discursive practise, as opposed to [a] pure theory,” Felman tells us, and to “testify - to vow to tell, to promise, and produce one’s own speech as material evidence for truth - is to accomplish a speech act, rather than simply to formulate a sentence”(16). The radical ontological shift from passive observation to wilful *embodiment* has a different meaning for those in whom affectivity has been impossible, an extraordinary meaning.

But why would *anyone* solicit such a thing, my reader may ask? Simply put, because those who are thoroughly dissociative, lack any self upon which to project. Catharsis is impossible for them, as they cannot project upon a past that never was. So, they *recognize* that something is wrong with them, but are affectively incapable of *knowing* it. Becoming a person, or truly identifying with someone else’s suffering, for such individuals, is a real struggle that requires radical self-identification strategies in

which one's embodiment becomes possible, as it were, by proxy.

Positively, the suffering in/ of a text can radically transform both one's implicit, as well as explicit memory, at least where one's testimony of another person, is the result of having to imagine what experience feels like. The testimonial medium *articulates* the previously ineffable voice of the other person, and facilitates the means in which one speaks for oneself, albeit not as oneself. At any rate, such testimonials of departure are "aggressive[ly]" self-referential, and,

born out of a refusal to bow to outside pressure to revise or to repress experience, a decision to embrace conflict rather than conformity, to endure a lifetime of anger and pain rather than to submit to the seductive pull of revision and repression. Its goal is change. The battle over the meaning of a traumatic experience is fought in the arena of political discourse, popular culture, and scholarly debate. The outcome of this battle shapes the rhetoric of the dominant culture and influences future political action. (Tal 7)

This is why testimonials of departure never consist simply of "telling" or "reporting" an event, but, on the contrary, functions as insufferable *media* where voyeurs, violated from the exposure of self-recognition, finally take pity on their own wounds.

"I don't think you can get your words to come till you're almost unconscious," Woolf wrote later in life to a friend, "and unconsciousness only comes when you've been beaten and broken and gone through every sort of grinding mill" (*Letters* 5 408). Clearly, the modern British novelists included here knew that their art was a type of "rescue work" for their audience. Knowing about suffering, and depicting suffering, are different actions with dissimilar consequences. Ford Maddox Ford, for example, was incapable of committing his traumatic memories of the Great War to paper, though he did reflect on this difficulty in an unpublished manuscript fragment entitled "A Day of

Battle.” “I have asked myself continuously why I can write nothing about the psychology of that Active Service of which I have seen my share,” Ford tentatively reflects, or “why I cannot evoke even pictures of the Somme or the flatlands around Ploegsteert” (as qtd. Judd 288). Finding himself incapable of riposte, however, The Good Soldier (1915) author continues this reflection, by wondering why,

[t]oday, when I look at a mere coarse map of the Line, simply to read “Ploegsteert” or “Armentières” . . . [it] bring[s] up extraordinarily coloured and exact pictures behind my eyeballs -- little pictures having all the brilliant minuteness that medieval illuminations have -- of towers and roofs and belts of trees and sunlight; or for the matter of these, of men, burst into mere showers of blood, and dissolving into muddy ooze; or of aeroplanes and shells against the translucent blue -- But, as for putting them -- into words! No: the mind stops dead and the right foot comes up to it with a stamp upon the hard asphalt -- upon the “square” after the command Halt, at Chelsea!

(as qtd. Judd 289).

Tellingly, Ford’s argument here is betrayed by the excessive signification of his vocabulary, which testifies to the amnesia, disassociation, psychoses and ineffability he still suffers from, even as he speaks of the event as having been concluded. Ford’s lack of reference to trauma in his subsequent works, in fact, foreshadows his own incapacity to believe they could be redeemed by the transformative power of art (Judd 290).

Tellingly, this male incapacity to express affectivity is symptomatic of that menacing affective disease that Lawrence refers to as Britain’s ultimate “crisis” (*Unpublished forward* 4). “We are now in a period of crisis,” Lawrence remarks in his infamous unpublished forward to Women in Love, and live in an age where, “[e]very man that is acutely alive is wrestling with his own soul” (*Unpublished forward* 4). The indisputable crisis in Women in Love, of course, is Gerald’s incapacity to feel genuine

emotion, for Birkin, his family or naturally, himself. The indispensable component in his sexual relations with Gudrun, for example, is their mutual incapacity to love one another. Where Gudrun is emotionally disengaged, however, she is neither disassociative nor fatally self-destructive. Male *disaffectivity*, for Lawrence, is clearly symptomatic of their impending annihilation, which is why as the Great War came to an end in Versailles, he worried about the war that yet had to be fought for male emotion, rather than the war that had just been fought for men's minds. In fact, Lawrence maintains his chief qualification for being a psychologist is rooted in his intimate knowledge about the "feelings inside a man," especially apropos their "conscious" realization of their own "feelings" (*Phoenix* 2 567).

To his credit, Lawrence had few illusions about massive a task it would be to educate men in their own affective grammar. Though it took two millennia to do so, sneers Lawrence contemptuously in a later essay, Christianity thoroughly appropriated masculinity's "language for feelings" to the extent that now men disbelieved they had ever existed at all (*Hardy* 203). Accordingly, male affectivity must be carefully "cultivate[d]" with deliberation and assiduousness, we are told, at least if it was not to release the violent provocation of "a whole rank tangle of liberated, degenerate feelings" in men (*Hardy* 205). Humanity has little choice in the matter, Lawrence forewarns us, for if men continue this "degenerative" tendency to "deny and blank out their feelings," their culmination will soon manifest in "[self]destruction" (*Hardy* 204).

Knowing Lawrence was so adamant about male affectivity helps explain his rationale for insisting that Freudian psychoanalysis was horribly inappropriate for

teaching men about their feelings or anything else, not least because Freud's "perverse vision" of human behaviour simply extends the destructive Judeo-Christian mandate that instructed men to be "ashamed" of their "inner meaning," and to be as contemptuous of women's bodies, as they are of their own (*Hardy* 205). Second, whereas, the only mandate for most psychologists should be facilitation of their patients' personal "satisfaction," or self-acceptance, Freudian psychoanalysis champions only those "monster[s] of perversity" Christianity used for two millennia to dominate its subjects: "laws," "axioms," "commandments," and "postulates" (*Hardy* 204).

Not surprisingly, Lawrence recommends men look elsewhere that Freud for affective instruction, namely, to specific literary works. Men should "look in the real novels, and there listen in," Lawrence insists, although "[n]ot to the didactic statements of the author, but to the low calling cries of the characters, as they wander in the dark woods of their destiny" (*Hardy* 205). Male affectivity is best learned, performatively, we are told, when one wilfully embodies the pain that is inscribed in a work of art. Tellingly, this instruction is also paradigmatic of that reading practise I refer to as a testimonial of suffering, which suggests also that the modern British novelists may have ignored Freud because their knowledge of mythography's association with psychological healing strategies were simply superior to psychoanalysis!

I have chosen to "listen" to that sacred suffering inscribed in the novels herein, rather than simply shaping them into neat, sterile formulations suited best for the critically didactic vacuum of ideology. How wonderful it is to bear witness to the awesome affectivity within me, and whose immanence is assured when I speak myself

through their words. Although I cannot share Lawrence's charitable belief that Freud's incapacity to grasp mythography's therapeutic power was due to his medical training, I do share his existential faith in humanity's "essentially religious, or creative" "first motive," which Lawrence defines as the commandment to "create something wonderful" of ourselves (*Psychoanalysis* 60). And I also agree with Lawrence's deconstruction of Freud's "sex goal" thesis (*Fantasia* 220). "When sex is the starting point and the returning point both," advocates Lawrence wistfully, "the only issue is death" (*Psychoanalysis* 220).

The modern novelists herein clearly subscribed to the idea that mythology heuristically potentiates individuals formally, because it is "a mode of being rather than of technique"; this is why it dramaturgically "emerge[]" at those moments of crisis in which characters pass beyond their everyday or most conscious selves to touch" the "question of feeling" (Bell 192). Accordingly, the sublime transformative potentiality of the modern British novel explodes the conceited illusions of identity Freudian theory is based upon, and instead champions that ingenious testimonial capacity dependent on the imaginative empathy of its audience. Likewise, testimonials of departure are not simply reciprocal heuristic reading strategies, but, embodiments of humanity's intimate "connections" to art's infinitely empathic sublime. This joyful affectivity ferociously propels the imagination towards radical disjunction, and thereby abolishes those principles of dissimilarity dividing sympathy from empathy, appreciation from knowledge, and scientism from dramaturgy, if only momentarily.

My deepest hope is that my methodology of non-Freudian masochism will yet be

successful enough to allow me further opportunities to pay witness to the mythologically pregnant psychopathologies of James, Conrad, Forster, Lawrence and Woolf. Only the performativity of healing transforms death, melancholia and violence into Dedalus' most profound gift of enunciation, speech, without which we are lost to ourselves. It seems only fitting, then, that my dissertation stands as a testimonial of departure to that rare lesson Woolf breathes into us when she instructs us to make Life "real by putting it into words" (*Sketch* 76). Although no other critic may bestow on Woolf's phrase the profundity that I do now, others might yet still. Others, too, will embody Woolf's invitation to this most transformative of dances, and will twist and turn in remembrance of all that is pure hope personified; at least when swirling eddies of imagination drowning seeds of rebirth, are redeemed sublimely, in breezes birthing our breaths.

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