

“A Democracy of Touch”: Masochism and Tenderness in D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*

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One of the central themes that critics identify in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* by D. H. Lawrence is the juxtaposition between the vitalist and rationalist mental outlooks and life attitudes, with the former, epitomized by the gamekeeper, Oliver Mellors, associated with the realm of nature, natural order, fertility, and life force, and the latter, representative of the sterile and efficient era of the industrial class society, exemplified by Clifford Chatterley. Aligned with (and mapped onto) this division is another binary opposition—that between mental life and life proper, or to put it more judgmentally (as the author’s sympathies are unmistakable here), between serene intellectualism and lusty sensualism. I return to this familiar ground, covered multiple times by the critics in the past, in order to shed new light on the notions of sexual mastery and submission in specific connection with vitalism. I will look at the patterns of dominant and submissive behavior that arise in the novel with the goal of demonstrating that these configurations of mastery and subservience represent instances of masochism in its classical formulation as a sexual or psychological perversion of deriving pleasure from pain (both in a direct and figurative sense).

The hypothesis that I aim to authenticate is that masochism is a “late” phenomenon in the history of representation, which accompanies vitalism’s reaction to modernity (and by modernity I mean a modern late-capitalist technological society characterized by the so-called *natural attitude*), while at the same time allowing a revealing glimpse into the internal contradictions of vitalism itself. The mental outlook of vitalism, a philosophy championed by D. H. Lawrence, was formed, as I will argue, as a backlash against what it perceived as the technocratic civilization’s insensitivity to human temporality and the consequent disempowerment of man. But in its attempt to bring things back to human scale, vitalists rebel against the notion of transcendence and strive to return to the prelinguistic moment before the origin of language.

My point of departure will be Julian Moynihan’s observation that *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* “dramatizes two opposed orientations towards life, two distinct modes of human awareness: the one abstract, cerebral, and unvital; the other concrete, physical, and organic.” He relates this comment to a passage from Lawrence’s essay “Apropos of *Lady Chatterley’s*

Lover,” where the author says that “There are many, many ways of knowing, there are many sorts of knowledge. But the two ways of knowing, for man, are knowing in terms of apartness, which is mental, rational, scientific, and knowing in terms of togetherness, which is religious and poetic. . . . We have abstracted the universe into Matter and Force, we have abstracted men and women into separate personalities—personalities being isolated units, incapable of togetherness—so that all great relationships are bodiless, dead” (67). Lawrence’s elucidation of the meaning of his own novel should be seen as legitimate, for it is agreed that he has explicitly written a programmatic text (roundly criticized as ideological), with the main character serving as his explicit mouthpiece in condemning the reigning cultural values. He insists that the valorization of intellectualism divorced from feeling and sensation fragments human existence and leaves it barren and empty of meaning (Clifford’s stories are meaningless), while tenderness and loving connection (Connie and Mellors’ love) are capable of lifting sexuality from the realm of animal nature and transforming it into something that is genuinely human. In the quoted passage, Lawrence aligns the reductionist approach to knowledge with modern technocratic civilization, and opposes it implicitly to the second way of knowing, that of togetherness. This other way of knowing belongs to vitalist aesthetics and worldview, which *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* can be seen as promoting. It has been read as an apology for vitalism. Therefore, I will preface my discussion of masochism with some expository remarks on the problematics of vitalism, in order to contextualize my further analysis.

The valorization of cerebral existence is at home in the world of the chattering classes to which the appropriately named Chatterleys both belong, albeit in somewhat different strata. Connie, whose provenance from an intellectual and cultural elite has supplied her with “an aesthetically unconventional upbringing” (662), has her formative encounter with the life of ideas as a young girl in Germany, where she discovers freedom and the thrill of intellectual debate in a mixed-gender company of students. At this stage, “it was the talk that mattered supremely: the impassioned interchange of talk. Love was only the minor accompaniment” (662). It was men that “insisted on the sex thing like dogs” (662), but to women, it was the passionate and intellectual interchange that held the main attraction, and sex was something to which they consented reluctantly. Later, she continues her association with intellectuals—both aristocrats and commoners—via her husband Clifford’s bohemian set, all of them fashionable literati of London society. Since Clifford, who is paralyzed from the waist down as a result of his war injuries, is impotent, his connection with Connie is solely an intellectual one. She is actively involved in his writing career, reading his stories, encouraging him, and serving as a hostess to his circle of intellectuals. It is suggested that Clifford has a premonition of Connie’s impending desertion, and this is probably why he so ardently insists that a mental connection, created as a consequence of “an integrated life built on a habit of intimacy” (691), is everything, while casual sex is nothing. He is therefore trying to talk Connie into having a child by another man that would be raised by Clifford as the heir of Wragby. To Connie, on the other hand, it is the mental life that “[begins] to feel like nothingness” (691), and her spiritual awakening is intimately bound up

with her sexual awakening, which she experiences with her lover, and her husband's servant, Oliver Mellors.

The juxtaposition of vitality versus sterility is set up between the worlds of Lady Chatterley and her lover, on the one hand, and Clifford and his set, on the other. The affair between Connie Chatterley and Oliver Mellors takes place in a rustic hut in the wood that belongs to the Chatterleys estate and begins simultaneously with the renewal of life after the winter, accompanied by a vivid, poetic portrayal of the advent of the spring, punctuated by the minute details of the change of flower blooming seasons. The lovers, Connie and Mellors, their bucolic surroundings, and their affair, narratively framed by the life-affirming progress of the spring, are associated with words such as "vital," "alive," and "life," and allusions to vigor, viability, pliancy, and fertility are frequently invoked in this connection. Thus, trees in the forest, surrounding the love nest, are described as "powerful beings, dim twilit, silent and alive" (739); the oak trees have "powerful trunks . . . , round and vital" (719), and the pine-tree under which Connie sits is an "erect, alive thing" that is "elastic, and powerful, rising up" (714). Early spring daffodils are "so bright and alive" (714), while a newly born a pheasant chick is "the most alive little spark of a creature in seven kingdoms" (732-3). Even these smaller things are powerful in their own way: the daffodils are "so strong in their frailty" (714), and the pheasant chick is "so cheeky" and "so utterly without fear" (733).

People too are described in a language evocative of plant life—their sturdy bodies giving an impression of being firmly planted in the earth or gravitating toward it. Thus, Connie's sybaritic father has "stout thighs" that are, like tree trunks, "strong and well-knit, the thighs of a healthy man who had taken pleasure in life" (828). It is suggested that Connie inherits her sensualist nature from her father. Connie's figure, as she looks at herself in the mirror, is also spoken of in organic terms with her breasts "pear-shaped" but "unripe," her "down-sloping" curves having retained some youthful "down-slipping richness," are becoming "sapless" and "going unripe, astringent" after years of celibacy (703-704). In this scene, before she embarks on her affair with Mellors, Connie perceives herself as drained of life (her "vitality is much too low" (709)); only in her buttocks, it appears, "life still lingered hoping" (704). Sex with Mellors, however, has a reinvigorating effect on her. In addition to her newly feminine body contours, she feels rejuvenated inside. During their intercourse, "her womb, that had always been shut, had opened and filled with new life," and so "in her womb and bowels she was flowing and alive now" (747). In fact, it is her "whole self [that] quivered unconscious and alive, like plasm" (774). Mellors, in turn, is originally depicted as a "pistil of an invisible flower," "a little frail and quenched," although still as "curiously full of vitality" (713, 689). After their sexual encounter, he tells Connie: "I thought I'd done with it all. Now I've begun again." And after she asks him "Begun what?" he replies "Life" (735). She echoes his sentiment later to Clifford when she says that "the life of the body is a greater reality than the life of the mind: when the body is really wakened to life" (815).

Even their body parts become anthropomorphized by the vitalistic description and

transformed into independent agents. Thus Connie is stirred by the feel of Mellors "warm, living buttocks" and struck by the "small, bud-like reticence and tenderness of the penis" (773-774). His penis is "proud" and "lordly," "Like another being!" and Mellors agrees that "he's got a will of his own" (798). As an expression of their wonderment at the potency and autonomy of their sexual organs, the lovers invent pet names for them, John Thomas and Lady Jane. These synecdochic replacements for their bearers are meant to divorce the love story and the characters from their specific content and elevate them to the level of the universal, where they become simple archetypes of man and woman. In line with this organic, pagan thinking, their genitalia become associated with the source of all life. For Mellors, Connie's "bottom" acquires the significance of a sacred, Atlas-like being that "could hold the world up" (806). In a symmetrical way, Connie thinks of his penis as the "root of all that is lovely, the primeval root of all full beauty" (774).

Clifford, on the other hand, is shown as a complete opposite to the world of natural vitality. His change of vocation from being a fashionable writer to undertaking the technological modernization of his mines might strike the reader as an odd transition from mental to materialistic existence. But, interestingly, materiality in the novel is not the same as physicality—it is closer to the physis of the natural attitude than to the embodied experience of *élan vital*. Via its association with the alienated world of capitalist production, the former is connected with the cerebral realm of ideas, while the latter to the vitalist one of the body and earth. Even though Clifford is animated by his projects of story-writing and acquiring technical expertise on mining, he remains curiously devoid of *élan vital*. He is said to have a look of "slight vacancy," that "of a cripple" (661), with "his peculiar and rather vacant apathy" (780) and his insides filled with a "terrible hollow," a "void" (750). His stories too, although skillful, clever, and increasingly popular in fashionable society, are empty: "there was no touch, no actual contact. It was as if the whole thing took place in a vacuum" (668). These descriptions evoke an image of a rotting fruit or tree decaying from the inside, which fits in well with the overarching metaphor of a human body as a tree that is rooted in the soil from which it derives its life energy by way of its roots, i.e., legs and buttocks. The paraplegic Lord Chatterley, by contrast, is literally disconnected from the earth as the source of all life. His disability epitomizes his existential condition of being "a negation of human contact" (668) and he therefore carries a void inside, as if something is withering in him. The most striking contrast is symbolically encoded in his mode of locomotion: instead of having an innate, organic connection with the earth, of seeming to grow out of it, Clifford rolls over it in a wheelchair, achieving the most fleeting and superficial of contacts. His lack of relatedness or sensitivity to nature is ironically underscored by the episode when he rhapsodizes about the beauty of the "English spring," while his wheels, in all obliviousness, "jolt over the wood-ruff and the bugle, and squash the little yellow cups of the creeping-jenny . . . [making] a wake through forget-me-nots" (780).

Clifford's motor chair is emblematic of the mechanistic world of capitalist production he embodies in the novel. His seat of Wragby is an impersonal assemblage of living spaces that

lack an organic center (762) and that repel his wife with their “mechanical cleanliness and the mechanical order” (669). The views from the estate are marred by the permanent cloud of smoke hanging over the Tevershall collieries that belong to it. The sense of sight is offended by “sharp, wicked electric lights” (736), and the sense of smell by “the rattle-rattle of the screens at the pit. The puff of the winding-engine, the clink-clink of shunting trucks, and the hoarse little whistle of the colliery locomotives” (666-7). These images make the coal works look like a vast, impersonal mechanism that has somehow gotten out of control and is now running amok like a rogue force on relentless offensive against the wooded idyll and without any regard to human concerns. As Mellors climbs on top of a denuded knoll, the industrial world reveals itself in all its intimidating ugliness and crushing insentience, impervious to human presence:

There, in the world of the mechanical greedy, greedy mechanism and mechanized greed, sparkling with lights and gushing hot metal and roaring with traffic, there lay the vast evil thing, ready to destroy whatever did not conform. Soon it would destroy the wood, and the bluebells would spring no more. All vulnerable things must perish under the rolling and running of iron. (736)

This inanimate mechanized world, poised to steamroll over everything standing in its way, just like Clifford’s chair, is inimical to life in its organic sense. To Clifford, however, life is the energy that feeds the cycle of simple production which, in its turn, puts into efficient use “the chemical possibilities of coal” (728). As he decides to dedicate himself to the technological modernization of his coal pit in order to make it profitable again, he is struck by “a new sense of power flowing through him:” it is as if “*Now* life came into him” (729).

These two orientations towards life, the technological and the vitalist, stipulate two types of relationships, according to Lawrence. The working title of the novel was *Tenderness*, and the relationship of tenderness encapsulates Lawrence’s ideal of human interaction—something that is spontaneous, unconstrained, and completely free from coercion and dominance, made possible by mutual attunement and keen sensitivity. This model of relationship is valorized in the novel as “a democracy of touch” that will be made possible after “we’ve shoved the cerebral stone away” (707). The interrelationships between individuals in modern industrial society, conversely, cannot be free and volitional because of its alienated, mechanistic or automated nature. The constitutive components of the mechanical model operate in the mode of “apartness.” They interact with each other with the help of sent impulses, which initiate movement and force certain parts to produce work. Conceptually, a mechanism’s design is hierarchical, whereby signals are sent along the chain of command, making the principle of subordination endemic to the industrial organization of labor. Not surprisingly, such a built-in necessity of compulsion provokes a reaction by the vitalist with his profoundly anti-authoritarian, voluntarist temperament. One way of subverting established power relationships, explored in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, is, as I will now show, via the outlet of masochist role-playing.

There are several examples of dominant-submissive games played by pairs of characters. I would like to focus on two most striking ones—those between Lady Chatterley and Oliver Mellors, on the one hand, and Lord Chatterley, and his servant, Mrs Bolton, on the other. Connie Chatterley's background is not aristocratic, unlike that of her husband's. Her provenance from the moneyed Bohemian class with its free-thinking tradition gives her some distance to the supposed unbreachability of the class barrier: the principle of absolute separation between the classes does not hold the same sacred status in her eyes as it does for those closer to the noble and plebeian extremes of the social divide. At the same time, it would be an exaggeration to say that she is oblivious to social distinctions. Her ambivalence toward the class system reflects, to some degree, the ambivalent social station of her lover, Oliver Mellors. Even though he comes from a local collier stock and works, at one time, as a humble blacksmith, he has inborn refinement, intelligence, and inquisitiveness that allow him to rise above his station. As a young lad, he courts a school-master's daughter, and together they become "the most literary-cultured couple in ten counties" (791). And later, after he joins the army, he is favorably noticed by a colonel, through whose patronage he is made a lieutenant. After he retires from the army and goes back to work for his former employer, it is a challenge for him, in Clifford Chatterley's words, "to get back to his own level" (718)—a situation that is reflected in the way his speech (confusingly, for Lady Chatterley) oscillates between broad Yorkshire dialect and educated English.

Despite the fact that their respective social positions are not easily pigeonholed, their relationship does entail some degree of indignity (for both). Since in the inherently hierarchical sexual relationship, the male holds the naturally superior position, both Connie and Mellors are denigrated by their sexual involvement. Connie is lowered by her association with a servant, while Mellors is in a humiliating position of having a mistress who is his social superior. It is far from clear which is the more injured party, that is to say, which one of the lovers is degraded more by this connection. Their relationship is initially a power play of mastery and submission until it promises to settle, after Connie gives up her social status, into the culturally stable paradigm of an active-passive/dominant-submissive male-female interaction. (The novel offers, as it were, a happy resolution). In the very beginning, however, the social codes are flouted between Connie and Mellors. The first thing she notices about the gamekeeper is that there is something elusively and insinuatingly defiant in his attitude toward his masters. When Connie first meets him, he looks to her "like a free soldier rather than a servant" (689). The mood of defiance is often conveyed by the look he gives her. Either he "stare[s] into Connie's eyes, with a perfect, fearless, impersonal look" or his look is "laconic, contemptuous, not hiding his feelings" (697) or his face "[takes] an undefinable look of derision," while a "smile of mockery [narrows] his eyes" (702). Such signals sent through facial expressions and body language make Connie realize that "the man [does] not respect her" (697). Even his dialect is used as a weapon in his and Connie's power struggle. When she notices that "his voice on the last words had fallen into the heavy broad drag of the dialect," she suspects that he did that "in mockery, because there had been no trace of dialect before" (688). Mellors, who has taught

himself to speak proper English during his army years and gives an impression of being "almost . . . a gentleman" (688) makes at times a conscious choice to revert to folksy speech in order either to parody and mirror his superiors' patronizing and supercilious manner or to humiliate his mistress by reminding her of his low birth and thus, in a perverse way, to affirm his mastery over her.

But even though Connie "was gifted from nature with [an] appearance of demure, submissive maidenliness" (743), she too is capable of engendering a feeling of inferiority in Mellors, on occasion. "He dreaded her will, her female will, and her modern female insistency. And above all, he dreaded her cool, upper-class impudence of having her own way. After all, he was only a hired man" (716). On a whim, she can pull rank on him or remind him who is in control, such as when she stops coming to their assignations for several days, being well aware that it is impossible for him to come and fetch her. All that the gamekeeper can do is stand impotently outside her house and look at her windows. But while she makes him wait in uncertainty, she herself is uncertain too, "divided between two feelings: resentment against him, and a desire to make up with him" (771). However, as their relationship progresses, Connie lets go of her impulse to be the dominant partner. This change of heart is connected with her lover's gradual awakening within her of her sensuality. At some point, her feelings for him become too strong, too genuine, and so she deliberately erases from her mind an earlier role-image of herself as a Bacchante who is served by her adoring phallus-bearer. She rejects the Bacchanal role model and replaces it with the one of a docile and subservient partner, overcoming her residual fear of "[losing] herself, [becoming] effaced, and she didn't want to be effaced, a slave, like a savage woman. She must not become a slave. . . . She had a devil of self-will in her breast that could have fought the full soft heaving adoration of her womb and crushed it" (747).

The self-will is associated in the heroine's mind with barrenness, and so she willingly gives it up for the sake of love and turns to him with her hitherto hidden side of gentle femininity. Another incentive to abandon self-assertive behavior is provided by the cautionary tale of the gamekeeper's unhappy marriage to Bertha Coutts. Mellors tells Connie how he hated it when Bertha actively tried to bring herself to orgasm by inducing him to clitoral stimulation: "By God, you think a woman's soft down there, like a fig. But I tell you the old rampers have beaks between their legs, and they tear at you with it till you're sick. Self! Self! Self! all self! tearing and shouting!" (792). The horror of the modern female for Mellors lies in her "ghastly female will" (843) of "endless assertion" (722). The epitome of this behavior is Bertha Coutts in her striving toward self-satisfaction. "And it came back on her like a raving necessity, she had to let herself go, and tear, tear, tear, as if she had no sensation in her except in the top of her beak, the very outside top tip that rubbed and tore" (792). The dramatic irony of this confession lies in the fact that this is exactly how Connie brought herself to orgasm with her first lover, Michaelis.

In contradistinction to other relationships he has known, Mellors wants a relationship built

on real tenderness. Some of the connotations of *tenderness* are softness, sensitivity, pliability, giving way, lack of resistance. That which is tender will not obstruct, hold out against, put itself forward, or put up a fight. It will yield to the force or penetration of the other to the fullest extent. Indeed, this is how Connie is feeling and reacting: "she felt herself melting in the flame," "she yielded with a quiver," her body is "softly opened" to "the thrust of a sword," "she was deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed," "the quick of all her plasm was touched" (773). Mellors, who thinks "there is no real sex left" and longs to find a woman "who'd really 'come' naturally with a man" (793), finds such a woman in Lady Chatterley. Connie allows him to realize the male fantasy of the vaginal and anal orgasms that do not require a separate pleasure organ, like the clitoris-experiences that build on responsiveness rather than self-assertion and willfulness. This is the model of human love that the novel promotes—a tender touch to the core of one's being, made possible by "primordial tenderness, such as made the world in the beginning" (773). Connie's first vaginal orgasm is a transformative moment, whereby she "knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman" (773).

But an even more symbolic act of giving up control and willing self-abasement occurs in the last scene of the protagonists' love-making when she and Mellors engage in anal sex. For Connie, it felt like "Burning out the shames, the deepest, oldest shames, in the most secret places. It cost her an effort to let him have his way and his will of her. She had to be a passive, consenting thing, like a slave, a physical slave. . . . She would have thought a woman would have died of shame. Instead of which, the shame died" (823). Here it is also appropriate to recall that another connotation of *tender* is "sore" or "painful," which correlates with the strong probability that the act of anal intercourse was probably quite painful for Connie. This submission of Connie to Mellors, the archetypal woman to the archetypal man, through the symbolic act of the murder of shame is portrayed in the novel as the ultimate triumph and redemption of love. Yet, at bottom, however, this is a quintessential act of masochism, which involves not only humiliation but physical pain.

The necessary submission of a woman to a man brings up another point about power relationships. Vitalists do not deny the centrality of power. The words *power* and *powerful* are used as frequent descriptors of nature in the novel that have clearly positive connotations. The color of celandines is "the powerful yellow of early summer" (767). Old trees in the forest "seemed a very power of silence, and yet a vital presence" (700). They are "powerful beings, dim twilit, silent and alive" (739); and they have "powerful trunks . . . , round and vital" (719). But the difference between the power of nature and civilization is that the former is a natural, and the latter an unnatural force. By making one of the main protagonists a paraplegic and physically helpless man with great economic (his mines), social (his title), and even intellectual (his stories) influence and power—and thus letting him rule three central areas of human endeavor—Lawrence underscores the unnaturalness of the second type of power and displays his distaste at the way power relations play themselves

out in civilized society. This is something that could be witnessed in the battle-of-the-wills relationship that exists between Clifford Chatterley and his nurse, Mrs Bolton.

The relationship between these two is also fraught with shifting power dynamics. Mrs Bolton, who is a local woman with nursing experience, is hired to take care of paraplegic and wheel-chair-bound Clifford in order to help relieve Lady Chatterley. She has "a very good opinion about herself . . . from having bossed the sick colliers for a good many years" and is therefore "in her tiny way, one of the governing classes in the village" (710). As in the case of Mellors, her social position is ambiguous, and she is somewhat of an upstart. "The masters! In a dispute between masters and men, she was always for the men. But when there was no question of contest, she was pining to be superior, to be one of the upper class" (711).

When she arrives at Wragby, Mrs Bolton is, at first, shy and uncertain. "Clifford made her feel small, and like a servant, she accepted it without a word, adjusting herself to the upper classes" (711). Soon she begins to relax, getting used to her master and regaining a sense that she will eventually "have him in her power. He wasn't so very different from the colliers, after all, when you lathered his chin, and softly rubbed the bristles" (712). But things turn out to be more complicated, and the two soon embark on an escalating relationship of mutual control and manipulation. Mrs Bolton is said to have "that queer sort of bossiness, endless assertion of her own will," but Clifford has "a finer, subtler will of self-assertion than herself" (722). While she offers her services to him with a "soft, caressive, subservient, yet managing voice," he defies her and gains the upper hand by having things done purposefully his way, not hers, by, for example, telling her to take away the hyacinths that she has so carefully arranged or deliberately putting her on indefinite hold with her shaving services. It can be said that she gets back at him by catering to his intimate and hygienic needs, which paralyzed Clifford cannot perform for himself, and which would certainly involve some indignity on his part. Mrs Bolton derives satisfaction and a sense of power from handling his helpless body: "She loved having his body in her charge, absolutely, to the last menial offices. She said to Connie one day: 'All men are babies, when you come to the bottom of them'" (722). Clifford one-ups her by playing on her class insecurities when he embarks on the project of educating her. First, he teaches her to type and take dictation, then to play board games, which, to Mrs Bolton, are seen as aristocratic pursuits. While Clifford "enjoyed it, it gave him a sense of power," Mrs Bolton is thrilled, on her part, because "She was coming bit by bit into possession of all that gentry knew, all that made them upper class" (723). But there is yet another level to her excitement-her realization that she is making herself indispensable to him, which is "her genuine thrill," and a power on top of his power (723).

Connie notices, at one point, that Clifford is treating a much older Mrs Bolton "as if she were half mistress, half foster-mother to him" (731). "Only when he was alone with Mrs Bolton did he really feel a lord and a master, and his voice ran on with her garrulously as

her own can run. And he let her shave him or sponge all his body as if he were a child, really as if he were a child" (729). Gradually, their relationship grows in intensity in order to culminate in a weird sexual game of infantile regression at the moment when Lady Chatterley announces her departure. "Clifford became like a child with Mrs. Bolton. He would hold her hand, and rest his head on her breast, and when she once lightly kissed him, he said! "Yes! Do kiss me! Do kiss me!" And when she sponged his great blond body, he would say the same! "Do kiss me!" and she would lightly kiss his body, anywhere, half in mockery.

And he lay with a queer, blank face like a child, with a bit of the wonderment of a child. And he would gaze on her with wide, childish eyes, in a relaxation of madonna-worship. It was sheer relaxation on his part, letting go all his manhood, and sinking back to a childish position that was really perverse. And then he would put his hand into her bosom and feel her breasts, and kiss them in exultation, the exultation of perversity, of being a child when he was a man (851).

Mrs. Bolton was both thrilled and ashamed, she both loved and hated it. Yet she never rebuffed nor rebuked him. And they drew into a closer physical intimacy, an intimacy of perversity, when he was a child stricken with an apparent candour and an apparent wonderment, that looked almost like a religious exaltation: the perverse and literal rendering of: 'except ye become again as a little child'. -While she was the Magna Mater, full of power and potency, having the great blond child-man under her will and her stroke entirely (851).

And this relapse into childhood and complete abandoning himself to the power of Mrs Bolton is taking place all the while Clifford is enjoying a very successful career as an industrialist and himself becoming a more powerful man than ever before ("a new sense of power flowing through him" (729)). The distinction between two kinds of power, natural and unnatural, are illuminated by the two types of relationship, (biologically-)normative between Connie and Mellors, and perverse (between Clifford and Mrs Bolton).

These instances of willing humiliation and self-abasement can be readily identified as masochistic behavioral templates. Although the original meaning of masochism defines it as pleasure derived from physical pain, the term takes on a less restrictive, psychological connotation almost from the beginning. Theodor Reik writes that the idea of mental masochism came to designate "not a somatic relation but the idea of submission and dependence as the essential element in the pleasure experience" (198). It is, indeed, the latter that is mostly applicable to the games the characters play. In his turn, Sigmund Freud identifies three types of masochism: *erotogenic*, *feminine*, and *moral*. Erotogenic masochism is the basic expression of masochism that underlies the other two. The physiological explanation of the erotogenic masochism is "libidinal sympathetic excitation" which accompanies the physical sensations of pain and unpleasure. The reason for this, as Freud

hypothesizes, is that “nothing of considerable importance can occur in the organism without contributing some component to the excitation of the sexual instinct.”

What the libidinal co-excitation, which gives us the sensation of pleasure, really masks is the death drive. According to Freud, the death drive is one of the regulative principles of the life processes in the organism. Much criticized as a supposition, because it is always fused with the life drive and cannot be detected on its own, the death drive is manifested through the Nirvana principle, which strives to reduce all excitation to zero—a desire to return to the mineral state of being, as it were. But because an organism tends toward self-preservation, the libido acts on behalf of the life drive in order to mitigate or render innocuous the destructive energies of the death drive. It does this in such a way that “it remains inside the organism and, with the help of the accompanying sexual excitation described above, becomes libidinally bound there” (418). This is what *primary erotogenic masochism* is about. Another way to disarm the death instinct is to turn it outward. Diverted toward external objects, the death drive turns into pure aggression, expressed as the “instinct for mastery or the will to power” (RF 214). When directed towards outside objects and placed in the service of the sexual function, the death drive becomes sadism. But part of this sadism can be diverted back onto the self, creating the phenomenon of *secondary masochism*.

The other two kinds of masochism have the erotogenic masochism as their physiological foundation. Feminine masochism is observed in men who have fantasies or playact scenes of being tortured to achieve sexual release. Freud calls this form of masochism feminine, because men are put in “a characteristically female situation” often involving fantasies of being raped or castrated which stem from some childhood sense of guilt and a desire for punishment. Guilt and punishment aspects make feminine masochism a transitional form on the way to moral masochism, which is a more complete reflection of the competing life-governing principles.

Moral masochism no longer makes physical pain a requirement. The suffering that the subject is addicted to is more often than not psychological. The unconscious sense of guilt is assuaged by punishment imposed by the *superego*, which serves the function of the guilty conscience. The superego is one of the compartments of the psyche that has internalized the collective parental voice of authority after the Oedipus complex has been transcended. It is locked into opposition with the *id*, which is the instinctual faculty governed by the pleasure principle. The resulting course of action is negotiated by the reality principle, representing the *ego*, which enables the postponement of pleasure and temporary toleration of unpleasure in order to maximize future gains and make the organism more fit for survival.

In the case of moral masochism, the subject is plagued by an especially harsh consciousness. The overweening sense of guilt produces the situation whereby the ego is both plagued by the sadistic superego and plagues itself via its own capacity for masochism.

As Freud says " the sadism of the superego and the masochism of the ego supplement each other and unite to produce the same effects" (425). The symptom of this condition is the resexualization of the Oedipus complex, manifested by a regressive return to the Oedipus situation. This condition is highly applicable to Clifford, who overtly regresses to the role of a baby with Mrs Bolton. It can also be argued that there is a regression to the anal stage. Partly, it consists in his enjoyment of Mrs Bolton's "menial offices," and partly, it is expressed through Clifford's association with money (money being a symbol of feces) and industrial production ("the house was full of the stench of this sulphurous combustion of the earth's excrement" (667)). But Connie's and Mellors' self-conscious humiliation are also recognizable instances of moral masochism.

Thus even though the underlying explanation of masochism in Freud is monocausal, attributed to the existence of the death drive, its actual workings seem to be two-fold. On the level of the unconscious, masochistic tendencies are explained by the death drive, but on the conscious, psychological level it appears to be the artifact of the human capacity for advanced planning and theory of mind (insofar as we find the superego remonstrating with the id about the desirability or foolhardiness of a certain future course of action), and by extension, of representation. Other theorists of masochism also saw something in the very nature of representation that engenders masochism and renders it perhaps not as counterintuitive as it seems initially. Thus, according to Jacques Lacan, the masochist is not his own agent, but the means and instrument of the Other's *jouissance*. He identifies himself with a common object or an exchange object and acts out his desire on an imaginary stage.

For Theodor Reik, masochism is the disorder of "anticipation," as it were. Its three main characteristics are: 1) the special importance of fantasy (for the subject, "it represents a preliminary which is indispensable, a *conditio sine qua non*" (209); 2) the suspense factor ("the tendency to prolong the tension, while we meet with the opposite intention, of resolving the tension, in normal sexual life" (223)); 3) the demonstrative feature, a kind of exhibitionism, through which the masochist wants to demonstrate to the world his humiliation. He sums up the motto of masochism as "victory through defeat" in the way Christ is victorious at the moment of his greatest humiliation. The masochist subject "submits voluntarily to punishment, suffering and humiliations and thus has defiantly purchased the right to enjoy the gratification denied before" (361). In other words, he "loses all battles except the last" (363). Masochistic experience creates the tension of anticipation that vacillates between pleasure and unpleasure, with the anxiety transformed into pleasure by an act of self-mastery. Reik comes close here to understanding that masochistic behavior, by building on overcoming the fear of representation, engages with the very structure of representation that effects a gap between the given and the imagined. At the same time, he does not go far enough into exploring the *scenic* aspect of representation. The latter is revealed by the third, demonstrative, feature of masochism, which shows an insight into the way a masochistic fantasy is not only "anticipatory," but also public. It engages with the community of speakers by taking place on the public stage.

For Jean Laplanche, masochism originates from *primal seduction*—the original, non-symmetrical, exposure that a child has to the other (an adult), which generates a message that the child has to interpret, presumably “entirely infiltrated with unconscious and sexual significations to which *adults themselves* do not have the code” (127). The masochist response comes as the second moment—that of self-consciousness—which arrives on the heels of and in response to the first moment, that of the awareness of the other. This first moment has the character of an interruption, and is bound to be experienced as painful, “For the necessarily traumatic intervention of the other must entail—most often in a minor way but sometimes in a major one—the effraction or breaking-in characteristic of *pain*” (209). Laplanche criticizes Freud for going astray in taking a turn towards a theory of drives. The problem with drives is that they are endogenous, arising within the solipsistic, monadic ego. He, on the other hand, characterizes human sexuality as “exogenous, intersubjective, and intrusive” (198). The other impinges from the outside in the form of an enigmatic message that demands to be translated, and it is the opacity of this message and the uncertainty as to its exact content and context that are experienced as painful. At the same time, because of the intermingling of self-preservationist and sexual physiology, to the extent that they “originate at the same place, in relation to the same source” (128), adult messages acquire unconscious sexual connotations that can induce an auto-erotic response, which is repressed and is later retrieved as a masochist fantasy. What is relevant to my discussion in Laplanche’s theory is his intuition about the importance of exogeneity, the centrality of the outside and the other to the constitution of subjectivity.

Gilles Deleuze also deserves to be mentioned as someone who, unlike the other masochism theorists, emphasizes a complete distinctness of masochism from sadism, but also draws strong connections between masochism and the theater of fantasy. He describes masochism as the phenomenon of acute self-consciousness that strives to rid itself of the anticipated punishment. An act of masochism is demonstrative, imaginative, aesthetic, and suspenseful. Its object is to incapacitate the superego by disavowing the mother and abolishing the father. What comes to the forefront in Deleuze’s interpretation of masochism is its temporal and scenic, one can say theatrical, view of the way the masochist operates. “In masochism we find a progression from disavowal as a process of liberation from the pressures of the superego to suspense as incarnation of the ideal” (127). (Deleuze’s example of disavowal is the boy child’s denial: “no, the woman doesn’t lack a penis”). The difference between a disavowal and regular negation is that “Disavowal is a reaction of the imagination, as negation is an operation of the intellect or of thought” (127). The moment of disavowal is followed by a suspenseful awaiting of the birth of the ideal ego as a “narcissistic ideal of omnipotence” (129) that creates a happy resolution to the problem of anticipation. (In Freud, by contrast, it is the superego that has the upper hand, but we can remind ourselves that both the ego and superego are aspects of the self, and thus both interpretations of masochism incorporate an anticipation of a triumphant overcoming of adversity that comes via the dynamic of elevation through humiliation or victory through defeat). Another important aspect to which Deleuze wants to bring the reader’s attention is masochism’s

contractual nature. Thus, the narrator of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's novel *Venus in Furs* signs a contract with Wanda, obligating both of them to a temporary mistress-slave relationship. While the sadist would impose his will through an institution, the masochist thinks in contractual terms, the main difference, in Deleuze's opinion, being "the free consent of the contracting parties [that] determines between them a system of reciprocal rights and duties" (77). To sum up, the common thread of the above theories is a desire to overcome the trauma of representation by closing up the gaps it has injected between the self and the other of consciousness and the now and then of anticipation.

While the above theories recognize the problematics of "exteriority," René Girard brings all the various strands together and explains masochism with the schema of a mediated desire. Masochism is an inevitable desire of an impossible ambition. The masochist imitates the desire of his model, the path to which is paved by insuperable obstacles. In fact, the desire is unfulfillable—it is what Girard calls a "metaphysical desire [that] always ends in enslavement, failure, and shame" (176). Why would the masochist choose from the outset such a hostile mediator who creates such difficulties for him? Why would he not choose someone more favorably disposed? Because this is the very definition of the masochist: "We are masochists when we no longer choose our mediator because of the admiration which he inspires in us but because of the disgust we seem to inspire in him" (178). But choosing someone who despises him, the masochist virtually assures that his desire is constitutionally unfulfillable. On the one hand, Girard writes, the imitator is very lucid in observing the connection between his choice of the mediator and the obstacle. On the other hand, this makes him appear even more strikingly blind when he, nevertheless, "tries paradoxically to satisfy his desire by rushing towards the obstacle, thus making his destiny one of misery and failure" (179). Girard cautions, however, that we should not be precipitate in concluding that the subject really desires shame, humiliation, and suffering. On the contrary, he desires something that is a complete opposite—"his mediator's divinity, and for this divinity he will accept if necessary . . . shame, humiliation, and suffering" (182). By choosing the most difficult mediator that could be conceivably imagined, the imitator aims to master and overcome himself in an extravagant feat of ambition. It is a form of self-deification, as Girard notes, and not of irrationality. What "the masochist desires [is] exactly what we ourselves desire: autonomy and god-like self-control, his own self-esteem and the esteem of others; but by an intuition of metaphysical desire more profound than his doctors possess . . . he no longer hopes to find these inestimable treasures except at the side of a master whose humble slave he will be" (183-84). Thus the half-blind/ half-clear-sighted masochist will continue striving to attain divinity by conquering an impossible obstacle that is constitutionally unconquerable. The built-in futility of this scenario cannot be properly understood until we grasp the triangular structure of desire, which is never naively straightforward but always mediated.

But there is an even more minimal and theoretical way of grasping the ambivalent desire of masochism. We can by now perhaps see that all of the above explanations present different

ways of grasping the pragmatic paradox that arises with the origin of language. The paradox consists in the keeping in simultaneous focus the dual relationship the sign user has with the object and other participants on the scene of representation: the first is the one of prolongation, and the other of joint attention. As Eric Gans says: "Symbolic reference cannot derive from the 'horizontal' relation of appetite; it entails a 'vertical' relationship of *différance* that is at the same time one of interdiction. The sign substitutes for the thing only because the thing itself cannot be appropriated. But this interdiction only increases the participants' desire; the energy invested in this desire maintains the attraction between center and periphery that constitutes the uniquely human phenomenon of the scene" (SI 3). In other words, "the member of the original community cannot possess the desired object, because the desire arises only when the object is not possessed" (EC 28).

The contradiction that is engaged here is not only formal but psychological. The simultaneous awareness of the desirability of the central object and the absolute impossibility of possessing it cannot be experienced as anything other than painful. Yet the symbolic act of the ethical sharing of the object between language users is, at the same time, empowering and liberating. Surely there is a sense of mastery attendant in the possibility of dividing (or multiplying) a symbolic object into an infinite number of parts and thus assuaging wounded sensibilities and putting all competing desires on an equal footing. Thus the sense of powerlessness inscribed in the act of representation is constitutionally intermingled with the sense of mastery and overcoming in a way that is typical for masochism. It seems then that masochist dynamics are inherent in the mechanics of representation. It is tempting to conclude that masochist tendencies become pronounced late in the history of representation. They grow together with the acute rate of the growth of our cultural self-consciousness, reaching the level of conscious awareness with the crossing over of some qualitative barrier of insight into our linguistic predicament. Masochism is a sophisticated game of role play staged with a great degree of self-awareness on an imaginary scene of representation and thus is ancillary to modernity, insofar as the latter is characterized by the problematic of exaggerated self-consciousness and alienation.

We have thus far seen how Freud's masochism of the superego aligns with other theories of masochism that attribute it to representation. Yet Freud's conception of masochism is richer. There is another factor yet unaccounted for, namely that of the death drive, which is operative on the lowest level but subtends the aggressive impulses of the sadistic superego. On the face of it, it is not immediately apparent how the death instinct, which is originally envisioned as the disintegrative force that pulls the organism down to the inorganic level of the organization of matter via the mechanics of the Nirvana principle that binds pleasure to the reduction of excitation, how this death instinct transforms into something seemingly entirely different—a "separation" anxiety, so to speak, of representation that is transmuted into a force of aggression put into the service of the superego, which unleashes it sadistically against the ego.

Many later readers of Freud have viewed this identification of the death instinct with the aggressive instinct as highly problematic and have found Freud's contention that libido rescues the death instinct and co-opts it for the purposes of life and survival unconvincing. Havi Carel in her analysis of the development of the death drive in Freudian theory writes that the death drive is developed by Freud as a general metaphysical principle that formally unifies various self-destructive phenomena but does not provide a generative view of their constitution and interrelation. Some contradictions between its various elements are irreconcilable. For example, masochism, in seeking unpleasure, tends to increase tension. But if it acts as an expression of the death drive then how is it possible for it to work in opposition to the Nirvana principle, which aims to discharge tension? (52). Carel suggests that it might be prudent to discard the Nirvana principle altogether. But should one postulate something like the aggressive drive? Carel thinks that this would also be problematic because "replacing the life/death duality with sexuality/aggression duality has its limitation" (59) "Aggression does not lend itself to the concepts that make up the drive. . . . It does not delineate a specific domain . . . , it has no somatic source . . . [and] it does not provide a model . . . of development" (58).

Carel has pinpointed correctly, in my opinion, that aggression does not fit the criteria for being a drive. Yet aggression is a phenomenon in its own right with anthropological origins. In its direct or inverted form, it subtends the masochist's feelings of guilt or anxiety. Whether it is the sadism of the superego in Freud, or the intrusive assault of the Other in Laplanche, or belligerence directed at the superego as the representative of the figure of parental authority in Deleuze, or the defiant push by the anxious consciousness towards the ending of suspense in Reik, or the deliberate choice of the most hostile mediator in Girard, everywhere we find that masochistic behavior does not arise from a purely conceptual conflict but is psychologically motivated by an emotionally charged and combative attitude expressive of an animus toward the other or the "othered" self. Generative Anthropology has identified this impulse as mimetic desire, which originated in the raw aggressiveness of the competitive and imitative instincts of animal social hierarchies but was harnessed and became transformed into the anxiety- and tension-laden paradoxical structure of representation.

If, however, we place the origin of masochism in unresolved mimetic desire, does this mean that we should discard Freud's death drive explanation and the Nirvana principle? I suggest that we keep them. The death drive uncovers an important intuition by the vitalists about the temporal aspect of discourse which is, in my view, an indispensable component in the theory of masochism. What Freud's drive-based view of human behavior has to recommend it is that it provides an important "energist" or energy-oriented perspective that is capable of explaining the trajectory of the stagnation and renewal of meaning, which, in its turn, helps us understand why a periodic repetition (in the form of ritual reproduction) of the originary event is a necessary feature of the scene of representation.

To rethink the meaning of Freud's death drive, I would like to recast it in energist terms. The seemingly odd idea of a drive that urges the human organism to return to an inorganic state would make more sense if thought of as *entropy*. In energist language, the mechanistic and organic paradigms represent two different thermodynamic models—those of a homeostatic system, on the one hand, and a far-from-equilibrium dynamic system, on the other. The former represents the processes in an ideal Newtonian system. It is a system without a death vector and without the dissipation of energy, but one in which one kind of energy is fully converted into another. Such would be a system fully described by the pleasure principle (lacking the economic contradiction introduced by the death drive). According to the homeostatic principle, any loss of energy—due to hunger, exhaustion, loss of heat—would produce an unpleasurable tension that would demand some action to restore the lost energy. The subject would then eat, rest, warm himself up, and thus recover the homeostasis. This is the logic of life preservation, of infinite replenishing, of exchange without loss. In the world of homeostasis, there is neither temporality nor attenuation—a condition that manifests itself as the unchecked expansion of the modernist will-to-power.

By contrast, the entropic model of psychic processes recognizes the dissipation of energy as a fact of life. The increase in entropy for isolated systems expresses the aging of the system. (OC 258). The so called *arrow of time* is associated with the evolution of dynamic systems toward states of higher probability, which means entropy increase (OC 253). Ilya Prigogine, who has written extensively about the thermodynamics and physics of irreversible processes, notes that the arrow of time makes its first appearance in the description of thermodynamic processes that are far from equilibrium. This is the domain of organic life and self-organizing systems that do not obey simple laws of Newtonian physics, which are time-reversible. In fact, a certain idea of irreversibility already exists for linguistic systems—it is the idea of the irreversibility of reading. This is a point made already by Paul de Man: once you have read something, your reading cannot be undone. The new meaning that the reading has generated cannot be erased. It has entered the “cosmic” cultural text and will stay there “forever.” But Prigogine's arrow of time is more complex than a simple irreversibility. In far-from-equilibrium systems, entropy is part and parcel of the production of (new) order. He is describing highly unstable states where even tiny fluctuations can be the cause of principally new system behavior and properties on the macroscopic scale, leading to self-organization and the growth of complexity. Prigogine identifies such states with dissipative structures.

An interesting feature of dissipative structures is that they constitute so-called high-affinity systems, that is to say, systems in a coherent state, all parts of which are mutually implicated. The nodes of mutual entanglement occur at moments of crisis, called bifurcation points. These are moments of instability / discontinuity in the evolution of a far-from-equilibrium stable state, at which the system could jump off into another state. They can also be seen as moments of possibility—of choice even—for the system of restructuring itself at a higher functioning, more coherent state. But they can start losing coherence and

descend into a less organized state of dissipated order. Prigogine's theory should be of interest to humanists because it presents a satisfying model of novelty and eventfulness, but also of decline and dissipation. The vitalists' idea of *élan vital* finds its justification in this or similar models of self-organizing dissipation systems. The entropic view complicates the homeostatic model, suggesting that homeostasis is an idealization. In reality, the pseudo-homeostatic system never reaches the point of full restoration, but squanders energy and order at every cycle until there is no more to lose. From this perspective, something akin to a Freudian death drive (a desire to return to an inanimate, inorganic state, which would indeed be an entropic loss of order) does exist and is distinctly different from aggression, which is directed at survival and reproduction, and thus at an increase of complexity. This too comes into play in the description of masochism insofar as it can be recognized as a phenomenon of vitalist rebellion against the "natural" (Newtonian, homeostatic, anti-entropic) attitude of modernity. What the vitalists are rebelling against is the world of excessive distances and in consequence, dramatically diminished possibilities, all created by the natural attitude.

The model of reality that underlies the natural attitude is conducive to the creation of excessive distances, that is to say, distances that exceed the "human scale," as it were, because it is infinite, timeless, and unchecked. The technological world it has helped to create exists in the constant state of acceleration and growing efficiency, giving some justification to Martin Heidegger's charge of *gigantism*. Martin Heidegger (himself, arguably, a vitalist) situates the questions of nearness and de-distancing within the context of phenomenological spatiality. According to him, the subject (Dasein) encounters other beings in their nearness, that is to say, in the same region of space that belongs to the horizon of the immediate and spatially contiguous experience. "What is 'near' lies in that which is in the circle of an average reach, grasp, and look" (BT 99). As for remote objects (that are "useful things"), Dasein is comported vis-à-vis them in a way that is spatially directed and interested, i.e., phenomenologically intentional, by bringing them into nearness. Bringing into nearness means eliminating distance by whatever means necessary—the process Heidegger calls *de-distancing*: "Da-sein is essentially de-distancing" (BT 97). With the development of modern technology, the capacity to de-distance rises dramatically. Increasingly remote, heavy, fast, or elusive objects can be reached and manipulated with the help of prosthetic extenders—mechanical arms, transportation and communication devices. The latter attest that the notion of acceleration need not be understood literally. "With the 'radio,' for example, Dasein is bringing about today de-distancing of the 'world' which is unforeseeable in its meaning for Da-sein, by way of expanding and destroying the everyday surrounding world" (BT 98).

The more remote objects can be manipulated, the greater the manipulator's sense of mastery over his environment. But, at the same time, the more remote (in different senses of the word) the objects become, the weaker the kinesthetic link between the experience of physical manipulation or maneuvering the object and the responsive feel of the object's

yielding, obeying, or giving way. There will certainly come a point at which some “naturally” felt barrier is exceeded, and the distance between the expended effort and the awaited feedback will become too great. The resistance that Dasein will need to overcome to bring a desired object into nearness will no longer be commensurate with the required effort.

In the area of culture, the unchecked growth of physical distances corresponds to the rapid “virtualization” of significance. Individuals with the highest cultural status can lack any and all high status characteristics inherited from animal hierarchies, such as physical size, strength, aggressiveness, physical attractiveness. An almost complete disconnection exists between social status and any instinctual remnant of an emotional response to physical alpha characteristics. It may astonish and humiliate people, like Mellors, that the world of technology is ruled by small, insignificant, debilitated men in nondescript clothes. These men can rule the world by extending their virtual tentacles further than should be humanly possible and wielding hitherto unthinkable symbolic power in more ways than what the vitalist mind can bear.

Clifford, as already mentioned, is a case in point. Physically decrepit, sexually impotent, emotionally disconnected and intellectually insignificant, he is, nonetheless, a figure of power and influence. From the vitalist’s perspective, his success in business and literature is “unearned.” Connie’s father, for example, pronounces his son-in-law’s stories to be shallow—“there’s nothing in it” (669)—and would probably attribute his fame not to any intrinsic qualities but to being able to ride the crest of fashion. His later financial prosperity owes itself to his willingness to exploit his workers and a kind of cunning that is “devilish” in nature, according to the narrative’s perspective. Throughout the story, he is called void or empty, consistent with the view that there is a kind of absence at the heart of modernity that is created by an ever-widening gap between human intention and its realization, whether through an “unnatural” distance between desire and its fulfillment or an unbearable suspension between the signifying gesture and its meaningful deliverance, wrecked by the increasingly remote and non-responsive technological world-by-proxy. Clifford Chatterley is thus an apt symbol of the world of remotely-controlled virtual reality. He has conquered the two worlds of success that count— artistic success, having become a fashionable and highly paid author, and the world of industrial production, having become a prosperous industrialist who has multiplied his fortune. Being a hereditary aristocrat, he already has the badge of distinction in the last remaining realm of success that would complete the sum of most people’s desires.

It is Clifford’s purely symbolic power, measured in that virtual commodity, that medium of universal exchange, that Mellors roundly despises. He sees how money has corrupted the young people who work for wages, turning them into consuming machines. “Their spunk is gone dead. Motor-cars and cinemas and aeroplanes suck that last bit out of them” (802). Marxist criticism of capitalism holds a similar view. According to Herbert Marcuse, the capitalist organization of labor has precluded happiness and simple hedonistic pleasures.

Because of “antagonistic work relations,” Marcuse writes, “labor is performed not in accordance with the capacities and needs of individuals but according to the requirements of the process of profitable production” (172). Therefore “Labor and happiness are essentially separated” (172). Their coming together can only be possible under the conditions of unalienated labor in a non-antagonistic society.

For Marxists, this is the society of the future, but for Mellors, it is the past. In traditional societies, as Mellors envisions, men engage in activities that involve movement, strength, physical skill and prowess, competitiveness, touching—both for the sake of bonding as well as measuring themselves up against other males in ways reminiscent of archaic rituals that have preserved the connection with dominance ranking within animal societies. We can surmise that for Mellors, physical, hands-on competitiveness that is more closely tied to the natural order is also more meritocratic. Regrettably, in the era of modernity, this outlet for creative activity has been abandoned because “Their whole life depends on spending money, and . . . they’ve got none to spend” (857).

Mellors calls for the return of the simplicity and honesty of traditional pursuits (that would presumably reveal the natural hierarchy among men) and for bringing back bright and extravagant clothes instead of insipid and identical business suits, which, because of the disconnection to the real, have lost their markings of prestige. In his letter to Connie he writes: “If the men wore scarlet trousers as I said, they wouldn’t think so much of money: if they could dance and hop and skip, and sing and swagger and be handsome, they could do with very little cash. And amuse the women themselves, and be amused by the women. They ought to learn to be naked and handsome, and to sing in a mass and dance the old group dances, and carve the stools they sit on, and embroider their own emblems. Then they wouldn’t need money” (857). In another place, he says: “An’ I’d get my men to wear different clothes: appen close red trousers, bright red, an’ little short white jackets. Why, if men had red, fine legs, that alone would change them in a month. They’d begin to be men again, to be men! An’ the women could dress as they liked. Because if once the men walked with legs close bright scarlet, and buttocks nice and showing scarlet under a little white jacket: then the women ‘ud begin to be women.” (804).

In an earlier draft, Lawrence has Mellors refer to “a sort of tribe-room” where men “in scarlet breeches” could “meet to dance and sing and play and wrestle.” The reference to a tribe reinforces the idea of an ancient, bonding-forging rite. Lawrence himself published an article called “Red Trousers” around the time of the publication of *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, where he called upon British men to reject the drabness of the Industrial Revolution’s business suit uniform and instead “stroll down the Strand and Piccadilly . . . wearing tight scarlet trousers fitting the leg, . . . then the revolution against dullness . . . would have begun” (352). David Bradshaw suggests that Lawrence might have been influenced, among others, by the Futurist Manifesto, a movement whose philosophy is compatible with vitalism.

The image of red trousers, a white jacket, and the accompanying images of swaggering, hopping, and skipping, bring to mind an picture of a bird—a stork or some red-legged sea fowl, which struts around, asserting its position in the animal hierarchy. A strutting red-legged bird is an image of virility (for example, a rooster’s legs turn red during the period of sexual maturation). Again, this is compatible with the idea of a return to the times when human pecking order had some proximity to the simple logic of animal hierarchies expressed in size and strength. For Mellors and fellow vitalists, there is something obscene in the way an insignificant and emasculated man, like Clifford, has corralled such riches of symbolic significance that are overly removed in scope from any symbolic dividends that a central figure of imitation can earn in a real-sized circle, such as in the context of a song, dance, or a jousting tournament.

The early physical connection between the size of the circle of participants and the distance to the interdicted object of desire has been broken. And here we possibly have another explanation of masochism—a rebellion against gigantism, which places a desired object at too great a distance, too far for it to sustain a dangling illusion that it could possibly be reached, the illusion that is impossible but that might be necessary in order to uphold the pragmatic paradox. Disempowered by distance that exceeds human scale, the masochist wants to be able to feel again in order to recover his mastery over the surrounding world. He can conjure up nearness only by inflicting pain upon himself, even if the price of regressing dangerously close to the moment of human origin is too high. What the masochist’s resistance expresses is a recognition that meaning has an expiration date. When meaning gets stale, it grates. Connie recognizes this when she walks home one day: “‘Home!’ . . . it was a warm word to use for that great, weary warren. But then it was a word that had had its day. It was somehow cancelled. All the great words, it seemed to Connie, were cancelled for her generation: love, joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband, all these great, dynamic words were half dead now, and dying from day to day” (698). In a symptomatically metonymic way, Connie transfers her frustration with contemporary civilization onto men in power: “Even the snaggy craggy oak-trees put out the softest young leaves, spreading thin, brown little wings like young bat-wings in the light. Why had men never any newness in them, any freshness to come forth with! Stale men!” (780).

This encapsulates an admission there is not only growth in the material universe, but also attenuation and senescence. Phenomena can excite our curiosity and strike us with newness, or they could cause our attention to flag when the newness has begun to wear off. Events could come as timely or inopportune, while ideas could feel up-to-date or obsolete. Narrative action could be precipitate or delayed. One important intuition that vitalism has against the natural attitude is that the bracketing of temporality is too reductive and misses something of fundamental importance in human experience. This intuition is encoded in the temporal dimension of the sign, its deferral. Deferral could be understood both structurally, as infinite postponement (as a messianic promise, an asymptotic progress of history, or, for a modernist writer like Clifford, the undecidability of language), and temporally. The latter

means that things are experienced from within our temporal situatedness: they could, for example, come “too early,” or it could be “too late for them.”

The theory of joint attention, a reciprocal ability of language users to understand that they are attending jointly to a common object or person, has been proposed by cognitive scientists as a necessary evolutionary milestone for the origin of language. In attention, we have another temporal phenomenon. It has a natural span, as well as a dynamic profile: from being intense, in the beginning, it scatters and is used up towards the end. But even more fundamentally, joint attention is evolutionarily linked to the converging appetitive gesture of prelinguistic protohumans. Appetite, which subtends the origin of language, is a temporal experience that has duration and cannot be deferred forever. All this underscores the dual nature of discourse—along the old Saussurean synchronic and diachronic poles, to be sure, but in the new light of Generative Anthropology. On the one hand, language is structural and atemporal. A linguistic sign is permanent and eternal, in some sense. Once it is formed, it can be said to continue to exist (somewhere in the world of Platonic forms) and to signify even after the language itself is forgotten. On the other hand, it can also be said to have a living history, a “built-in obsolescence,” to have run its course, after which it loses its freshness and excitement and becomes “stale.” This is familiar to us from the linguistic phenomenon of dead metaphors and clichés. The ossified language of political ideologies with their ready, hackneyed phrases serves as another reminder of the living and evolving nature of language, which stays always ahead of our attempts to harness it.

The sign is temporal because mimetic desire which gave rise to it is temporal. And desire is temporal because it retains the memory of appetite. Without the temporal dimension of desire, without appetite and attenuating memory, we would not have ritual. Gans writes that “Ritual was born when the memory of the communal peace brought about by the presence of the sacred object in the originary scene led the community to seek an occasion for the reproduction of the center-periphery structure of that scene” (OT 91-92). And elsewhere he explains that “significant memory retains not merely the deferring function of the sign but also its referent,” (EC 43) the desire for which will come back because “The appetite satiated in that context will recur as desire that cannot be satisfied by the object itself but only by its renewed presence on the public scene of representation” (43). Thus, ritual, the reproduction of the originary event, will be recurrent because the effectiveness of the deferral weakens with time, while desire is constantly reawakened. Put another way, there is a tension between the theoretical and pragmatic dimensions of language. From a theoretical perspective, the separation between the periphery and center is the absolute one of “vertical transcendence,” and the desire for the sacred object in the center is therefore structurally unfulfillable. But in practical terms, the sacred must be periodically reaffirmed or renewed through ritual due to our flagging attention and the unsustainable tension of permanent deferral. The originary event needs to be reinforced from time to time because of the entropic character of language.

From the thermodynamic point of view, it is interesting that the vitalist love affair is described in the language of heat and energy. Sexual desire is compared to a flame or a candle, and the most desirable aspect of the relationship between the sexes, according to Mellors, is warm-heartedness: "I believe if men could fuck with warm hearts, and if women could take it warm-heartedly, everything would come out all right" (795). Connie and Mellors exchange kisses of warmth (736), and an image that is frequently evoked is that of melting (as in forging or foundry-work—it is fitting that Mellors used to be a blacksmith in his earlier life). These references describe Connie's sexual experience as "exquisite and melting her all molten inside" (746) or like "curious molten thrilling that spread and spread" (798). Mellors reduces her to "the molten center of womanhood" (746).

New life is also associated with warmth. Thus, pheasant hens are "proud . . . in all the heat of the pondering female blood" and "are warm with their hot, brooding female bodies" (732) (the etymology of brooding is connected with heat). Connie thinks it is "warm and lovely to hold a child" (744). Sexuality is pure creativity. "As Mellors' seed sprang in her, his soul sprang towards her too, in the creative act that is far more than procreative." His orgasm is described as if "the bowels of compassion kindled between them" (843), and when he justifies to Hilda, Connie's sister, Connie's unplanned pregnancy, he says: "The Lord blew a bit too soon on the spark" (847)—the allusion to the spark of creation is unmistakable here.

The vitalist's response to excessive distance is to remove distance entirely. The initial title of *Tenderness* evokes, as mentioned, the feeling of complete yielding and sensitivity to each other, especially on the woman's part. The description of Connie's vaginal orgasm, her coming to experience "primordial tenderness" where she is "deeper and deeper and deeper disclosed" and "closer and closer plunged the palpable unknown" while "further and further rolled the waves of herself away from herself" until "the quick of all her plasm was touched" (773), paints such an ideal of absolute responsiveness with zero distance. Thus, Connie "knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman" (773).

By becoming converted to a vitalist worldview, the two protagonists are redeemed, insofar as they transcend the problem of improper masochism. Mellors realizes that he need not be ashamed about his lack of means and lower status. "He realized as he went into her that this was the thing to do, to come into tender touch, without losing his pride or his dignity or his integrity as a man. After all, if she had money and means, and he had none, he should be too proud and honourable to hold back his tenderness from her on that account" (843). On the receiving end, the feminine passivity that is celebrated here brings to the fore the dual meaning of the word "suffer" as something one experiences or undergoes but also as the feeling of pain or distress. Being the sufferer, Connie, at the end of the novel, can embrace feminine masochism proper.

The zero-distance model of love that the novel promotes, that of a tender touch that reaches

the core of the other, overcomes the problem of separateness, alienation, mutual misunderstandings, and competing interests. It transcends the paradigm of Newtonian physics (and the natural attitude), subject to the reductionist, the-whole-is-the-sum-of-its-parts logic, and is instead more in line with the “new physics” of today, such as quantum mechanics and far-from-equilibrium thermodynamics, that theorizes *non-local* effects (such as constitutive parts of the system acting in concert with each other as if they can “read each other’s minds”-instantly). In thermodynamics, as Prigogine explains, collisions between particles create correlations that lead to the emergence of new orders of complexity. The irreversible arrow of time can be understood “as a flow of correlations” (FG 48). But correlations also create ensembles of particles that act coherently, as one whole. In Prigogine’s formulation, “the second law of thermodynamics . . . implies a departure from locality” (421).

In other words, the physics of far-from-equilibrium thermodynamics brings together as inseparable and interconnected several strands of thought that do not fit in Newtonian physics (and the natural attitude): the arrow of time, emergence, creativity, mortality, pregnant moments of possibility (points of bifurcation), and non-locality (entanglement or coherent behavior). Perhaps the necessary link between the phenomena above can appear not immediately intuitive, but it is nonetheless the core of vitalists’ intuition about the structure of reality. One could cite Heidegger, as an example of a vitalist thinker, in whose philosophy the questions of temporality, possibility, and belonging are inextricable from each other. It may be justified to say that vitalists were ahead of their time if, by “within-timeness,” we imply a conformity with accepted scientific theories. Socialist theories that postulate the desirability of non-antagonistic societies with non-alienated labor are another domain where vitalist ideas have taken root.

The vitalist worldview is one of sadness and elation. Elation—because it knows itself as capable of creativity. Only a vital, bodily relationship of touch between a male and female can attain to the ultimate act of creation, that of bringing about a new life, of which the Newtonian model of exchange and interplay is not capable: neither via a scintillating conversation in a fashionable salon, nor an intellectual exchange of ideas or economic commodities, nor trendy, avant-garde art that is all the rage. Modernist art, in its turn, is presented as barren and out of touch with what is essentially human, and, therefore, Clifford’s writings are “meaningless,” there being “no touch, no actual contact” (668).

The plastic arts side of the modernist movement is represented in the book by Duncan Forbes, who is Clifford’s counterpart in the field of avant-garde painting. “His art was all tubes and valves and spirals and strange colours, ultra-modern” (848). But to Mellors, despite the paintings’ “purity of form and tone,” their overall effect is eviscerating: “It murders all the bowels of compassion in a man” (848). And Connie concurs with him that Duncan’s art is just so many “empty tubes and corrugations” (849). Symbolically, Clifford, who epitomizes “a negation of human contact” (668) and for whom “sex . . . [is] just another

form of talk, where you act the words instead of saying them" (680), is himself sterile and therefore needs for his wife to bed another man in order to produce an heir and save the baronetcy.

The life-affirming message of vitalism, however, is also tinged with sadness because of its facing bravely the entropic question of mortality and obliteration. Here one can bring up Heidegger again with his unflinchingly stoic "being-toward-death." One could perhaps say that because it is mindful of death, as a phenomenon central to life, the vitalist worldview can be seen as fundamentally tragic. And this is why masochism as self-aggression will always hover somewhere on the periphery of the organistic, energist, celebratory philosophy of life.

As a movement, vitalism was a response to the cultural forgetting of the temporal dimension of the originary sign and the withering of language. An interesting linguistic feature of the novel is that everything is repeated twice (or even more times). Phrases and memorable descriptor words are repeated either right next to each other or within the span of a paragraph, so that the first mention is still retained in the short-term memory, making the two words of phrases chime with each other. The effect of this literary device is similar to but also different from the stream-of-consciousness narration in a modernist novel. Instead of concatenating ideas impressionistically or creating a chain of allusions, this technique creates an illusion of placing the narrative within real time. It is as if the narrator had said something, then heard himself saying this and had a compulsion to repeat it as if to convince himself of the truth of the statement. It perfectly captures the real-time, "interactive" nature of discourse that unfolds on the scene of representation (even if it is taking place in one's head) and therefore carries within itself a dramatic, extemporaneous, performative dimension with an imaginary interlocutor who is always present on the scene. Stylistically, the novel with its short sentences, exclamations, and repetitions has the quality of unstudied carelessness or improvisation, as if the narration is unfolding in the "now." This gives the language of the novel the sense of robustness, rhetorical power, and strong presence.

Certainly, the attunement to temporality that gives the story its resonance and momentum does suggest that there is some truth in the belief in language's tendency towards obsolescence (as per Connie's observation that "All the great words . . . love, joy, happiness, home, mother, father, husband, all these great, dynamic words were half dead now, and dying from day to day" (698)). But vitalist philosophy, according to Eugene Rose, who describes successive stages of nihilism in recent Western history, is an even further descent into the denial of truth than the "realist stage," which roughly corresponds to the scientific and materialist worldview of late-capitalist society. While the previous stages still speak of "eternal truths," even though these no longer mean what they used to mean, the vitalist wants to dispense with truth altogether. Rose quotes Nietzsche's quip from *Beyond Good and Evil*: "The falseness of an opinion is not for us any objection to it. . . . The question is,

how far an opinion is life-furthering, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps species-creating." What this denial of truth indicates is that while the vitalists are astute in diagnosing the problems of modernity, they themselves are blind to the structural, atemporal, and transcendent dimension of language and skeptical of the sign's ability to signify so as to create eternal meaning. In the terminology of Generative Anthropology, they are dismissive of the absolute distance that must be maintained vis-à-vis the sacred center. Or to put it another way, they misunderstand the sacrificial nature of language, and, according to Eric Voegelin's GA-compatible view of history, engage in a gnostic rebellion against transcendence.

In the end, what vitalists want is to regress beyond language. It is not just the past they long to recover, it is a mythical past that never was. It might initially seem, as we observe Connie and Mellors running naked in the woods and braiding flowers into each other's pubic hair, that they style themselves after neo-pagans in an ambition to retrieve a long-forgotten tradition that predates corrupt and irredeemable civilization. This would appear to be supported by the symbolism of exchanging one sacred for another. While "there's nothing sacrosanct about a silver tea-pot" (717), according to Connie's response to Clifford's complaint that she was not home on time to serve tea, the site of Connie and Mellor's love-making, the little shed in the pastoral surroundings of the woods, serves as "a sort of little sanctuary" (715). Pseudo-religious characterizations, such as references to Connie "playing Bacchante" (815) and Mellors as "the great god Pan" (857), as well as the description of both of them as "the sons of god with the daughters of man" (774), also point us in this direction. However, theirs is a religion without a sacred-or with a very limited, metaphoric sacred, in the same sense in which the ideas of "the Body" or "Love" are sacralized. In reality, their ideal communion is not mediated by the sacred center, it is purely dyadic. There is no divine presence in their shed that will witness and authenticate their union. They are gods unto themselves.

But can someone who denies language leave a written history? Those who embrace life, death, change, vigor can certainly create a new life. But would it be akin to a life of a tree or animal in the forest, given that they cannot preserve the record of it for posterity? Ironically, it is Clifford who is originally expected to give his wife's child his name and inscribe him into the Chatterleys line of succession. If the occurrences within life that vitalists so ardently celebrate cannot be written down and transmitted then can they legitimately be referred to as events of human history? In Mellors' last letter, he writes that he believes in their private Pentecost, "the little forked flame between me and you" (857). "The Old Pentecost," he writes, isn't quite right. Me and God is a bit uppish, somehow" (857). He is rewriting the original Pentecost, which celebrates the event of the appearance of the Holy Spirit that descends in the form of the tongues of fire. It does so in the presence of the disciples, who themselves start speaking in tongues and are thus enabled to preach to and convert the unbelievers. Its structure reproduces the originary event, a kind of initiation, extrapolating it to the global linguistic community, wherein everyone is united in

the presence of the sacred. In our case, however, the Pentecost is private, it does not engage any central presence, uniting Connie and Mellors through the tines of the flame's fork. This a religious ritual involving only two people.

The urge to escape the scenicness of language is also reflected in the gamekeeper's "private" language. Mellors is an educated man, an autodidact and a reader; yet he purposefully chooses to slide back from educated English into a countrified dialect, marked as illiterate. Partly, as has already been discussed, he does it in order to humiliate and mock Connie (and her sister Hilda). But it can also be partly attributed to a desire to leave civilization and written language behind and go back to a mythical oral past. He refuses to be categorized as someone who is going to leave a mark behind him. To a "what are you?" question, he replies: "You may well ask. It no doubt is invisible. Yet, I'm something to myself at least. I can see the point of my own existence, though I can quite understand nobody else's seeing it" (841). He is an artist without a work of art, a silent genius, with his only creation (symptomatically, not to his name) being his and Connie's baby. And even this conceit is difficult to sustain because the story is, after all, written down as a book, and the author, who speaks through the character, does very likely care about the fate of his literary output.

Writing a manifesto about the abandonment of language presents a true conundrum, and one could ask whether it is not resolved here by a convoluted act of narrative masochism. That this is so can be ascertained by interrogating the choice of authorial perspective. Even though the author's social, political, and aesthetic views are ventriloquized by Mellors, it would be a mistake to conclude that he is the author's alter ego. First, there is the fact that there are only one or two moments when we are given access to his consciousness. Against this hypothesis also speaks the aesthetization and sexualization of the gamekeeper's image. The descriptions we read of him do not portray him in stereotypically masculine terms. He is depicted as someone fine and delicate, of "exquisite, delicate manliness" (797), compared to a pistil of a flower or associated numerous times with whiteness and slenderness. In these passages, he is seen through Connie's eyes, both as a refined thing of beauty and a sexual object: he has "slender white arms" and a "lambency [of] the warm, white flame of a single life," "his velveteen breeches slipping down over his slender loins," "his white slim back . . . curved"; he is "slender, quiet and quick" or "white as milk, with fine slender muscular flesh" and "slender sensitive loins" (701, 716, 797). There is also a mood of seductiveness attendant to his early appearances in the novel. Again, we are seduced through Connie's eyes, as he seems to be dismissive of her in such a way, as per Girard, so as to incite her attraction. Thus, he gives her an "impersonal look," or even a "cold, ugly look of dislike and contempt," or "his eyes narrowed . . . with impudence," and the smile on his lips is "mocking or teasing her" (688, 717).

The descriptions of Connie as a sexual object, on the other hand, are not equally convincing. Her attributes are referred to appreciatively by Mellors himself, such as, for example, when he says that she "got the nicest arse of anybody" (806). Yet his sexual attraction is not

transmitted to the reader through the text itself. Connie is described in almost masculine, or, at least, not sexualized terms, as “a ruddy, country-looking girl with . . . [a] sturdy body, and slow movements” (661). She is said to be attractive but never shown in a seductive light from the narrative or some other character’s points of view. Instead she remains throughout the narrative a neutral locus of the authorial perspective and a receptacle of pure experience. Insofar as the dominant narrative frame of reference is that of Connie’s consciousness, it can be said that it is the consciousness in the authorial position that is seduced and sexually dominated by Mellors. This is not to make inferences about the novel’s possibly homoerotic undercurrents. Although the vivid description of anal sex from the perspective of the passive partner lends support to such a reading, this is beside the point. The idea here is rather that a masochistic perception is not only thematically but also structurally embedded in the point of view from which the narrative is told.

But there is another perspectival layer I would like to address. An interesting thing about this novel is that it makes no pretense of telling the story from the viewpoint of an impartial omniscient narrator. The authorial consciousness is unabashedly prejudiced, opinionated, sweeping us forcefully along the emotional landscape of the unfolding act of narration. However, if we step out, for a moment, from the partiality of the account and treat it as an independent collection of facts, we may be struck by how “unfair” the author is to one of the characters, namely, Clifford. We are talking about a man who became paraplegic fighting a war and who, instead of sinking into despair, reinvented himself not once, but twice, becoming successful both times, a man, finally, who is willing to raise another man’s child as his own. To any impartial observer, he would seem to have some admirable qualities. And yet he is portrayed in the novel with unrelenting antipathy, almost revulsion. If it were accepted that an author had ethical obligations towards his characters in owing them a modicum of objectivity, then a strong case could be made that D. H. Lawrence has violated the writer’s code of honor in the case of Clifford Chatterley.

His distaste for Clifford knows no bounds, and it grows worse as the story progresses. He is introduced as a pretentious, intellectually shallow, emotionally absent, supercilious, turgid bore, who lacks literary talent yet is lucky to become a celebrated writer because his brand of “Clever, rather spiteful, and yet, in some mysterious way, meaningless” (668) writing happens to fall in with the reigning style. At next glance, there appears something more seriously, organically and spiritually, wrong with him. On the one hand, he is presented as robust, with a “healthy-looking face, . . . broad and strong,” (661), even growing portly. But, at the same time, something that is wrong inside of him begins to show through the exterior. We are told that he is “the slight vacancy of a cripple,” that “something inside him has perished” with his injury, that “there was a blank of insentience” (662). It is as if some inner rot is invading him, which is consistent with the yellow tint with which he becomes afflicted and which is medically connected to his liver, but metaphorically to his recurrent fits of rage. With the hiring of Mrs Bolton and Connie’s losing interest in him, his condition degenerates. By the time he abandons his writing career and throws himself into the study

of mining, he is almost completely changed. Outwardly, he appears to be a ruthless capitalist, "an amazingly astute and powerful [man], a master" (730). But "Inwardly, he began to go soft as pulp," like other self-made industrialists, who are "of a mental age of about thirteen, feeble boys" (728). He is "becoming almost a *creature*, with a hard, efficient shell of an exterior and a pulpy interior" (730).

And finally, when he finds out that Connie is leaving him, he regresses to the weird state of an adult infant, playing perverse sexual games with Mrs Bolton. On receiving his wife's letter, he dissolves into hysteria. "Any attempt to rouse his manhood and his pride would only make him worse: for his manhood was dead, temporarily if not finally. He would only squirm softer and softer, like a worm, and become more dislocated" (851). What can be a more decisive, merciless, and brutal blow to a hated character than depriving him of manhood and turning him into a worm that is growing progressively softer and pulpier until it is certain to be squashed under somebody's foot? With such an eruption of animosity toward a character, a question that suggests itself is whether this is not an act of disavowal we are witnessing—"no, I am not Clifford Chatterley!"—which in turn suggests that the narrative is covering up an authorial projection onto a figure of absolute abjection. While the author wants to be Mellors, in whose mouth he puts his vitalist credo, he suspects that in reality he is Clifford. Who would be a more fitting figure of identification for the author than another highly literate character and writer? Lady Chatterley's is a less literate consciousness than Lord Chatterley's, and the gamekeeper's than Lady Chatterley's, disclosing a reverse correspondence between the ladder of affection—from despised Clifford, to neutral Connie, to idealized Mellors—and the distance of identification.

In the revealed mimetic configuration, Connie is the object of a triangular desire, the apex of the triangular configuration between the three protagonists, Clifford as the imitator, Mellors as the impossible mediator, and Lady Chatterley as the prize. But the choice to align the dominant narrative point of view with Connie's consciousness obscures and disavows the authorial position of an identification with Clifford and idealization of Mellors. The former's position of the abject in the novel is an inversion of the sacred position that his own wife holds in his eyes. We are told that Clifford both "worship[s] Connie" and succumbs to "a secret dread of her" (729, 730). He falls into the state of "a queer, craven idolatry, like a savage, a worship based on an enormous fear, and even hate of the power of the idol," and is living in a "half-subservient dread of her" (729, 730). Although with the opposite sign, this idol worship is structurally analogous to the abasement of Clifford Chatterley in that they both capture an aversion to touch in the fear of being contaminated that is attendant to the position of the sacred.

Jacques Derrida traces both polarities of the sacred to the idea of the *unscathed*, which, in English, is etymologically related to Old Norse *skaða*—to hurt or injure. For Girard, abhorrence and worship would be the two successive stages of mimetic contagion, when the act of the extirpation of the scapegoat from the community's midst flips into its opposite, a

related recognition of its divine nature. But more fundamentally, this ambivalence towards the sacred captures the underlying ambivalence towards the moment of the origin of language, which establishes peace by instituting the ethics of reciprocity while at the same time giving rise to the existential human condition of an unsatisfiable desire. This underlying ambivalence prompts us to return to the question of whether it would have been better to not have invented language at all. Would we have been better off? While many critics of civilization differ in their diagnosis of when things went wrong—with the onset of Secular Humanism, Enlightenment, or Marxism—radical primitivist philosophers of the John Zerzan type (which could be seen as modern heirs to vitalism) point their finger to the very moment of the origin of language. The originary interdiction of the sign is the source of the masochist's self-recognition and self-disavowal. The author's investing Clifford with abject qualities and placing him in subjection to Connie (and, by extension, to Mellors) aims at the symbolic destruction of a literary Clifford within himself as a way of resolving the dilemma of writing a book about non-writing. Perhaps the act of writing a novel about a character who chooses to efface himself into oblivion is itself a circuitous act of masochistic victory through defeat?

Abbreviations

BT-*Being and Time*

EC-*End of Culture*

FG-*Is Future Given?*

OC-*Order out of Chaos*

OT-*Originary Thinking*

SI-*The Scenic Imagination*

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