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'Use me as your slave!': Masochean masochism in Richard Marsh's *The Beetle,* Bram Stoker's *Dracula,* and the Mordern Gothic

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters by Research

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Content

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Notes on primary texts

Title	Author	Abbreviation	Full reference
Dracula	Bram Stoker	-	Stoker, Bram. *Dracula.* (1897). (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 1993)
The Beetle	Richard Marsh	-	Marsh, Richard. *The Beetle. (*1897) (United Kingdom: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1994)
Venus in Furs	Leopold von Sacher-Masoch	*Venus*	Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von. *Venus in Furs.* (1870). In *Masochism.* (USA: Zone Books 1989).

Introduction

The modern Gothic has been subject to the scrutiny of many critics. It is a genre that offers a range of elements such as horror, romance, and often humour, all serving as means of taking the reader on a journey to a parallel reality where dangerous creatures and forces of the fantastic can be encountered in broad daylight. One of the most popular topics of discussion when it comes to the modern Gothic, is the sexual subtext that seems to permeate the texts written during the fin de siècle; the era at the turn of the 20th century in which British society was going through major changes affecting gender roles, sexuality, social status, and identity, and the Modern Gothic was an incredibly popular genre.

In September 1897 *The Beetle* by Richard Marsh was published and immediately gained great success, far more, in fact, than the curiously similar Modern Gothic novel *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, which had been published four months earlier. That Marsh's *The Beetle* at the time completely outshone *Dracula* is paradoxical considering that *Dracula* turned out to be, perhaps, the most analysed and scrutinised Modern Gothic novel of modern literary criticism, while Marsh and *The Beetle* only just in recent years have resurfaced. The novels are strikingly similar; both feature monstrous villains who embody foreignness, occult mesmerism, hypersexual deviancy, and who are on quests of destruction. Both novels were sensational and would have shocked and entertained the 'newly literate middle-classes' (Vuohelainen 2006, p91) with their dealing with contemporary issues of degeneration, The New Woman, foreignness, sexuality, and class disparity (Vuohelainen 2006).

The Beetle outsold *Dracula*; in 1913 Marsh's novel was on its fifteenth edition,

Stoker's was only on its tenth. One can speculate as to why *The Beetle*, in spite of its success at the time, was for many years neglected by literary critics who started favouring *Dracula* as subject for analyses. Minna Vuohelainen suggests that the villain of the novel, the Beetle-woman, was just not 'sexy or sympathetic in the same way as the vampire' (Vuohelainen 2006, p98) and thus would not have attracted the attention of literary scholars in the same way as *Dracula* did when it had its revival on film in the 1960s (Vuohelainen 2006). None the less, critics such as Vuohelainen herself, Victoria Margree, Julian Wolfreys, and Kelly Hurley have, in more recent years, brought attention to Marsh's much deserving body of work, although with a primary focus on *The Beetle.*

The Beetle was, as aforementioned, incredibly popular in its time and received many positive reviews praising it for its suspense and tantalising horror. The novel touches upon highly relevant late-Victorian topics, and according to Vuohelainen, what seems to have been particularly enthralling to the Victorian audience is the covert sexual brutality that the narrative presents. The 'pleasurable horror', Vuohelainen states, allowed readers to 'fantasise about the sadistic sexuality' (Vuohelainen 2006, p98) that was incorporated in the Beetle's assault on both the male and female characters of the novel, and which offered a liberating indulgence in taboo fantasy.

This sexuality that the narrative depicts is what fuels the argument of this thesis. The issue of sexuality and its depiction in the modern Gothic has undergone countless analyses by literary critics, possibly because it was contemporary to the birth of psychonanalysis which inherently linked sexuality to trauma, repression, and perversion. Furthermore, the fin de siècle was a time of change with the emergence of the New Woman – a 20th century feminist – as a well as homosexuality which, in relation to the the public trial of Oscar Wilde, had become an issue of public discussion. *Dracula* once more reigns supreme when it comes to analyses of sexual subtext, so much so that Kathleen L.

Spencer states that 'one more reading of the text's unconscious may seem a bit pointless' (Spencer 1992, p197). The novel has been read as homoerotic by critics such as Christopher Craft and Talia Schaffer due to the submissive nature of Jonathan Harker and his borderline intimate relationship with the Count, while others, such as Maurice Hindle and Kathleen L. Spencer, focus on the broader sexuality of the text, acknowledging that the issue of sexuality in the late-Victorian era was complex and the sheer taboo of sex and pleasure of any nature is what is encountered in the Modern Gothic.

The few scholars who have conducted similar analyses of the sexual subtext of *The Beetle* have reached the same conclusions; the gender-ambiguous villain who assaults by penetrating her victims with a mesmeric gaze can be read as a homoerotic fantasy, while the general otherness of the Beetle as well as as the issues that arise within the circle of protagonists depict an exploration of general sexuality and gender roles. This thesis considers these claims, but aims to add another perspective to the analyses of both *Dracula* and *The Beetle,* as well as the Modern Gothic in general, a perspective that is fuelled by a specific type of sexuality present in the fiction of the late-Victorian era, namely that of submission, reversal of gender roles, and, in essence, masochism.

In 1870, 27 years before the publication of *The Beetle* and *Dracula,* Leopold von Sacher-Masoch published *Venus in Furs*, the novel that was to become his most famous and discussed work. In late 20th century Europe something was happening to literary fiction; according to Rita Felski and Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, European authors, especially of the avant-garde, underwent an 'imaginary identification with the feminine' which caused their texts to take on 'stylistic and thematic motifs codified as feminine'. This challenged the traditional style of fiction which was inherently masculine and bourgeois, creating contradictory depictions of status, gender and sexuality (Felski 1991).

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch can be viewed as an author who was an early

representative of this Western European era which ran simultaneously with the latter part of the Victorian Era, and was to be called the Belle Epoque, a time of positivity, feminine advancement, and flourishing artistic experimentation. The tendencies that led up to and dominated this era allowed for experimentation with gender roles and sexuality, and Masoch's works are permeated by male submission and the pleasure connected to the disavowal of masculine sexuality and submission to a cruel female torturer. Submissiveness was traditionally a trait connected to the feminine, and Masoch's novels, as well as the work of his avant-garde colleagues, were both artistically and sexually liberated, as well as controversial in their reversal of sexual dominance.

This concept of desired sexual submission was later coined as 'masochism' by the German neurologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing who, in his clinical studies of sexuality, had found a 'perversion' entailing an individual's desire to be 'completely and unconditionally subject to the will of a person of the opposite sex; of being treated by the person as by a master, humiliated and abused' (Krafft-Ebing 1894, p115). In a footnote in his work *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1894) Krafft-Ebing gives credit to Masoch by stating that Masoch's 'romances and novels have as their particular subject the description of this perversion' (Krafft-Ebing 1894, p115), and subsequently he chose to create the eponym 'masochism'.

Masochism has since been a concept of much debate as I will move on to discuss in the following chapter, but while, according to Felski and Stewart-Steinberg, a part of Europe was embracing a literary tendency promoting the experimentation with reversal of sexual dominance and gender roles, Britain was still more or less held in chastity by the Victorian codex of primness. That this repression of any kind of sexuality and desire that was not considered reproductive was causing 'slips' - to use a Freudian term – in the literature and art of the Victorian fin de siècle is well known; I have already mentioned how critics have made many readings and interpretations of the sexual subtext of literature

produced at the time, which brings us back to the genre of the Modern Gothic.

According to Hurley, the Modern Gothic can be considered an 'instrumental genre, re-emerging cyclically, at periods of cultural stress, to negotiate the anxieties that accompany social and epistemological transformations and crises' (Hurley1996, p5). In other words the Modern Gothic, as well as the element of the 'fantastic' as presented by Kathleen L. Spencer, worked as literary tools for the Victorians to deal with the changes that the Fin de siecle brought with it. The tendencies that were sweeping through Europe at the time likely influenced Britain, however, because Britain was affected by different circumstances; the Empire was unstable, the Industrial Revolution had upset the class system, and Victorian society was generally permeated by anxiety and paranoia, the masochism that was allowed to flow freely in texts such as Masoch's *Venus in Furs,* had to be expressed through distorting mediums such as the Modern Gothic and the fantastic.

This thesis aims to show how masochism ought to be considered a part of what one can call the 'canonised' readings of the sexual and exploratory subtext of the Modern Gothic genre. However, the masochistic tendency I aim to unravel is one that is directly derived, not from Krafft-Ebing's case studies, but from Masoch's original works, with a focus on *Venus in Furs.* To aid this analysis I will make use of the excellent and thorough analysis conducted on Masoch's authorship by Gilles Deleuze, presented in his essay 'Coldness and Cruelty' from 1967. Deleuze gives an in-depth reading of what he describes as the 'Masochean' style, language, and motifs, creating a concept that is completely independent from sadism, or Sadean sadism, which is an important differentiation in Deleuze's analysis.

What Deleuze shows is that Masochean masochism should not be viewed as a clinical concept, but as a literary tendency – a fantasy structure that permeates Masoch's novels. As will be further discussed in chapter 1, Deleuze emphasises that the

characteristics of Masochean masochism revolve around the contract created by the male masochist that allows for him to disavow his sexual dominance and submit to his cruel female torturer. This thesis subsequently claims that the Masochean masochistic fantasy can be considered a literary concept embodying an exploration of sexuality and gender roles, and that it is present in British novels of the Modern Gothic genre.

Venus in Furs had not yet been translated into English when *The Beetle* and *Dracula* were published. What I aim to show is not that Marsh, Stoker, and their contemporaries were influenced specifically by Masoch, but rather that the masochism found in Masoch is also present in the late-Victorian Gothic, although in these texts it takes a different, much more covert shape. While critics have not neglected masochism as a theme present in the sexual subtext of Modern Gothic novels, the masochistic readings tend to be classed as part of the homoerotic fantasy that many scholars, including those mentioned in this thesis, have traced in the texts. Another perspective is offered by John Kucich in his *Imperial Masochism: British Fiction, Fantasy, and Social Class* from 2007 in which he addresses the romantic masochism connected to patriotism and martyrdom that surfaced during the latter part of the 20th century. Imperial masochism functioned as a hegemonic tool to promote a kind of masculinity that took pleasure in suffering for the greater good, the Empire, and the country, creating an ego that was empowered by the ability to handle pain (Kucich 2007). This thesis aims to add to these readings an interpretation of the masochistic tendency, not as a covered up same-sex fantasy, but as an exploration of a new type of masculinity, one that allows for submission and indulgence in servitude towards a strong female figure.

That masculinity was subjected to scrutiny and reformation during the fin de siècle has already been established, but while this experimentation was welcomed by the European avant-garde, British masculinity appears to have found this destabilisation fear-

inducing and yet fascinating. Hurley makes an in-depth analysis of this sexual identity crisis, and I will make use of her comments on the Victorian problematics regarding both male and female gender norms in chapter 1. Her work depicts the male at the centre of the stage, defining all other forces in relation to himself, creating a notion of otherness. While this leaves the male in control, this at the same time causes anxiety and impotence as all external 'othered' forces are antagonised, and their influence on the male subject is considered threatening and destabilising. Maurice Hindle comments on this insecure masculinity as well, stating that writers of the late-Victorian era dealt with a problem that has 'less to do with the embarrassment of an unwanted erection than with the difficulty of retaining one at all' (Hindle in Stoker 1993, pix).

By this I do not intend to argue that the Masochean masochistic fantasy I claim is present in the Modern Gothic was not inspired by sexual desire. What I aim to show is that the desire and pleasure connected to it was derived from the issues that the Victorian male was having at the time; masculinity was undergoing changes that caused it to desire this justified impotence and disavowal of sexual dominance that the Masochean masochistic fantasy allows for, and even romanticises.

The type of masculinity we meet in *The Beetle* and *Dracula* is one that has been split by these issues. Linda Dryden, author of *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells,* argues that due to the fears of degeneration and the notion of an 'otherness' within, a literary tendency took shape, featuring evil doubles like Dr Jekyll's Hyde and Dorian Gray's portrait. According to Dryden the double represented the fear of an inner degenerate, a force of deviant sexuality, criminal potential, and general ungentlemanly behaviour that could lurk inside even the finest gentleman, but it also functioned as a means of exploration – a kind of anti-hero that could explore taboo notions such as homosexuality, crime, and general amorality that the hero was not allowed due to

his obligations to his restrictive traditional masculinity.

With this thesis I aim to extend this notion of double identity and use it as a part of the Masochean reading I will conduct on the novels selected for this thesis. Both in *The Beetle* and *Dracula* traditional gender identities are destabilised; female villains are sexually dominant while male protagonists are forced into feminised positions of submission and victimisation. In *The Beetle* the protagonist Paul Lessingham can be read as inhabiting a double persona; the novel was even titled *The Peril of Paul Lessingham: The Story of a Haunted Man* when it first was serialised in the Victorian magazine *Answers* (Vuohelainen 2006), suggesting that Marsh intended to put focus on the (masculinity) crisis that protagonist Paul Lessingham goes through. In *Dracula* we have a large group of protagonists, but Jonathan Harker, the male protagonist who gets to narrate the first and last part of the novel, experiences a similarly problematic masculinity as he is subjected to the dominance of a strong female force of evil, the vampires, in a way that causes him both pleasure and repulsion.

In chapter 1 I will deal with the concept of Masochean masochism by examining and developing the analysis conducted by Deleuze while referring to Masoch's *Venus in Furs* in order to put the concept into perspective. In this chapter I will moreover elaborate on the Modern Gothic, employ the work of critics such as Dryden and Hurley, and from there show how the Masochean concept can be interpreted to be an element of the Modern Gothic's subtextuality.

In chapter 2 I will conduct an analysis on Marsh's *The Beetle* and unravel how the Masochean masochistic fantasy manifests itself in the narrative. I will especially focus on the characters, in particular Paul Lessingham, and what roles they play in relation to the Masochean contract and fantasy structure. To aid this analysis I will moreover apply theory on the male/fetishised gaze as developed by Kobena Mercer. In the third and final

chapter of this thesis I will conduct the same Masochean analysis on *Dracula* and compare and contrast it with my findings on *The Beetle*.

What I aim to achieve with this thesis is a deeper understanding of the Masochean masochistic fantasy and show how it is relevant for the analyses of *The Beetle* and *Dracula,* as well as the Modern Gothic in general. In addition, by comparing and contrasting *The Beetle* to *Dracula* I wish to draw attention to Richard Marsh and his body of work that deserves a place in the Modern Gothic canon alongside Stoker.

Chapter 1

Masochean masochism and the modern Gothic

What is the essence of masochism and how it is applicable to literature? In 'Coldness and Cruelty' Gilles Deleuze investigates this exact question as he explores the body of work that has made its author the eponym of masochism, namely Leopold von Sacher-Maoch's authorship. Deleuze begins by addressing the issue of defining masochism, the 'perversion' as he refers to it, from Masoch's authorship. He compares the coining of masochism with the naming of diseases; often a disease is named either after the patient who displayed its symptoms, or after the doctor who monitored and mapped its symptoms. When Krafft-Ebing coined masochism in 1894 he chose, not to name it after himself or any of his case studies, but after the man who had made an artistic representation of the 'symptoms'. In the same way, Krafft-Ebing coined the term 'sadism', inspired by the (anti-)heroes of Marquis de Sade's authorship who take pleasure in committing sexual and non-sexual acts of violence on their subjects.

Deleuze, however, takes issue with these eponyms because in *Psychopathia Sexualis* Krafft-Ebing presents masochism and sadism as two connected and counter-opposite 'perversions' – in other words, not only does Krafft-Ebing 'pathologise' Masoch's work, by creating these eponyms and describing them as co-depending opposites, he simultanously binds Masoch's work to that of Sade. This connection was in the years following *Psychopathia Sexualis* taken further by other clinicians, such as Freud, and eventually merged into the term sadomasochism. This, Deleuze states, is a 'crude and ill-differentiated' (Deleuze 1991, p132) way of looking at the two, in their original artistic form,

very different concepts. Deleuze argues that by looking at the language, the literary effects, and themes applied respectively by Sade and Masoch, it is evident that the two authors' works 'present unparalleled configurations of symptoms and signs' (Deluze 1991, p 16), and that they exist independently of each other.

Deleuze's exploration of Sadean sadism and Masochean masochism (I use Deleuze's eponymous classifications in order to distinguish the concepts' artistic derivation from clinical derivations) shows how the two concepts share certain characteristics, yet these characteristics manifest differently and without mirroring each other. For instance, Deleuze emphasises that the Masochean relationship is based on a contract set up by the masochist and enforced by the dominant partner. The Masochean subject is 'educational' and wants to know and understand the relationship or the 'alliance', as Frida Beckman and Charlie Blake describe it, between himself and the dominant female (Beckman & Blake 2009). The Sadean protagonist, on the other hand, is 'instructional'; he wants to dictate the relationship between himself and his subject, uncommitted and unaffected by the subject's needs and feedback. As Deleuze states: 'the masochist draws up contracts while the sadist abominates and destroys them' (Deleuze 1991, p20).

Another major difference between the two concepts, Deleuze points out, is their artistic representation by the respective authors. Masoch's novels are permeated by grand aestheticism, loaded descriptions, and references to decadent myths. There is a lingering 'coldness', made apparent in *Venus* by Wanda, as well as the woman in the narrator's dream, 'the goddess of Love', who both sneeze and shudder. They are both of a 'marble pallor' and wear furs to stay warm, all as an analogy for the cold air with which they treat their submissive partners. The women are, however, also passionate and emotional, and their irrationality, especially their temper (Severin glorifies his cruel aunt whom he describes as an 'angry queen' (Masoch 1991, p175)) is celebrated as something

particularly feminine and devilish. This polarisation is crucial for the understanding of the Masochean masochistic fantasy, and will be discussed further later in this chapter. In Sade's novels, on the other hand, there is a sense of bleak 'apathy', a lack of or even deficit amount of emotion, that manifests in atheism and detachedness between the Sadists and the subjects, as displayed by the Libertines in *120 Days of Sodom* (Deleuze 1991).

The point Deleuze is making is that, in a literary sense, sadism and masochism are not opposites, they are two different notions that exist independently and not as parts of the clinical unity 'sadomasochism'. They do not fulfil each other either. A masochist would not have his need for contractual submission met by being subjugated to the whims of the anarchistic sadist who, in turn, would find no satisfaction in hurting and humiliating a subject who took pleasure in it or tried to bind the Sadean sadist within a contractual relationship (Deleuze 1991).

So in what ways are sadism and masochism related, if they are related at all? Some theorists argue that every masochist has a sadistic streak and vice versa; Freud, for instance, states in his *Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex*[1] that a 'sadist is simultaneously a masochist' although one of the streaks might be more strongly developed in the subject than the other (Freud 2005). René Girard has a similar perspective on sadism and masochism, arguing that when one desire is exhausted it merges into the other (Fleming 2004). But what Deleuze aims to show is that the 'cruelty' as he calls it, that is present in Masoch is artistically different from Sadean sadism, because the two concepts are founded upon two different bodies of work written by two different authors. In *Venus,* Severin eventually ends up disavowing his submissiveness and starts seeing himself 'no longer as the “anvil” but as the “hammer”'(Deleuze 1991, p39), but this does not turn him into a Sadean anti-hero, just a slain or perhaps embittered masochist who has

1 Original title: *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905).

realised his actualised fantasy has come to an end.

This means that when reading a narrative with a Masochean masochistic tendency, the cruelty that is present should not be mistaken for Sadean sadism, but seen as a natural part of the Masochean fantasy; the cruelty that the Masochean masochist desires is of a kind that he himself fuels and shapes to fit a romantic ideal he has in his mind. Where the Sadean sadist stands for apathy and negated feelings, the cruel female torturers found in Masoch display a range of emotions and can best be described with the terms 'cold – maternal – severe, icy – sentimental – cruel' (Deleuze 1991, p51).

This creates a dilemma for it means that a Masochean narrative, while being indulgently masochistic, or feminised as Felski puts it, it has to, at the same time, take on the disposition of the cruel torturer. Deleuze touches upon the issue of narrating from either a masochistic or sadistic point of view by referring to George Bataille, who, in his book *Erotism*[1], argues that Sade paradoxically uses the language of the victim when he describes scenes of torture. Deleuze explains: 'Only the victim can describe torture; the torturer necessarily uses the hypocritical language of established order and power' (Deleuze 1991, p17). This argument is not a straight forward one; what Bataille seems to argue is that Sade, while endeavouring to describe scenes of torture, needs to adopt the victim's voice because the torturer would never be able to describe what it is like to be tortured. At the same time the torturer would naturally justify/rationalise their actions in accordance with the institution they belong to. This is debatable considering that Sade makes a point out of negating any emotions connected to the torture apart from the conceptualised “libertinian” pleasure the Sadean heroes take in it which is, perhaps, exactly a way of institutionalising it. Still, Bataille's argument is an interesting point to consider because it in turn makes Deleuze ask the question if Masoch's language is 'equally paradoxical [….] because the victim speaks the language of the torturer he is to

1 Original title *L'Erotisme* (1957).

himself, with all the hypocrisy of the torturer' (Deleuze 1992, p17). To unpack this question, let us ask another: will a Masochean masochistic narrative not always necessarily be torturous towards itself at the same time?

The answer to this question leads back to the notion of the Masochean subject setting up his own contract of enslavement. The author of a Masochean masochistic narrative will, all the while indulging in the masochistic fantasy, naturally have to produce a literary situation in which this fantasy can be fulfilled – ergo the author needs to assume both the role of the victim as well as the enforcer. This reflects in the Masochean narrator, for, as a part of forming his own contract, he puts into words what kind of torturer he wishes the woman to be. Severin explains to Wanda exactly what he wants from her, as when he states: 'I am only truly able to love a woman who dominates me, who overpowers me with her beauty, her temperament, her intelligence and her will-power, a woman who rules over me' (Masoch 1991, p172). In this way, what Bataille calls 'the language of the torturer' with its propaganda-esque qualities, is already a natural part of the Masochean masochistic narrative. The language of Masoch glorifies, even sublimates, the torturous acts. In *Venus*, the abuse of Severin is represented as a sort of romantic dream; a revival of boyhood feelings and fancies. Wanda's sadistic and hedonistic qualities are romanticised as she is referred to as 'a child' who 'needs playthings' (Masoch 1991, p162) – and in the same way, Wanda dominating Severin is likened to a parental scenario in which Severin describes how, after bringing Wanda her lost slipper, he stands in the corner 'like a child waiting to be punished' (Masoch 1991, p166).

Another way that Masoch romanticises the masochistic fantasy is via his employment of history and myth – in *Venus,* for instance, the narrator's introductory dream features the 'goddess of Love' who considers herself a Greek divinity, and Severin, who is obsessed with mythological deities, initially falls in love with a statue of Venus, the

infatuation with which then merges into that with Wanda. Wanda, too, invokes mythical and historical figures, for example when she justifies her harshness towards men by referring to the cruelty committed by strong females of the past such as 'Helen and Delilah all the way to Catherine the Great and Lola Montez' (Masoch 1991, p146).

In Masoch's novels 'the icy realm of Christianity' (Masoch 1991, p149) is forsworn as an unnaturally stoic religion with a dogma that turn men away from natural love. For as Wanda states: 'It was Christianity [….] that first brought an alien and hostile element into nature and its innocent instincts. The struggle of the spirit against the senses is the gospel of modern man' (Masoch 1991, p159). This disavowal of Christianity and preoccupation with myth and history both play parts in the romanticised nature of the Masochean fantasy and present the act of male submission as an organic and subliminal thing; it is not a perversion – it is a tribute to human nature.

Thus the contractual relationships formed in Masoch's works are all shaped to fit a romanticised fantasy belonging to the masochistic subject himself, about submitting to a cruel female torturer. While in Masoch's novels the contract is often embodied in a real physical contract between man and woman, the contract shall also be understood on a symbolical level; the entering into a relationship dynamic where the woman dominates and the man submits. The aforementioned invocation of mythical and pagan divinities serves as a means to shape the Masochean Ideal – the idealised (and idolised) female torturer – who features in and is essential to all of Masoch's works. This representation of the ideal woman is, as previously mentioned, cruel, cold, maternal and sentimental. She is furthermore inherently connected to nature, and this concoction has been analysed by Deleuze to consist of a metaphorical 'trinity' of mother figures; the 'uterine' mother, the 'Oedipal' mother, and the 'oral' mother. He explains:

> Masoch's three women correspond to three fundamental mother

> images: the first is the primitive, uterine, hetaeric mother, [….] the second is the Oedipal mother, the image of the beloved, who becomes linked with the sadistic father as victim or as accomplice; and in between these two, the oral mother, [….] who nurtures and brings death (Deleuze 1991, p55).

In other words, what Deleuze finds is that there are in Masoch's works three types of female characters present; the 'uterine' who is hedonistic, libertarian and promiscuous, the 'Oedipal' who is sadistic (here used in its clinical form; the pleasure in making others suffer) and has either victimised a father figure and adopted his role as tyrant or simply teamed up with him. Lastly there is the 'oral' who holds characteristics from both of the two extremes on top of the crucial maternal qualities that signify nature, nurture and time.

The 'oral' mother is thus the Masochean Ideal; she is both promiscuous and sadistic, but also inherently maternal. In the 'oral' mother Masoch embeds Nature; the loving creator of life, while at the same time being the cruel bringer of death (Deleuze 1991). The way that Masoch seems to invoke the idea of Mother Nature in the 'oral' mother feeds back into his employment of myth and creates an idea of eternal truth; it has always been like this, and it always will be. Thus the power of the 'oral' mother becomes inherited, unquestionable, and the submission of the male subject is in the same way organic, because it stems directly from her.

Now it is natural to ask: if the Masochean Ideal plays the part of the mother, then who is the father and what is his role in the Masochean masochistic fantasy? Interestingly, in 'Coldness and Cruelty' Deleuze challenges the psychoanalytical idea that the father plays the decisive role in masochism. What Deleuze argues against is the notion that masochism is rooted in the guilt connected to the Oedipal stage in which the child desires to castrate or kill the father in order to have the mother to himself.[1] This Freudian take on

1. The masochistic desire then emerges as the child realises it is not only impossible to kill the father, it is also morally

masochism is, from a Deleuzian point of view, yet another way of connecting sadism and masochism (the sadistic desire is turned upon the self and thus becomes masochism), and does not fit into the Masochean fantasy structure. Instead Deleuze proposes the theory that the female torturer does not represent the father who punishes the son for his Oedipal longings, but indeed represents the mother, and the masochistic subject in turn represents the father, or a lesser version of the father, who is beaten for his inadequacy. Deleuze supports this notion by stating that, even though the patriarch is the dominant figure in Sadean sadism, in Masoch's works it is the mother figure that dominates while the father figure is overruled by her.

From here Deleuze makes an even more interesting point as he invokes the notion of palingenesis. In a metaphor using Cain and Christ, Deleuze paints a picture of the Masochean masochist as the murderer of the father, the favourite of the mother, yet in need of the mother to cleanse him of the likeness of the father by giving birth to him again as the ideal masochistic subject. Deleuze states:

> When the torture is inflicted upon the hero, [….] we should conclude that what is beaten, foresworn and sacrificed, what is ritually expiated, is the father's likeness, the genital sexuality inherited from the father – however miniaturized he may be. This is the real "Apostasy". To become a man is to be reborn from the woman alone, to undergo a second birth (Deleuze 1991, p99-100).

What essentially happens in this metaphor is that the oral mother assumes the role of both the father an the mother, expels the father from the equation, assumes the phallus, performs a parthenogenesis, and gives birth to the Masochean subject again, making him what Deleuze calls 'the new man'. Like Christ on the cross, the Masochean subject is now forsaken by the father and knows 'no sexual love, no property, no fatherland, no cause, no

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wrong to wish him dead, and a desire to be punished by the father arises (Freud

work' (Masoch in Deleuze 1991, p100) – only submission and servitude towards the 'oral' mother.

This 'new man' is characterised by his desexualised disposition; because he has been purged of his 'genital sexuality', his sexual gratification now lies entirely in his devotion and servitude towards the cruel mother. What is interesting, and very relevant for the discussion that will take place in chapters 2 and 3, is that by setting up this metaphor, Deleuze is essentially reversing the gender roles between the female torturer and the male subject. For as Deleuze states: 'the absence of a penis need not indicate lack of the phallus, its presence likewise need not indicate possession of the phallus' (Deleuze 1991, p68). This indicates how Deleuze differentiates between the physical evidence of being male (the penis) and that of being sexually dominant (the phallus). The female can thus easily adopt the phallus, while the male just as easily can disavow it.

In this way, the oral mother embodied in the female torturer creates the 'new man' represented by the submissive male. She adopts the sexually dominant role, assumes the phallus, and creates a version of the male that still has his penis but which has disavowed sexual desire and dominance. This is when the earlier mentioned symbolical contract comes into play as it is as the 'new man' the Masochean masochist steps into the contractual relationship with his cruel mistress.

What has been established so far in this chapter is that the Masochean masochistic fantasy, as developed by Deleuze, is made up of the contract that the masochist himself creates. This contract binds the masochist to his female torturer who represents the Masochean Ideal; she is a maternal figure who is at the same time sexually promiscuous, sadistic, and connected to myth and history. On a symbolic level this contract makes the masochist a 'new man'; this is a submissive masculinity that has disavowed his genital

sexuality, and his 'phallus', and finds itself in blissful servitude to its cruel mistress. In accordance with Deleuze, it has furthermore been concluded that Masochean masochism is seperate from Sadan sadism as they are two independent artistic concepts. Thus the cruelty that is present in Masoch, and in masochistic narratives, should not be considered Sadean, but a part of the Masochean masochistic fantasy as it is the Masochean male subject who forms and shapes his own contractual relationship and thus, in essence, the cruelty of his own female torturer.

Now, while this masochistic fantasy could be explored fully and overtly in the writings of Masoch and his European contemporaries, this tendency manifests very differently in late-Victorian literature, and in particular the Modern Gothic. In her book *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles: Stevenson, Wilde and Wells* (2003) Linda Dryden deals with the genre of the Modern Gothic, how it came about, and what fuelled it. According to Dryden, the nineteenth-century fin de siècle was an era dominated by concerns that had emerged during the nineteenth century, and that these issues had a big impact on in the literary art produced at the time:

> Loss of religious faith, fears about the effects of the expanding metropolis, increasing political unrest in Europe, the emergence of the ‘New Woman’, apocalyptic predictions for the future and anxiety about scientific advances found expression in the late nineteenth-century novel. This was a powerful and influential medium where these issues were laid bare and debated, where the real concerns of the late nineteenth century could be dramatized through the lives of fictional protagonists and scrutinized through the acuity of the creative artist (Dryden 2003, p1).

In this way, the fin-de-siècle novel was a tool for realisation of the issues of the era, and a

way of investigating modern ideas and occurrences. Although exploring the trauma of a society in revolt seems like an unpleasant thing to do, the medium of the novel also posed a form of escapism. It was a space of comfort where the author could explore problematic and/or risky relationships and situations without having to fear the outcome as it could be authored in a way that eventually soothed the fears otherwise indulged in through the body of the narrative (Dryden 2003).

The genre of the Modern Gothic was immensely popular at the time because it was entertaining and easily approached by the working class who had newly become literate. Narratives of this genre were set in the middle of the urban landscape, featuring monsters that could be encountered in broad daylight which starkly contrasted the more classic Gothic tales which often took place in dark and ancient castles, often in desolate parts of Europe that very few common Victorians would ever get to visit. In these stories the Gothic element would be linked to superstition, and presented as a flight of fancy that would solve itself at the break of dawn. In her article 'Purity and Danger: Dracula, the Modern Gothic' (1992), Kathleen L. Spencer argues that the 'reality' of the modern Gothic had a harrowing effect on the Victorians because it presented the readers with a threat, an intruder or a monster, that could be encountered in the streets of their own neighbourhood in the light of day. Spencer calls this element of horror *the fantastic*; a phantasmagorical element that is suddenly encountered in the real world, challenging the protagonists' perception of reality (Spencer 1992).

Like Dryden, Spencer argues that the modern Gothic tales written during the fin de siècle served as more than just entertainment; they were means of dealing with fears and societal threats, and were a 'potent vehicle for social drama' (Spencer 1992, p208). The authors of the Modern Gothic dealt with the new inventions and emergences of the modern age with a sort of fearful fascination, all the while trying to preserve an image of

Britain as a wholesome nation, unfazed by its unstable imperial power and changing social structures. Spencer states that because the fantastic is based on violations of reality it must necessarily be 'fundamentally concerned with *identifying* reality' (Spencer 1992, p208). She further argues that the fantastic allows for the incarnation and personification of oppressing anxieties (such as degenerate like the Beetle and Dracula), and thus makes them tangible and easier to be (manually) dealt with, stating that in the end of a fantastic tale 'the violating element is characteristically expelled and the mimetic world, the status quo, is re-established' (Spencer 1992, p208).

One of the most oppressing fears in Victorian society was the fear of degeneration, the notion that evolution could come to a halt and start reversing itself. Degeneration moreover entailed the fear of Otherness which was essentially anything different from the defining class of society, namely the white, bourgeois, British male. Fuelled by post-Darwinian theorists such as Havelock Ellis and Cesare Lombroso, the idea of the 'degenerate' was depicted as a human being with significantly animalistic characteristics such as a low brow, excessive hairiness, and bad stature, but really the term covered anything that was not white, British and male. Thus the feminine, the foreign, and the criminal were all considered as Other, and as a threat towards bourgeois patriarchy. The theory of degeneration even claimed that the Other could indeed invade this entity of proper male Britishness, or, even worse, be found growing from within (Dryden 2002).

This fear, Dryden argues, was analysed by late Victorian narratives such as Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), both of which explore the idea of the inner degenerate by personifying the degenerate personality as a monstrous double haunting the life of the characters. Dryden states: 'Writers of Gothic horror [....] were to explore such fears through sensationalist narratives' (Dryden 2002, p9), arguing that the genre of the Modern Gothic

used its genre-typical effects, such as supernatural elements and horror, to indulge in the forbidden world of the degenerate. Nonetheless, this fear was ambiguous for there was an element of pleasure in this exploration, the desire to simply give into a degenerate self, and, through it, experiment with sex, gender-roles, crime, and ultimately identity. The medium of the Gothic novel aided by the fantastic opened up for a journey into the realms of this forbidden fantasy.

Kelly Hurley discusses this ambiguity in great detail in *The Gothic Body: Sexuality, Materialism and Degeneration at the Fin de Siècle,* arguing that the Gothic fiction written in the late 20th century was permeated by polarised yet ambiguous (re)constructions of gender, social roles, and, in particular, sexualities. She talks about how 'the ruination of traditional constructs of human identity' (Hurley 1996, p3) was the fin-de-siècle Gothic's main concern, and how the body, the corporeality versus spirituality, became subject for narrative experimentation. Fuelled by post-Darwinian theorists abandoning God for the sake of evolution, the human body suddenly became a far too tangible thing; no longer considered the work of a creator, but a work of nature, the human body now appeared far more as an animalistic creature controlled by instincts than, as previously believed, an image of God. This, according to Hurley, inspired narratives featuring interspecies, monstrous man-beasts like H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr Moreau* (1896) and *The Time Machine* (1895), and indeed Marsh's *The Beetle* and Stoker's *Dracula.*

This experimentation was, according to Hurley, a source of both pleasure and suffering; the human subject was to undergo a deconstruction and although traumatised by this brutal reinvention, it also found itself 'aroused by the prospect of a monstrous becoming' (Hurley 1996, p4). According to Hurley, this ambivalence between pleasure and suffering manifests itself in texts of the modern Gothic as *hysteria*; Hurley explains how characters when encountering the fantastic often find themselves affected by bodily

symptoms like those connected to the early psychoanalytical idea of hysteria, convulsive 'throes of both desire and loathing' that are meant to be the body's physical reaction to incomprehensible and problematic feelings and emotions (Hurley 1996, p4).

This idea is highly applicable in connection with the masochistic fantasy, for from a Victorian point of view, taking pleasure in a Masochean type of sexual power-exchange, the reshaping of both male and female gender-identity, was indeed a disturbing and taboo notion. Hurley notes how, for the Victorians, '[d]eviant sexual behaviour – [….] any sexual activity, in fact, besides “normal” intercourse within Christian matrimony – constituted a sort of behavioural recapitulation of some ancestral state' (Hurley 1996, p72). In other words, sexual power-exchange and masochism would have been labelled as a degenerate perversion, and thus frowned upon.

In this way, the sexual fascination connected to the power-exchange and submission that I argue is a tendency in late Victorian narratives causes the characters to display symptoms of hysteria. In the forthcoming analyses we will see how the protagonists experience overwhelming feelings of nausea and revulsion when encountering the fantastical and overtly degenerate villains, who instigate the Masochean masochistic fantasy's structure in the narratives. Another critic, Victoria Margree, argues that this kind of extreme repulsion that is particularly apparent in *The Beetle*, resembles the notion of 'reversal of affect' – a Freudian concept of coping with the trauma of taking pleasure in something that is actually threatening by negating it. For as Margree asks, why would the horror of the degenerate villain be described in such graphic detail if ‘some form of pleasure was [not] considered to be available through [the] descriptions’? (Magree 2007, p67).

The fear induced in the Victorians by the notion of male submission and reversal of gender-roles is possibly connected to the ambiguity that surrounded Victorian femininity.

Hurley explains how femininity and gender roles were something that were heavily debated at the time of the fin de siècle due to the appearance of the New Woman and her claim to equality and female independence. Women in Victorian England occupied two polar opposite stereotypes; one represented the Victorian woman as an 'angel in the house' and one represented her as 'the sex', carnal and degenerate. These two stereotypes reflect how Victorian patriarchy feared the feminine Other due to the sexual temptation embodied in her, and how it dealt with this fear by creating a polar opposite, far more controllable stereotype, or role model even, that Victorian women could aspire to. This role has been coined 'the angel in the house' – a term that refers to the poem of the same name written by Coventry Patmore about his gentle and obedient wife – and portrayed the Victorian woman as the sweet, asexual, motherly, peace-keeper of the home. Influential Victorian critic John Ruskin presented his ideal of woman to be just this; the creator of a safe harbour that the man could return to after a day spent in the confusing, anxiety-inducing, modern world of science and politics. As the degeneracy crisis arose at the fin de siècle with its breaking of social norms, the need for structure and fixed gender roles became painfully urgent, and the Victorian woman was given the role of keeper of everything safe, sacred, and domestic.

The other stereotype that the 'angel in the house' was to keep in check was the radically opposite idea of women as irrational and hypersexual beings, completely controlled by the hysteria that was associated with the female sexual organs. When discussing these contradictory stereotypes Hurley states:

> This nineteenth-century perception of women as “the sex” - fully constrained within a sexualized identity, and so both corporeal and animalistic – stands in sharp contradistinction to Victorian celebrations of woman as a domestic angel, an essentially

disembodied creature (Hurley 1996, p121).

Hurley goes on to note how Victorian literary representations of women were in the same way antithetical extremes: 'saintly or demonic, spiritual or bodily, asexual or ravenously sexed, guardians of domestic happiness or unnatural monsters' (Hurley 1996, p121), creating a picture of women as always Other – be it subliminally good or inexplicably carnal. The two extremes, Hurley notes, can often be found appearing simultaneously in narratives, where the angelic heroine starkly contrasts a degenerate, polar opposite, often monstrous female villain, showing just how conflicting the Victorian views of women were.

The threat that women thus posed to the Victorian patriarchy was one inherently connected to their bodies and their sexuality. It was in patriarchy's interest to keep women in check, and this control was attained by portraying her as irrational, infantile, and in need of restriction to keep her from wreaking havoc socially and politically. Therefore the notion of handing over sexual dominance to a woman would, at least in the public domain, have been unthinkable. The New Woman did, as previously stated, challenge the position of women in society; she advocated education for women, equal legal rights, and female sexual agency. The New Woman would furthermore wear trousers that gave her the option to ride bikes, giving her far more freedom than she had prior been used to, and making her look significantly more like a man. The New Woman thus encroached on the male domain and caused a questioning of 'the very means through which the Victorians distinguished masculine from feminine' (Margee 2007, p72). The New Woman also found her way into Victorian literature, and indeed the Modern Gothic as we will see in the *The Beetle* and *Dracula,* where her presence emphasises the inconsistent gender norms that are so essential to the fin de siècle crisis.

Now, returning to the Masochean masochistic fantasy, it could easily be assumed that the New Woman would be the incarnation of the Masochean ideal with her claim to

female sexual liberation and equality, not to mention that the term is curiously well fitting as the counterpart to the Deleuzian 'new man' – but she is not. Looking at the Ideal that is set up in *Venus,* it is clear that the polarised Otherness of woman is fundamental for the Masochean masochistic fantasy to work:

> Every woman, good or bad, is capable at any moment of the most diabolical thoughts, actions or emotions, as well as the most divine; the purest as well as the most sordid. In spite of all the advances of civilization, woman has remained as she was the day Nature's hand shaped her. She is like a wild animal, faithful or faithless, kindly or cruel, depending on the impulse that rules her. [….] Man, even when he is selfish or wicked, lives by principles; woman only obeys her feelings (Masoch 1991, p192).

This quote by Wanda in *Venus* gives a clear sense of the binary stereotypes that Hurley discusses. These opposites are furthermore celebrated throughout the novel; Wanda constantly alternates between being the sadistic, debauched, cruel mistress that Severin is in painful awe of, and the sublime deity that he adores, mediating, in accordance with the Deleuzian 'oral mother', between the 'uterine' and the 'Oedipal', creating the Masochean Ideal. Severin even states:

> If I cannot find a noble and spirited woman willing to share my destiny in complete faithfulness, then give me no half-measures, no lukewarm compromises. I prefer to be at the mercy of a woman without virtue, fidelity or pity, for she is also my ideal, in her magnificent selfishness (Masoch 1991, p171).

Thus the Masochean female stereotype is just as inconsistent and contradictory as the Victorian stereotype, but the stress and fear caused by this instability only fuels the

desire of the Masochean subject. What can be argued is that the desire significant to the Masochean fantasy is aimed at the stereotypical woman turning powerful – not a stereotypical woman turning man. Again, in order for the Masochean fantasy to work, there needs to be disparity between male and female in order for the gender roles to be reversed and thereby fetishised, therefore it is in the Masochean fantasy's interests to keep the idea of woman polarised and fundamentally different from the idea of man. In this way, when the Victorian male characters feel the *hysteria of ambiguity* as they encounter sexually potent female villains, they are coping, not with the fear of a homoerotic desire towards the masculinised female, but with the Masochean masochistic desire to hand over their sexual dominance to the cruel female torturer.

It is this ambiguity of the female villains that has spurred the notion of homoerotic tendencies in the novels dealt with in this thesis, and in the Modern Gothic in general, for the villains appear to take on masculine qualities turning them into representatives of othered masculinity. However, from a Masochean masochistic point of view, when the female villain displays a dominant and aggressive sexuality, it should not be understood that she is representing masculinity, but that she is representing a Masochean female torturer who has assumed the phallus, ergo the sexual dominance that is usually associated with men. Here it is important to remember how Deleuze differentiates between the phallus and the penis; the phallus represent sexual dominance and aggression, while the penis is only a physical signifier. That the phallus and the penis (still in metaphorical sense) are often understood as inseparable may be the reason why these late-Victorian Gothic villains have popularly been read as homoerotic, because the villains are interpreted as representing both the penis and the phallus in a female disguise. The male protagonists who fall victim to the Modern Gothic female villains have in the same way been interpreted as feminised and this feminisation has been linked to the homoerotic

fantasy – but this feminisation also fits into the Masochean scheme, and moreover resonates with the experimental trend of the fin-de-siècle avant-garde affecting Europe.

This thesis is, however, not the first to argue that there is a masochistic tendency permeating the late Victorian Gothic; John Kucich also investigates the presence of a masochistic tendency in late Victorian Imperial fiction, one that takes the shape of martyrdom, self-sacrifice, and patriotism. Even though this kind of masochism has similarities to the Masochean masochistic fantasy, the two tendencies cannot be considered to be one and the same. The Imperial masochism that Kucich deals with is not channelled into servitude towards a sexually potent female torturer, but rather towards the idea of a subliminal deity, a greater good, and the homeland. Kucich argues that this masochistic tendency was used in fiction, partly as a hegemonic device to promote the British Empire, partly as a way of dealing with issues of social status and class in Victorian society.

This kind of masochism is, nonetheless, still relevant to consider as it reflects the same need and desire for a reconfiguration of masculinity that was being expressed in art and literature throughout Europe. According to Kucich, narratives such as Stevenson's adventure fiction for boys and imperial romances by Kipling and Haggard, can be classed as Imperial Gothic tales which helped form a 'fundamentally masochistic ethos of British masculinity, in which the ability to absorb pain stoically – or even ecstatically – was greatly prized' (Kucich 2006, p9). These narratives conveyed a message of honour and pleasure achieved through submitting oneself to cruelty for the sake of a higher purpose exceeding the self. Kucich further mentions how late-Victorian artists would glorify historical figures such as James Cook, who suffered horrible deaths for the sake of the Empire, all the while using images of divinities such as the personified goddess Britannia, to conduct an idea of achieved martyrdom. Even though Kucich's Imperial masochism is not connected to a

female torturer per se, it still represents a desire to let go of the responsibility of being the leader of society as the white British male considered himself to be. With this notion of 'honourable masochism' the hero was allowed to indulge in weakness and submit to forces beyond his control without losing his integrity.

The notion of martyrdom is what Imperial masochism has in common with Masochean masochism. It is connected to Masoch's employment of history and myth, for in Masoch's work masochism is indeed honourable, although sexualised: Severin makes an overt comparison between his desire to submit and the act of martyrdom in *Venus*, when Wanda asks if he is 'weak and sensuous by nature', and Severin in turn asks: 'Were the martyrs also weak and sensuous by nature?' (Masoch 1991, p172). He continues that he was fascinated with martyrdom even as a child:

> To endure horrible tortures seemed [….] the highest form of delight, particularly if the torturer was a beautiful woman, for to my mind the poetic and the diabolical have always been united in woman. I turned this into a veritable religion (Masoch 1991, p179).

Thus martyrdom and the notion of suffering for the sake of a greater good (here that would be the pleasure of the female torturer) is part of the Masochean fantasy.

What is moreover interesting about Kucich's approach to masochism is that he essentially puts emphasis on its rooting in fantasy. He states:

> Understanding masochism as a fantasy structure means viewing it as a medium in which individual and social experience is intertwined. It also means regarding it as a medium of symbolic transformation that incorporates a wider range of behaviours than is usually conjured by the term "masochism" (Kucich 2006, p3).

This is an excellent statement about how fantasy ultimately is the essence of masochism

of any kind. When investigating Masoch's novels Deleuze makes the observation that fantasy and the anticipation of the Ideal is essential for the Masochean subject, and this to a degree that makes it completely outshine the need for physical stimulation. Deleuze notes how there is a notion of suspense lingering over the erotic scenes, almost like a shyness or coyness, during which sexual pleasure is postponed. He states:

> [T]he desexualized has become in itself the object of sexualization. This explains why coldness is the essential feature of the structure of perversion; it is present […..] in the ideal of the masochist, where it figures as fantasy (Deleuze 1991, p117).

Thus these moments of textual chastity become spaces in which the Masochean fantasy can grow, fuelled by the idealism that permeates the Masochean contract, unspoiled by the vulgarity of genital sex which the Masochean subject has already disavowed as 'the new man'.

Even though Masochean masochism is structured as a romanticised, theatrical, fantasy scenario of a man subjected at the feet of a powerful, merciless woman, the male masochist fantasy should not necessarily be taken as matriarchal propaganda. For even though Masoch celebrates historical and mythical women of power, the contract that is the most fundamental part of the Masochean subject's submission, would lose its power were there to be a permanent matriarchy. Deleuze states:

> In the contractual relation the woman typically figures as an object in the patriarchal system. The contract in masochism reverses this state of affairs by making the woman into the party with whom the contract is entered into (Deleuze 1991, p92).

This means that, as established earlier, the reversal of gender roles is a crucial part of the Masochean masochistic fantasy, and in order for the roles to be reversed in the safe space

of fantasy, there necessarily must be a fixed order to them in real life - the dominant male, the submissive female.

In the same way as Spencer established that a story of the fantastic must end with the expulsion of the fantastic object, the masochistic fantasy always has to end so that the correct order of things can be re-established – as in *Venus* when Severin eventually turns torturer, and he engages in a relationship with more traditional gender roles. Should the fantasy become reality it would no longer belong in the idealised fantasy structure that is being spun by the masochist himself, and it would thus cave in on itself. According to Freud, this correlates with the original idea of fetishism; the chosen fetishised object (here extended to the concept of male submission) makes up for in fantasy what is absent in reality[1]. In this way the fetishised power-exchange cannot be fetish and reality all at the same time.

This creates a paradox between what is masochistically desired in fantasy and what is desired in the real world, for even though the Masochean male expresses a wish to be completely controlled by a female torturer, it is he who creates, shapes, and indeed controls the ideal he wishes her to be. This is something that Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg discusses in her book *Sublime Surrender: Male Masochism at the Fin-de-siècle*, as she analyses the role of the idealised female torturer whom she refers to as 'the Lady':

> [The Lady] becomes [….] a cold, indeed terrifying and inhuman partner, occupying that place of radical Otherness beyond the symbolic order that Lacan calls the Thing or the Real. Since woman occupies the space of the Other onto which man projects his own narcissistic ideal, it is man who thus stages in its most theatrical possibilities his own servitude. From here derives the importance of

1 In his essay 'Fetishism' (1928) (Original title Fetischismus' (1927)) Freud characterises fetishism as a replacement for the penis that the boy child believes his mother has. Upon experiencing that his mother, and subsequently all women, lacks a penis, the traumatised boy finds a substitute for the penis, and fixates his sexual interest to that.

> disavowal that is noted also by Deleuze. The masochist remains at all points the stage director of his own fantasy, but without thereby destroying the illusionary quality of his game (Stewart-Steinberg 1998, p5).

With this paragraph Stewart-Steinberg shows how the masochistic subject not quite ever gives up control; his fantasy relies on his control over the female subject even though, theatrically, it takes the shape of power-exchange. In the same way, the male masochistic fantasy does not exactly eliminate the polarised depiction of women, but appears to emphasise and cultivate it.

In the following chapters I will show how the Masochean masochistic fantasy can be traced as a tendency in *The Beetle* and *Dracula* respectively. The notions of reversal of gender roles, power-exchange, and the contractual relationships between the 'new man' and the Masochean Ideal, will be explored much further as I analyse the characters and their dynamics. As has been established in this chapter, the Modern Gothic was a vehicle for exploring and expressing societal issues as well as delving into desires and taboo relationships, and in the following chapters I will show how *The Beetle* and *Dracula,* with their sexually aggressive, monstrous female villains, and their elements of horror and the fantastic, can be interpreted to explore these Masochean notions of male submission and female dominance.

Chapter 2

Reversal of gender-roles and power exchange in *The Beetle*

Those eyes of hers! They were a devil's. I can positively affirm that they had on me a diabolical effect. They robbed me of my consciousness, of my power of volition, of my capacity to think – they made me as wax in her hands.
(Marsh 1992, p194)

Richard Marsh's *The Beetle* is a perfect example of what Spencer calls a tale of the fantastic with its reality-bending villain the Beetle; an Oriental, sexually aggressive, priestess of Isis who has transmigrated into a shape-shifting monster. Using her mesmeric powers, the Beetle is capable of invading the most intimate parts of the characters' lives and turn them into her passive slaves. She has come to England on a quest for vengeance, haunting the politician Paul Lessingham who killed her 20 years before, and caused her to turn into the incarnation of her own deviancy. It is the effect that the Beetle has on her victims that initially sparks the notion of a Masochean masochistic tendency, for her mesmeric powers renders the protagonists completely under her influence, in involuntary servitude to her needs and whims. The male characters who go under her spell express revulsion at being made slaves to a creature so 'supernaturally ugly' (Marsh 1994, p14) that the they cannot make out whether it is male or female. This revulsion is exactly what Hurley classes as hysteria and Margree describes as 'reversal of affect', which suggests that a desire, or a fantasy, is being explored. In the following paragraphs I will

conduct a thorough analysis of *The Beetle* with special focus on the protagonists, the villain, and their dynamics, as it is within these structures that the Masochean masochistic tendency can be traced.

The Beetle is a novel narrated by four different characters, starting with Robert Holt, a clerk who, due to unfortunate circumstances, has ended up in the streets of London, searching for shelter. It is after having crept through an open window in what appears to be an empty house that Holt first encounters the Beetle and immediately is put under her mesmeric control. The second part of the book is narrated by Sydney Atherton, an inventor who finds himself in love with Miss Marjorie Lindon who, to Atherton's dismay, has recently become engaged to the noteworthy politician Paul Lessingham. It is Marjorie who narrates the third part of the book, but her narration ends abruptly at the point of her being captured by the Beetle. The last part of the book is narrated by Augustus Champnell, an agent hired by Lessingham as well as an acquaintance of Atherton's, and it is he who gives voice to the ending of the gruesome tale.

It is interesting that Paul Lessingham does not get to narrate a part of the book considering he is the character who plays the greatest role in the Beetle's coming to London. It is via Champnell's narrative we learn how Lessingham, at the tender age of 18, travelled through Egypt and on a stroll through the Rue de Rabagas was captivated by the song of a woman. The woman turned out to be a priestess of the Cult of Isis, an ancient pagan cult engaging in 'orgies of name-less horror', including offerings of white, preferably British, women (Marsh 1994, p196). We learn how Lessingham wound up imprisoned in the chambers of worship and was subjected to unspeakable acts of implied sexual abuse by 'the woman of songs' while witnessing the horrific deaths of many a woman of his 'own flesh and blood' (Marsh 1994, p252). When Lessingham finally gathered enough strength to withstand the mesmeric powers of his captor, and put his hands around her neck to

finish her, she transmigrated at the point of death into a demonic creature of vengeance, capable of transforming herself into a monstrous version of the cult's sacred symbol; a scarab. It is as this fantastic 'personification of evil' (Marsh 1994, p253) that the Beetle travels to England to haunt Lessingham and his fiance in the name of revenge, causing the characters to find themselves in a constant battle to resist her hypnotic invasion while trying to rid themselves and Britain of her obnoxious presence.

The conflict in *The Beetle* has been interpreted by various critics to be of a highly sexual nature; Hurley, who gives a thorough analysis of *The Beetle* along with other prominent Modern Gothic novels, argues that the changeable and emphasised corporeality of the Beetle is a prime example of the ambiguous representation of female sexuality that was discussed in chapter 1. In their essay ‘’Orgies of Nameless Horror’: Gender, Orientalism, and the Queering of Violence in Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle*’ (2012) W. C. Harris and Dawn Vernooy argue that there is a strong homoerotic undercurrent in the novel due to the ambiguity of the Beetle's gender, while Victoria Margree in her article 'Gender, Sovereignty and Insecurity in *The Beetle'* (2007) proposes that apart from the Victorian fear of homosexuality, the novel's dominant theme of conflict is that of shifting social structure; the fear of unemployment and the descent from upper class to lower class due to urbanisation and a breaking class system. Margree thus argues that it is not the gender-ambiguity of the Beetle herself that signifies the conflict, but the way she emasculates the male characters, degrading them to weaker versions of masculinity – or even females.

Thus a certain amount of interpretation has gone into the problematics regarding gender-roles and masculinity that the novel presents – both Hurley and Margree, moreover, touch upon the notion of masochism present in the narrative; Margree writes that if the Beetle's mesmeric invasion of the male characters is to be viewed as an

emasculating subjugation, then Holt's chapters in particular 'must be understood as forming an extended masochistic fantasy' (Margree 2007, p18). However, what both Margree and Hurley bases their arguments around is the idea of a homoerotic fantasy being embedded in the masochistic experience of the characters. Margree states that it is Holt's potential for homosexual “contamination”, i.e. the fact that the Beetle successfully 'penetrates' his psyche, that constitutes an example of what the Victorians feared was happening in society; the fear of degeneration and a weakening of masculinity. Like Margree, Hurley argues that the Beetle's gender-ambiguity, along with her hyper-sexual Orientalism, allows for a reading of the text as homoerotic, because the Beetle essentially represents masculinity.

The Masochean concept of masochism, however, offers an alternative reading of the predatory, penetrative qualities of the villain as well as the way her victims find themselves behaving with feminised 'passive obedience' (Marsh 1994, p14), for this resonates with the dynamics of the Masochean contract; the male subject gives up his sexual dominance and the female torturer adopts it, creating an unconventional power-structure, and a new kind of masculinity, namely the 'new man'.

In *The Beetle* we are presented with two different kinds of masculinity embodied in the two male protagonists; the awe-inspiring politician Paul Lessingham and the heavily sarcastic, womanising, inventor Sydney Atherton. Robert Holt is purposefully not classified as a protagonist as he serves much more as a tool in the investigation of the Beetle than an actual agent. He is from the beginning a defeated character having slid to the bottom of society, and is furthermore completely and irrevocably 'overwrought' by the Beetle's power which, as noted by Margree, renders him obsolete both as male and as protagonist (Marsh 1994, p 10). This, however, does not render him irrelevant for my analysis, and I will elaborate Holt's character later on.

Lessingham and Atherton, on the other hand, both manage to either regain agency after being under the influence of the Beetle, or, as in Atherton's case, completely resist her invasion. The difference between the two men is interesting; on one side we have Paul Lessingham, a stoic, collected, public speaker who is described to be 'cold as an iceberg' and 'dry as a stick' by Atherton (Marsh 1994, p57). Yet, this hard-boiled exterior crumbles with increasing frequency throughout the narrative, momentarily bringing Lessingham into a state likened to that of a 'hysterical woman' (Marsh 1994, p247). This is just one in many ways that Lessingham depicts the double persona that Linda Dryden talks about in her work; the Victorian fear that the inner self could be split in two – a good and a bad self, like Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, one being a respectable gentleman, the other an incarnation of uncontrollable Otherness (Dryden 2003). Interestingly, the nature of Lessingham's double differs from Jekyll's Hyde, and Dorian Gray's monstrous painted self for that matter, in the way that rather than being a hellish, uncontrollable force of malice, Lessingham's double is weak and submissive.

Lessingham refers to the time he was enslaved by the Beetle, or the Woman of Songs as she is called in her human state, as a time of 'mirage, of delusion, of disease' (Marsh 1994, p39), as he admits to Champnell his fear of relapsing into the 'wretched thing' (Marsh 1994, p201) he was when he was held captive twenty years earlier. Although Lessingham claims that his vulnerability was due to a fever, the narrative suggest that he was immediately enthralled by the Woman of Songs as he confesses:

> [I]t is the the simple truth that her touch had on me what I can only describe as a magnetic influence. As her fingers closed upon my wrist, I felt as powerless in her gasp as if she held me with bands of steel. What seemed an invitation was virtually a command. I had to stay whether I would or wouldn't. (Marsh 1994, p194)

The ambivalence that Lessingham feels towards this loss of control is of a sexual nature; Lessingham notes that Champnell gives a suggestive smile at the notion of Lessingham feeling enchanted by the Woman of Songs: 'You will smile, - I should smile, perhaps, were I the listener instead of you' (Marsh 1994, p194), implying that Champnell is convinced that Lessingham is telling a tale of seduction. The scenario that Lessingham describes is furthermore explicitly sensual; the 'thrilling' and 'amazing' harmonies of the siren songs, the drinking of strong liquor, the focus on the Woman's eyes with their 'diabolical effect', and the physical intimacy of the setting as described by Lessingham: 'My last recollection of that fatal night is of her sitting in front of me, bending over the table, stroking my wrist with her extended fingers, staring at me with her awful eyes' (Marsh 1994, p194).

While telling his tale, Lessingham is clearly suffering, and following Margree's application of the 'reversal of affect', Lessingham's strong reactions to the scene of seduction suggest that he is torn between fascination and fear of the sexual power-exchange, causing him to show hysterical disgust at the recollection. The fact that Lessingham was a sexually potent 18-year-old on a coming-of-age journey through exotic Egypt at the time, would have made him susceptible to sexual domination – that is, if we compare him to Severin in Masoch's *Venus*, who at an early age discovers that he is 'supersensual' and has his first sexual experiences submitting to his cruel aunt.

This is only one of the things that Lessingham and Severin have in common; both are depicted to have been awkward youths; Lessingham was an orphan, and both he and Severin have their innocence taken away by what can be considered a dominant female. This renders both of them greatly affected; Severin becomes inherently masochistic, seeking out dominant female partners, but eventually turns his back on the masochistic fantasy, while Lessingham makes a 180 degree turn away from what can be read as a heady, sexual, Oriental adventure of the kind that would have been 'unobtainable in

Europe' (Said 1978, p118)[1]. Instead, Lessingham aspires to 'work for his country' (Marsh 1994, p144), choosing the dryness of politics over women and romance. He ends up as the almost caricatured version of a stone-cold politician who is 'not by any means a woman's man' (Marsh 1994, 144). In fact, Marjorie claims that women are Lessingham's 'weakest point', suggesting that Lessingham is, despite his political potency, impotent when it comes to gender stereotypical relationships.

This ambivalent potency manifests itself in the narrative in a curious way that resonates the idea of the phallus versus the penis. Hurley picks up on how the language used to describe Lessingham's (and Holt's) physical state when under the otherwise emasculating influence of the Beetle, is persistently phallic (Hurley 1996). For instance, Lessingham tells Champnell about how, when the Beetle held him captive in the temple, her kisses and caresses filled him with 'physical, mental, and moral horror', yet he still found himself lying there 'like a log' for her to use as she pleased (Marsh 1994, p196-197). The Beetle herself also applies these phallic analogies to Lessingham, describing him as 'straight as the mast of a ship' and 'hard as granite', suggesting that, despite Lessingham's claims to having been held captive against his will, he was nonetheless most sexually pleasing to the Beetle. (Marsh 1994, p24). This idea of Lessingham representing a constant erection, all the while being, in his own words, a 'fibreless, emasculated creature' (Marsh 1994, p198), is a great example of the Masochean masochist's disavowed sexuality; the phallus, ergo the sexual dominance has been handed over to, in this instance, the Beetle, while Lessingham has been left with the member.

Returning to the idea of a dual personality, it has now been established that Lessingham's 'monstrous double' can be perceived as Masochean masochistic. One could even say his second personality is that of the Deleuzian 'new man', and this is perhaps

1 Quote also found in Hurley (1996). Said describes in his work on Orientalism how what was considered the Orient by Victorians (Asia, Middle East, etc.) was defined by its otherness and subsequently hypersexualised. It was considered to be a place where the British male could slacken his strict morals and indulge in sex and sensuality.

what is causing Lessingham to have issues with living up the role as a sexually dominant, British male. Atherton senses Lessingham's ambivalent masculinity, marking that 'to the life of every man there is a background' usually dark and indecorous (Marsh 1994, p104), and, as Hurley notes, both he and Marjorie's father question Lessingham's suitability as a father and husband (Hurley 1996).

Sydney Atherton, on the other hand, is a different kind of masculinity that carries his indecorous “shortcomings” much more on his sleeve. He serves as a contrast to Lessingham, candidly expressing his fascination with death, violence and war. Marjorie notes that Sydney is

> the most extraordinary mixture. The things which most people would like to have proclaimed in the street, he keeps tightly locked in his own bosom; while those which the same persons would be only too glad to conceal he shouts from the roofs. (Marsh 1994, p 149)

Unlike Lessingham, Atherton is also a bit of a ladies' man, or at least he is a fickle lover, preferring, 'like the bee, to roam from flower to flower' (Marsh 1994, p149). In this way Atherton also exhibits duality, but in the form of the anti-hero, rivalling Lessingham in his courtship of Marjorie, although he is still gentlemanly enough to be concerned with the safety of his country, and to back down when he realises that his love rival has him beaten. The fact that Atherton is not a 'supersenual' man, to use a Masochean term, in the way that he is not overwhelmed by the opposite sex, but instead tends to have a callous change of heart when it comes to women, may be the reason why the Beetle never succeeds in dominating him. He is also very comfortable in his own awkwardness, owning that he has the streak of a mad scientist, which empowers him.

Thus Atherton does not represent the same Masochean desire as Lessingham does, and he manages to resists when the Beetle, in a most Masochean manner, offers

him a contractual relationship ('put your hand into mine. Say that you wish it. It shall be done' (Marsh 1994, p101)) that will unite them in their hatred towards Lessingham. Atherton does, nonetheless, express a certain degree of desire to engage with the Beetle who claims that he has been 'wanting' her all night, as he states '[a] look came into his eyes which I felt I ought to understand, yet to the meaning of which I seemed, for the instant, to have mislaid the key' (Marsh 1994, p100). So the Beetle's advances do stir something in Atherton – she is after all an Oriental, oversexed, monster with mesmeric powers, but she never wins him over.

Instead of being a figure of the Masochean masochistic fantasy, Atherton plays a part in the novel's depiction of a different kind of contract, namely the traditional contract of matrimony. However, before discussing the various contractual and Masochean relationships that are formed in the *The Beetle* any further, let us first take a look at the novel's female characters.

Marjorie Lindon, the object of desire for both Lessingham and Atherton, is a somewhat controversial female character, and comes across as a representation of The New Woman. Marjorie is an interesting character because of the way she is victimised by the Beetle; she has her hair cut off, is dressed as a man, and suffers covert sexual abuse as the Beetle escorts her through London. Margree argues, that even though it is established early on in the text that Marjorie is a New Woman due to her interest in politics and her demanding the agency to choose who she wants to marry, she is 'a rather pale version' (Margree 2007, p72), only really politically engaged for the sake of supporting her husband-to-be. Margree claims that it is in the 'context of cultural debate about the New Woman that Marjorie and the particular form of assault she suffers must be read' (Margree 2007, p72), arguing that it is Marjorie's New Woman-behaviour that is punished when the Beetle assaults her by dressing her up in men's clothes and parading her through town.

This portrays Marjorie as an incomplete female character; she is partly the classic, innocent heroine who needs saving by the protagonists, and partly a New Woman figure rebelling against the ideal of the Victorian woman as 'the angel of the house'. According to Margree the text punishes Marjorie for being incomplete by dressing her in the clothes, not just of any man, but of 'the destitute and emasculated Robert Holt', as a way to show her that she will never succeed in becoming a man, which was essentially what the opponents of the New Woman thought the movement was trying to achieve (Margree 2007, p74).

From a Masochean point of view Marjorie is not so much an incomplete character because she is a classic heroine tainted by the ideas of a New Woman which subsequently causes her to fail as both, but because she is caught between the role of a stereotypical submissive female, and that of an idealised Masochean heroine such as Wanda in *Venus.* As was discussed in chapter 1, the Masochean Ideal can only be one of two extremes - Severin makes it quite clear that a woman has to be either cruel and callous or innocent and submissive as he says to Wanda: 'no half-measures; if you cannot be a true and loyal wife, then be a demon!' (Masoch 1989, p182). This is interesting because it reflects the general conception of women in the Victorian era as discussed, but also because it shines a light on the way Marjorie's quasi-New Woman character, after encountering the story's version of real female agency, namely the Beetle, regresses to the state of a nervous wreck who needs the constant support of her male companions in order to function. The Beetle's assault on Marjorie can thus still be seen as punishment, as it turns Marjorie into a controllable, more desirable and polarised form of femininity, now that she has failed to live up to the role as the 'demon' of the narrative – a role that is obviously held by the Beetle herself.

Before elaborating on the character of the Beetle, there is yet another female character who deserves attention, namely Dora Grayling. Dora is not a prominent female

character, she remains on the side line and seems more like a consolation prize for Atherton than anything else. Yet the interesting thing about Dora Grayling is that she manages to form a quasi-Masochean relationship with Atherton in the sense that it is almost completely contractual. Dora offers Atherton financial support for his experiments in chemical warfare which turns her seduction of him into more of a business proposal. Nonetheless, it is Atherton who labels the relationship:

> 'I'll show you round, and tell you all there is to be told, and then if you still think there's anything in it, I'll accept your offer [….] - that is, if it still holds good.'
>
> 'Of course it still holds good.'
>
> 'And we'll be partners.'
>
> 'Partners? - Yes, - we will be partners.' (Marsh 1994, p80)

While it is rather Masochean that Atherton is the one who outlines the contractual relationship, this union can be read to represent a more traditional kind of marriage. That the union is rather anticlimactic – made out of necessity and with a capitalist agenda – can be interpreted as the author's comment on the passionless conservatism surrounding matrimony in Victorian society. In fact, both Atherton and Dora's, and Lessingham's and Marjorie's marriages turn out a little flaccid in the end – Marjorie is reduced to a mentally fragile wretch, and what used to be a union of passion turns into her depending completely on Lessingham. Interestingly, this mirrors Severin's eventual marriage to a woman that he can dominate, which also seems, if not anticlimactic then perhaps embittered by the fact that the masochistic fantasy has come to an end, and conservative gender roles have to be reassumed.

Returning to Dora, she is an incomplete character in the same way as Marjorie, although not as prominent. While being a respectable young lady from a rich family, she

also possesses characteristics that suggest sexual aggression as she is a much sought-after young woman, giving her the potential for infidelity that is so very desirable from a Masochean masochistic point of view. Furthermore, she is enraged that Sydney pays more attention to Marjorie, and Sydney notes that it 'suits her' and that she has 'never looked prettier' than in such a state of passion (Marsh 1994, p76). This fascination with angry women is a cornerstone in Masochean masochism; in *Venus*; Severin speaks freely of his taste for female cruelty and despotism, and women are, as aforementioned, celebrated for their irrationality and temper. Thus it is suggestive that the male protagonists appear to admire both Marjorie and Dora for their aggressiveness and their temperaments, as it feeds into the Masochean tendency.

There are various Masochean dynamics in the Beetle; first of all there is the 'menage à trois' between Lessingham, the Beetle, and Marjorie, which very much mirrors Severin's situation with Wanda, and his eventual wife. Lessingham's first relationship is with the Woman of Songs who dominates him and uses him as her slave, and this shapes Lessingham into a Masochean masculinity that cannot seem to live up to his role as a sexually superior husband-to-be back in England. Yet, in the same way as Severin's fantasy has to end so does Lessingham's; he turns his back on masochism and wounds up with a broken, easily controllable version of Marjorie, to whom he can, without much effort, be the stereotypical Victorian ruler of the household.

Then there is the relationship between Dora Grayling and Sydney Atherton that is initially based on a business contract, offered by Dora and shaped by Atherton, but which eventually turns into a contract of marriage of which Champnell notes:

> Sydney Atherton has married Miss Dora Grayling. Her wealth has made him one of the richest men in England. She began, the story goes, by loving him immensely; I can answer for the fact that he has

> ended by loving her as much. Their devotion to each other contradicts the pessimistic nonsense which supposes that every marriage must be of necessity a failure. (Marsh 1994, p276)

This suggests that the marriage between Dora and Atherton is more of a practical union that Atherton grows to appreciate. It does, however, still appear somewhat forced, and as a comment on the rigidity of conventional marriage.

In the last part of this chapter I want to discuss the character of the Beetle and the relationship she has with, perhaps, the most victimised character of the novel, Robert Holt. It is Holt's narrative that sets off the novel; it is dramatic, graphic and shocking, luring in the reader, much like the Beetle does Holt.

The Beetle is in many ways the ultimate Victorian sexual predator; she holds all the most terrifying traits of the hypersexualised woman that we find in one end of the spectrum of the polarised idea of femininity that Hurley addresses, first of all because she is all too corporeal. When the Woman of Songs transmigrates into the Beetle she is 'transfigured into her own hungry, emasculating womb' (Hurley 1996, p138), attacking her victims by *enveloping* them, as it is described by Holt: '[It] enveloped my face with its huge slimy, evil-smelling body, and embraced me with its myriad legs' (Marsh 1994, p12). He even compares the experience in its entirety to being taken out of the physical world and 'plunged into the inner chambers of all nameless sin' (Marsh 1994, p45), which all sound like metaphors for the womb.

The Beetle has, in her monstrous afterlife, become a metaphysical representation of the female reproductive system; uncanny in her ability to consume, yet give birth. This shows in the way the Beetle, apart from attacking her victims in a way that resembles the idea of 'vagina dentata'[1], also possesses a maternal quality as she is a priestess of the cult

1 'Vagina dentata' covers the fantasy of a toothed vagina associated with hazardous intercourse and castration anxiety. It was first applied to psychoanalyst theory by Otto Rank in his book *Trauma of Birth* (1924), and has been extended

of Isis which, according to Atherton, is associated with 'the story of the beetle which issues from the woman's womb through all eternity' (Marsh 1994, p107). Furthermore, there is a suggestion of the Beetle having an infantilising effect on Holt as he states that her mesmeric words seem to 'enwrap themselves about' him, 'confine' him 'tighter and tighter, within, as it were, swaddling clothes', making him 'more and more helpless' (Marsh, 1994, p26). 'Swaddling clothes' is an interesting choice of metaphor for the bondage that Holt feels he is put in, 'chains' or 'a strait jacket' could have been used in its place, and it seems unlikely that such a comparison would have been made if it was not meant to provoke an image in the reader of a mother nursing her baby.

Thus the character of the Beetle heavily resonates the Deleuzian idea of the trinity of mothers; she is uterine, because of her hypersexuality as well as her physical resemblance to a vagina, she is oral because she is maternal, and brings life and death (the Beetle resurrects Percy Woodville after Atherton accidentally kills him), and she is Oedipal because she is sadistic, even though not directly in connection with a father figure, as she has taken his place by adopting the phallus and his ability to *penetrate,* if only only mentally.

In essence, the Beetle is the incarnation of female sexual desire in the way she preys on her victims in the form of a vaginal monster, all the while being completely consumed by irrational feelings of heartbreak and vindictiveness. She is furthermore overtly animalistic, not only in the sense that she can take on the shape of an insect, but also because in her human form she reminds her victims of an animal – at one point Holt describes her as ‘some savage beast nursing its pent-up rage’ (Marsh 1994, p48) and Marjorie notes that in the Beetle's room there is an odour of some 'evil-smelling animal' (Marsh 1994, p77).

But it is not only the fact that the Beetle is 'some ghoulish example of her sex, who

upon since by theorists such as Freud and Ferenczi (Colman, 2008).

had so yielded to her depraved instincts as to have become nothing but a ghastly reminiscence of womanhood' (Marsh 1994, p22) that makes her such a threat towards the protagonists. What makes the Beetle so utterly terrifying is the way she has adopted the phallus - her ability to penetrate the minds of her victims with her mesmerism - for this masculine quality gives her access to her victims' deepest, most intimate spaces. It is evident from the text that the Beetle's mesmeric powers stem from her eyes; her gaze invades her victims, and at the same time disarms, controls, exposes and reads them. Holt states that it seems to him that the Beetle is 'nothing but eyes', and he describes looking into that pair of eyes as something spell-binding and regressive:

> [T]hey seemed to be lighted by some internal radiance, for they shone out like lamps in a light-house tower. Escape them I could not, while, as I endeavoured to meet them, it was as if I shrivelled into nothingness. [….] They held me enchained, helpless, spell-bound. I felt that they could do with me as they would; and they did. (Marsh 1994, p14)

But the gaze does not just mesmerise the Beetle's subjects, it also objectifies and fetishises them. There is a strong sense of scopophilia[1] connected to the Beetle's eyes; Holt notes 'I had a horrible persuasion that, though unseeing, I was seen; that my every movement was being watched' (Marsh 1994, p10). Furthermore, the Beetle appears to take great pleasure in stripping her subject naked to see his bare white flesh: 'A look came on his face, as I stood naked in front of him, which, if it was meant for a smile, was a satyr's smile, and which filled me with a sensation of shuddering repulsion.' (Marsh 1994, p 16). This presents a strong idea of a *gaze* giving the beholder the power to objectify her subjects, which altogether alienates, fetishises, and humiliates them.

1 Meaning 'pleasure in looking. Scopophilia is the translation of the Freudian term *shaulust*, covering the infantile instict of exploring and learning (Chandler & Munday, 2011).

The idea of the gaze was initially introduced by Jacques Lacan in his book *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (original title: *Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychonalyse,*1973), and was a psychoanalytical theory on early development when the child learns that while seeing, it is also seen by external autonomous forces. Lacan's theory has since been widely elaborated on by other theorists such as Michel Foucault applying what he called the 'unequal gaze' to the power dynamic embodied in the surveillance of prisoners. In her essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' from 1975, Laura Mulvey brought attention to the theory of the male gaze; the idea that the cinematic representation of women is created and moulded by the men behind the camera. The male gaze constricts the female form and shapes her into a man-made ideal. The theory on the male gaze is connected to scopophilia in the way that the beholder takes pleasure in looking at his object, the woman, and uses the gaze to emphasize and fetishise what he desires about her.

An interesting extension of this theory is made by Kobena Mercer whose essay 'Reading Racial Fetishism' from his book *Welcome to the Jungle* (1994) adds a racial perspective to the theory of the gaze, arguing that the male gaze does not only hold the power to objectify and fetishise women, but also black men. The racial gaze thus uses its sculpting properties to control the black male body, that, due to its otherness, induces both anxiety and fascination in the white male beholder. The white male gaze thus turns the black male's body into a highly sexualised ideal and reduces it to a mere object for the gaze to derive scopophilic pleasure from, all the while antagonising it as something alien and Other. Mercer calls this tendency the ‘fundamental *ambivalence* [sic]' of the fetishised Other, meaning that the white male gaze applies both positive and negative qualities to its fetishised object, turning it into a thing of both desire *and* fear.

It is this kind of fetishising, ambivalent gaze that the Beetle possesses, and she

uses it to take control of her subjects bodies; Holt states that the Beetle's eyes 'never for an instant quitted [his] face' and how with 'a frightful fascination' they constrained him (Marsh 1994, p24). The Beetle furthermore takes obvious pleasure in looking at his body as she exclaims: 'What a white skin you have, - how white! What would I not give for a skin as white as that, - ah yes!' (Marsh 1994, p16). So even though it is understood that Holt is being mesmerised by the Beetle's gaze, she furthermore uses it to reduce him to an object of her fetish of choice; the white, British body.

That the Beetle possesses this feitshising gaze does not only suggest a fantasy of reversed sexual gender roles, but also a fantasy of reversal of the Imperial hierarchy; the white man submitting to the racial Other. The Orientalism and foreignness embedded in the Beetle as well as the sexuality of the Modern Gothic in general, is something Kelly Hurley discusses in her analysis of the novel. The colonial issues that arose in the late-Victorian era were dealt with by the Modern Gothic in the same way as the issues of gender roles and social structure; Britain had to preserve an image of colonial power and control over the racial Other, but this proved increasingly difficult with the Zulus and Boers rising against the British. This caused a lot of anxiety in Victorian society which manifested in the Modern Gothic as xenophobia and jingoism, and tendencies such as Kucich's Imperial Gothic masochism can be traced in the narratives. It was not only Africa and the Africans that were Othered by the British; critic Edward Said proposes in his influential book *Orientalism* (1978) that the Eastern part of the world, or the Orient, was, in the same way, classed as Other, and the oriental was considered as something particularly sensual, sexual, mystical, and dangerous.

Thus the fact that the Beetle has come from exotic Egypt, and is 'peculiarly Oriental' (Marsh 1994, p63), emphasises her hypersexuality, her mysticism and indeed her otherness which in turn emphasises the horror (and the pleasure) connected to the

protagonists' submission; not only are the male characters submitting to a female villain, but she is foreign too, which takes away the responsibilities connected to sexual and racial dominance. The Beetle becomes the incarnation of a particularly British Masochean masochistic desire as she offers complete role-reversal and power-exhange, both sexually and politically. Her dominance is connected to her mesmeric gaze which serves as a weapon of control, as well as a tool for role-reversal with its objectifying properties. Her mesmeric powers and her shape-shifting abilities are moreover what make her an element of the fantastic which essentially allows for the characters' brief indulgence in the masochistic fantasy. The contractual relationship we find in Masoch can be seen as embedded in this gaze as it transforms the Beetle into a female torturer and her respective victim into the Deleuzian 'new man'. The fantasy, however, has to end, and the Beetle is destroyed, as the fantastical monster that she is, and normality is restored with its prosaic conventions of gender-roles and marriage.

The villain we have encountered in this chapter, as well as the dynamics she spurs in the narrative, can thus be read as an exploration of a Masochean masochistic fantasy. The Beetle is, in all her otherness, a monstrous version of the Masochean Ideal, and her mesmeric, objectifying gaze turns the male characters into 'new men'. In the next chapter I will analyse Stoker's *Dracula* and compare and contrast it to that of *The Beetle*, as I aim to show that *The Beetle* is not a singular example of a Masochean masochistic text in the Modern Gothic, but part of a wider tendency.

Chapter 3

'A wicked, burning desire': male submission in *Dracula*

'There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear.'
(Stoker 1993, p53).

When reading *Dracula* and *The Beetle*, one cannot help but be struck by the similarities between the two novels, and how interesting it is that they were published in the same year, only a few months apart. It has been claimed that Marsh was inspired by Stoker's novel, but, as Minna Vouhelainen notes, *The Beetle* was initially presented as a serial, published in the magazine *Answers,* with its first entry in March 1897, about two months prior to the publication of *Dracula* (Vuohelainen 2006). So Marsh and Stoker appear to have written their respective novels completely independently of each other, yet with interestingly similar outcomes. As stated earlier, *Dracula* has been given a lot of attention by literary scholars, but with this chapter I aim to show that there are still new ways to interpret the text.

As in *The Beetle*, the villain, or indeed villains, of *Dracula* are of ancient heritage, foreign, and in possession of a supernatural ability that allows them to take control of their victims. These villains are, of course, the vampires, led by Count Dracula, a Transylvanian aristocrat who has lived for centuries as an immortal force of evil, capable of shape-

shifting, and who feeds on the blood of the living. The narrative style of the novel moreover resembles that of *The Beetle* as it is epistolary, made up of diary entries and letters by the main protagonists, as well as a couple of newspaper articles. This is interesting, for as we discovered in chapter 1, it is rather crucial that the Masochean masochist gets to articulate his own submissiveness in order to form and shape the contractual relationship, and by giving each protagonist their own voice, this is allowed for.

The novel starts out with a diary entry made by the newly admitted solicitor Jonathan Harker who is travelling to Transylvania to work for a Count Dracula, who is interested in buying some real estate in England. The reader quickly learns that Harker has a fiancée, Mina Murray, back in England, to whom he is very devoted as he makes notes to himself about how he will share his experiences with her upon his return. Harker does not, however, spend much time in Dracula's castle before he realises that the count is a monstrous vampire who is holding him hostage, and it is in the castle that the, for this thesis, perhaps most important scene takes place; namely the seduction scene between Harker and Dracula's three minions, the vampire brides. The remaining part of the novel is then narrated by respectively Mina Harker, Lucy Westenra, Dr. John Seward, and Abraham Van Helsing. The conflict escalates as Dracula travels to England, attacks Lucy Westenra who subsequently becomes a vampire, and the group, including Lucy's fiancé Arthur Holmwood, and her rejected suitor Quincey Morris, assemble in order to destroy Dracula.

The characters and their dynamics are yet another thing that *Dracula* and *The Beetle* have in common; Jonathan Harker inhabits, like Paul Lessingham, an awkward masculinity and has by critics such as Jasmine Yong Hall and Dejan Kuzmanovic, been positioned outside the homosocial group of potent, masculine protagonists due to his subservient profession as an inexperienced hired solicitor. Especially in Harker's first diary

entry there is some insecurity connected to the fact that he has only recently gone from clerk to admitted solicitor, and a certain co-dependence on Mina can also be traced in the way Harker is constantly referring to his fiancé. Even though Kuzmanovic argues that Harker earns his way back into the group later in the novel, he is initially a passive, submissive character, falling prey for the vampires which leaves him impotent and hospitalised.

Dracula has, in the same way as *The Beetle*, a representative of The New Woman, namely Harker's fiancé Mina Murray. Mina is, however, a far more accomplished New Woman than *The Beetle's* Marjorie Lindon, as she holds a job as a typist and is considered to have a 'man's brain' (Stoker 1993, p302) by the male characters, resembling the displaced Victorian idea that The New Woman desired to be a man. Mina plays a crucial role in the narrative as she eventually collects and organises all the entries that make up the novel, but what makes her even more important is the psychological bond she develops with Dracula after he attacks and “imprints” on her. This bond gives her an ability to track down Dracula, resulting in the final slaying of the vampire. However, despite her New Woman qualities and her part in the action, Mina still seems to represent the 'angel in the house'-femininity because of her asexuality and devotion to her husband-to-be, and it is perhaps this 'purity' that allows her into the homosocial group in the first place. However, Mina is briefly excluded from the group after Dracula defiles her. This defilement turns her into an incomplete femininity, caught between purity and monstrosity, in the same was as Marjorie Lindon is in *The Beetle.* Following Margree's argument about Marjorie being punished for her incompleteness by the narrative, Mina too can be interpreted to be chastised when Van Helsing tries to exorcise her with a sacred wafer and burns her forehead with it, leaving a Cain-like mark on her.

Mina's initial role as the angel is moreover emphasised by the novel's other main

female character, Lucy Westenra, who can be placed at the other end of the spectrum of polarised femininity. Lucy has been the topic of much critical discussion and is read by most as representing implied aggressive female sexuality, for when approached by three different suitors in the same day she welcomes the male attention asking: 'Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her [….]?'. As Lucy is bitten and eventiually turns into a vampire, her sexual aggressiveness becomes visible through her monstrosity as her 'sweetness' turns into 'adamantine, heartless cruelty' and her 'purity to voluptuous wantonness' (Stoker 1993, p 271). Lucy is nonetheless the character who is most punished by the narrative; she receives blood transfusions from every male protagonist who is not married, and is eventually killed by the group driving a stake through her heart, resulting in a most gruesome and bloody scene.

The sexually aggressive femininity that Lucy displays as a vampire is the same as the one exhibited by the three vampire brides that Harker encounters in Dracula's castle, and can best be described as a complete incarnation of Victorian fears regarding female sexuality and forbidden desire. These female villains are portrayed, not as appalling as the monstrous Beetle, but as overtly erotic and tempting, while simultaneously being ghastly and fear-inducing, making them, perhaps even more dangerous than the Beetle. Their hypersexuality is embedded in their inherently oral nature; descriptions of the vampires focus on the sensuality of their mouths, describing how the female vampires have ‘ruby’, ‘voluptuous lips’ that induce in Jonathan Harker 'some longing, and at the same time some deadly fear' (Stoker 1993, p53). This resonates with the idea of 'vagina dentata' that was applied to the Beetle in chapter 2; the conceptualised ambivalence connected to the female genitalia as it represents both sexual fascination and fear of castration. The mouth is naturally the focus point of the vampires as it is via the mouth that they attack and spread the vampiric 'affliction', but emphasised by the notion of 'vagina dentata', the

predatory mouth is directly linked with the female genitalia; voluptuous, inviting, bloody, and devouring.

The villains of *Dracula* attack their victims in the same way as the Beetle does, for both the Beetle, in her insect form, and the mouths of the vampires are representations of the devouring, emasculating, female sexual organ. Again, this portrays the Victorian ambivalence connected to woman and the fear of, and fascination with, her assumed animalistic, ravenous sexuality; an ambivalence that clearly shows in the seduction scene in the castle when Harker is on the brink of being bitten by one of the undead women:

> There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. [….] I could feel the soft, shivering touch of the lips on the supersensitive skin of my throat, and the hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there. I closed my eyes in a languorous ecstacy and waited (Stoker 1993, p54).

This passage shows how the vampire induces in the victim a desire to submit; Harker is clearly mesmerised, waiting passively to be bitten out of his own volition. This means that the vampires have a mesmeric quality that they share with the Beetle, giving them the same ability to penetrate their victims' minds, just as their pointed teeth penetrate the skin on their victims' necks.

This hypnotic power is in *Dracula* portrayed as an inherent quality of the vampiric predator; it is a form of seductive mesmerism that, unlike the mesmerism of the Beetle, does not send the victim into a state of insanity, but instead induces in them an unwelcome longing to submit to the whims of the perpetrator. This mesmeric power is also exhibited by

Lucy as well as the Count; when Lucy in her vampire form is trying to lure Arthur into her arms, Dr Seward notes how there is 'something diabolically sweet in her tones', and correspondingly Arthur seems 'under a spell', advancing towards her (Stoker 1993, p272). Dracula too has this seductive effect on his victims; Lucy describes it as 'something very sweet, and very bitter all around [her] at once' (Stoker 1993, p130), and Mina states: 'I did not want to hinder him. I suppose it is a part of the horrible curse that such is, when his touch is on his victim' (Stoker 1993, p379). Back in the castle, this means that despite the unease that Jonathan feels about the monstrous women and their predatory mouths, he still feels 'a wicked, burning desire', not to kiss, but to be *kissed by* 'those red lips' (Stoker 1993, p53). This shows how there is a deep ambivalence connected to the vampires, and their not-altogether-awful sexual dominance.

It is not hard to find representations of the Deleuzian trinity of mother figures embedded in these female characters; the female vampires are inherently 'Oedipal' with their sadistic and selfish hunger, and they are furthermore connected to the Count who can be interpreted as a sadistic father figure. At the same time, the female vampires represent the 'uterine' mother in their sexual wantonness; they are hypersexual and devoted to the fulfilling of their perverted, predatory, hunger. In a way the Masochean Ideal, the mediator between the 'Oedipal' and the 'uterine', can be found in Lucy Westenra who plays a very particular role in the narrative. In a Masochean context Lucy already holds the qualities of the 'uterine' mother in her human form due to promiscuous sexual appetite, and when she is transformed into a vampire she receives the 'Oedipal' qualities that are connected to the alliance with the father figure (Dracula) as well as the sadistic streak that is also characteristic of the 'Oedipal' mother. There is furthermore a lot of male jealousy surrounding her; she has three suitors and can, alas, only choose one, which is highly desirable from a Masochean point of view. So in a way, Lucy combines the 'uterine' and a

and the 'Oedipal', creating the essence of the 'oral' mother figure – she furthermore features in a, however horrific, maternity scene in which she cradles a child that she is about to feed on. This mirrors the way that the Beetle has an almost maternal power over Holt, supporting the idea of Lucy being the naturally maternal, yet cruel, 'oral' mother.

I would, however, like to take a different approach to the Masochean Ideal in *Dracula,* and argue that the vampires as a unity, including Lucy, function as one big force of feminine evil, and thus together make up the Masochean Ideal. Dracula too is part of this unity, even though he is not classed as female. Let me explain: while the vampire brides are easily translated into Masochean terms, the most prominent villain, Dracula, and his primary victim, Jonathan Harker, present a somewhat more complex dynamic. Harker's experiences in Dracula's castle have been interpreted by many scholars as having homoerotic implications. This is primarily due to the nature of the encounter; the power-balance between the two is heavily affected by Jonathan's submissive position as a hired solicitor 'ready to attend' to the Count's needs and wishes, 'and take [his] instructions in all matters' (Stoker 1993, p27). Furthermore, Dracula entraps Harker in his castle, and thus takes away his agency which turns him into a helpless subject completely under the control of the awe-inspiring Count who is described as a 'tall old man' with an incredible 'strength' and 'a very marked physiognomy' (Stoker 1993, p 25-26-28). In his highly influential essay 'Kiss Me With Those Red Lips' from 1984, Christopher Craft puts this argument forward, suggesting that the Count's keen interest in Harker, Harker's feminisation though submission, and the displaced desire towards the kisses of the vampires, all point towards a homosexual fantasy that is both feared and indulged in by the narrative.

The homoerotic readings of *Dracula* have furthermore been fuelled by the life of the author; Christopher Craft and Talia Schaffer argue that Bram Stoker utilised his writing to

deal with his own homosexuality and the fear it induced in him. Stoker was intimately acquainted with Oscar Wilde, and the trial that Wilde had to go through on charges of sodomy probably had an influence on the outcome of *Dracula* (Maurice in Stoker 1993), but to what extent Stoker was inspired by his own battle with homosexuality is unknown.

Now, while this thesis appreciates the homoerotic readings of *Dracula*, it aims to add a new perspective to the subtextual sexuality of the text for, as Craft correctly notes, the text appears to await 'an erotic fulfilment that entails both the dissolution of the boundaries of the self and thorough subversion of conventional Victorian gender which constrained the mobility of sexual desire' (Craft 1984, p108). This dissolution of boundaries and subversion of gender can, however, apart from be interpreted as homoerotic, also be read as a desire for power-exchange and reversal of gender roles which is offered by the Masochean masochistic fantasy.

For, while critics argue that Dracula opposes a stronger, more dominant masculinity, 'more vigorous and commanding – more manly – than the British male characters, who are prone to indecisiveness, hysteria, and ineffectuality' (Hurler 1996, p147), I argue that there is a different side to the Count that has been neglected by literary criticism. This side is one of effeminacy, for when analysed closely, Dracula displays significantly feminine qualities of the stereotypically polarised kind so common in the Modern Gothic. It is understood that Dracula's peculiar appearance and behaviour are a manifestation of his foreignness and his otherness – but within his otherness lies the same binary opposites that are found in the otherness of 'the sex': he is animalistic, not only in appearance with his pointed ears and sharp fingernails, but also in his pursuit of his carnal lust for blood, like a 'man-eater' (Stoker 1993, p412) on the prowl. He is furthermore irrational, 'only a child' in his mental development (Stoker 1993, p389), which was a trait applied to women by post-Darwinian theorists. Last, but not least, the Count is completely controlled by his

(sexualised) yearning for blood and power; his own corporeality even depends on his needs being fulfilled as he is described to be like a 'filthy leech' vitalised by his victims blood. This strongly resembles the Victorian notion of the woman being controlled by the hysteria induced by her own body. The connection to blood and the fact that he possesses the same vaginalised mouth as the female vampires further connects Dracula to the female reproductive system. What I aim to show with this analysis of Dracula as a feminine force is that, while he can be interpreted to act as a prop in a fantasy of forbidden homosexual desire, he can also be read as an extension of the female vampires, the four of them representing a unity – a monstrous force – of cruel, dominant, femininity. The fact that they all operate the same 'vagina dentata'-esque weapon; their eoriticsed mouths, only supports this notion.

Another interesting point is to be made about Dracula's gender-bending qualities for he resembles the Masochean father figure connected to the Oedipal mother whom Deleuze calls 'the Greek'. Deleuze describes 'the Greek' as the sadistic father figure with whom the female torturer teams up in order to emphasise the sadistic humiliation of the Masochean subject. In *Venus*, 'the Greek' is depicted as a young man, so handsome and narcissistic that he likes to dress as a woman, and receive the praise of men as well as women. According to Deleuze this feminised, yet potent, male figure can be found in various of Masoch's novels, employed to emphasise the female torturers sadistic promiscuity and her subject's inadequacy. Similarly Dracula can be interpreted to have the role of a not-altogether-masculine father figure who is connected to the 'oral' mother, whom he is either thwarted by, or as in this instance, conjoined with. One comes to think of the scene where the Count is holding Mina to his breast as a part of a blood drinking ritual, most of all resembling 'a child forcing a kitten's nose into a saucer of milk to compel it to drink' (Stoker 1993, p363). This may resemble an act of maternity rather than paternity, but

that is exactly the essence of the Masochean father figure; he is either part of the mother or nothing at all, fluctuating between the sexes.

Dracula is an extension of the female vampires, and vice versa. Together this monstrous, feminine force has the capability to devour (suck blood) as well as penetrate (mesmerise), giving them the phallus, and turning the subject, here Harker, into a Masochean 'new man'. In terms of a Masochean contract, there is an obvious contractual relationship formed between Dracula and Jonathan, and disguised as a standard work contract, it positions Jonathan in a submissive position in relation to a dominant force of otherness. What furthermore emphasises their contractual dynamic's Masochean streak is the way that Jonathan has to enter the Count's castle by his own volition:

> The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture [….]:- 'Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!' He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince (Stoker 1993, p25).

This volition can be interpreted to symbolise an unconscious desire to enter into the dark realms of Dracula's castle, the territory in which taboos and fantasies can be explored. Moreover, the active choice that Harker has to make in order to enter resembles how the Masochean subject voluntarily hands himself over to the cruel torturer, in a contract he has himself written up.

What can be established from this analysis of *Dracula* is that the sexual subtext of the novel can indeed be interpreted to be of a Masochean masochistic nature, just like that of *The Beetle*. In the text we find representations of the Masochean subject, the Deleuzian

trilogy of mothers, a sadistic, feminised father figure, as well as a form of the Masochean contract of submission, instigated by the subject himself. Like the Beetle, the villains of *Dracula* are hypersexual monsters who attack in the fashion of vagina dentata; their eroticised, bloody, mouths are linked to the female reproductive system, and their hunger for blood can be read as a type of hysteria such as the sexual hysteria that it was argued women suffered from in Victorian times.

As with *The Beetle,* the mesmeric powers that the villains exhibit allow for an indulgence of the masochistic fantasy. The mesmerism is also connected to the literary hysteria that Hurley discusses, as it induces in the victim a desire to submit, all the while filling them with repulsion; Harker notes that the vampire brides are both 'thrilling and repulsive' (Stoker 1993, p54), and Lucy describes the feeling of the Count's presence as 'something very sweet and very bitter' (Stoker 1993, p130). Dracula furthermore induces dizzy spells when visiting Lucy in her chambers, and a 'horrible feeling of nausea' (Stoker 1993, p28) in Harker when he comes too close. This hysteria reflects the ambiguity connected to the 'reversal of affect' that Margree invokes in her analysis of *The Beetle,* showing how there is a fundamental yet deeply disturbing pleasure connected to the horror of the vampires, and the power-exchange they offer to the male subject.

Conclusion

The analyses conducted in the three chapters of this thesis show that while the Modern Gothic and its classic novels have been subject for numerous critical studies, neither the genre nor its respective literary works are exhausted. With this thesis I have brought attention to a new perspective that can be applied to the Modern Gothic texts; one that is concerned with their sexual subtext and the masochistic tendency that has already been picked up on by other critics and assigned to an exploration of homosexuality. My analysis, however, shows that this tendency also can be interpreted to be Masochean masochistic; a kind of masochism composed by Gilles Deleuze, derived entirely from Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's authorship. This concept of masochism is a non-clinical literary tendency that Deluze separates from Sadean sadism, emphasising that, from a literary point of view, the two concepts cannot be connected as sadomasochism – a clinical forging of the two 'perversions' – because they are derived from two different literary bodies of work.

In this thesis I have explored this concept of Masochean masochism and concluded that it promotes a relationship between a Masochean male subject that, via a contractual relationship with a female torturer, actualises his own romanticised fantasy of submission and servitude. The torturer that the Masochean male submits to, as well as the remaining female characters in Masoch, have, on a symbolic level, certain characteristics that Deleuze divides into three different mother types; one that is based on sexual lust called the 'uterine', one connected to a sadistic father figure known as the 'Oedipal', and one that mediates between the two and adds a maternal perspective, representing the Masochean

Ideal which Deleuze refers to as the 'oral' mother. As part of the contractual unity of the masochist and his torturer, the 'oral' mother assumes the phallus and performs a parthenogenesis in which the masochist is reborn as the 'new man', disavowing his genital sexuality and the sexual dominance that goes with it.

Essentially what the Masochean masochistic fantasy is about is the male desire to submit to a strong, cruel, dominant female. In *Venus in Furs* male sexual submission is glorified and associated with historical and mythical deities, personas, and scenarios, which in turn inspires the Masochean Ideal whom the Masochean male creates in his mind and actualises via the dominant female.

While this fantasy could be freely expressed by Masoch and his European contemporaries at the dawn of the Belle Epoque, this was far more problematic in Victorian society as it was restricted by rigid gender roles, as well as the fears and paranoia that permeated the fin de siècle. However, as we saw in chapter 2 and 3, this fantasy of power-exchange and role-reversal can still be traced in the Modern Gothic, but it takes a far more covert shape. As shown by critics such as Dryden, Spencer, and Hurley in chapter 1, the Modern Gothic was a genre that, at the time of the late-Victorian era, was a medium through which authors could explore anxiety-inducing issues regarding degeneration and taboo sexualities. What has been concluded by these critics is that while the monsters encountered in the Modern Gothic represent otherness and a sort of collective Victorian identity crisis, especially regarding masculinity, they also represent the ambiguity connected to forbidden desire, and the fascination with what was considered improper and degenerate.

This ambiguity has been described by Hurley to induce a form of literary hysteria which, she argues, shows in the texts as physical repulsion as soon as the characters are approached by the sexually dominant female or gender-ambiguous villain. Margree, in her

analysis of *The Beetle,* invokes the Freudian notion 'reversal of affect' suggesting that the repulsion that the protagonists express when articulating their experiences with the Beetle, really works as a cover-up of the true, yet disturbing, pleasure they take in their own sexual submission. These analyses I have made great use of in my own analysis, for they show how the masochistic desire overtly explored in Masoch is concealed behind a veil of horror and degenerate otherness in the Modern Gothic, as it was the only way it could be explored without being condemned.

The critics who I have dealt with in this thesis all pay attention to the masochistic tendency that can be found in the Modern Gothic where it manifests as the protagonists' forced submission to monstrous villains. However, these existing masochistic readings are preoccupied with homoerotic fear/desire, and seem to neglect the possibility that the narratives could be exploring a fantasy of male submission and female domination. With this thesis I have put focus on this specific perspective, and with my analyses of *The Beetle* and *Dracula* I have shown how the female villains' monstrosity and fantastical mesmeric powers allow for a brief indulgence in an obscured form of the power-exchange that can be found in the works of Masoch:

In *The Beetle* we find a villain whose gender-ambiguity has caused her to be read as a homoerotic catalyst, but with the analysis conducted in chapter 2, it has been shown how the Beetle can indeed be interpreted as a representative of the Masochean Ideal; she exhibits the aggressive sexuality, the sadism, and the maternal traits, that are all incorporated in the 'oral' mother. She possesses a mesmeric gaze that partly objectifies and fethishises her victims, partly controls them and strips them for agency, which in turn relieves them of their sexual and political dominance.

The main male protagonist, Paul Lessingham, first encounters the Beetle in Egypt as a young man of 18, and as shown in chapter 2, her seduction of him can be interpreted

as a form of contractual relationship in which he ended up as her sex slave. Paul Lessingham can be read as an awkward masculinity; he is an orphan on his own in Oriental Egypt as he gets seduced by the Beetle-woman, and I compare him to Masoch's Severin who is a 'supersensual' youth, also having his first sexual experiences while subjected to the cruelty of a strong female torturer. Thus Lessingham represents the Masochean 'new man'; he is enslaved by the Beetle, and disavows his sexual dominance.

It is especially interesting how the enslaved Lessingham is described with phallic analogies all the while he claims to have felt impotent when under the Beetle's influence, because it resonates the idea that Deleuze puts forward about the phallus representing the sexual dominance, while the penis is only the physical signifier of masculinity. The two are not necessarily connected, and when Lessingham disavows his genital sexuality as the Beetle's slave and 'new man' it is his symbolical phallus that he loses, and he is thus left with the penis.

In this state, Lessingham is completely submissive towards the Beetle, and it is not until he manages to escape that the Masochean masochistic fantasy comes to an end. The narrative is set 20 years later when Lessingham has made a radical change and become a politician. The experiences he had with the Beetle still affects him, and he is showing signs of inadequacy when it comes to traditional romantic relationships. This issue I have interpreted as a version of the double persona that Dryden discusses, for Lessingham has, in some respects, the same problematic masculinity that is displayed by Dr. Jekyll in R. L. Stevenson's novel, as he is divided between the role of the stoic politician and the submissive 'new man' – a persona that he had left behind but is reminded of, and perhaps even slips into in fits of hysteria, when the Beetle comes to London to haunt him.

It is when Lessingham is reminded about his experiences as the Beetle's slave that

he displays symptoms of the hysteria that Hurley mentions, which in turn suggests that there is indeed a certain amount of pleasure connected to these memories of sexual submission. The character of Robert Holt functions as a parallel to Lessingham; he is enslaved by the Beetle in London and utilised as a servant to help her get to Lessingham. Through Holt's descriptions we learn how the Beetle resembles an enveloping womb when she attacks, all the while still penetrating her victim's minds with her hypnotic powers. This shows how, in her afterlife, the Beetle has become a 'ghoulish example of her sex, who had so yielded to her depraved instincts as to have become nothing but a ghastly reminiscence of womanhood' (Marsh 1994, p22), or in other words, the incarnation of the Masochean 'oral' mother.

The ambivalence that the characters feel about submitting to the Beetle can be interpreted as a covert Masochean masochistic desire. It is also interesting how the eventual matrimonial unions of respectively Lessingham and Marjorie, and Sidney Atherton and Dora Grayling, come across as anticlimactic, as it can be read as a comment on the prosaic and restrictive Victorian views on marriage and gender roles outside of sexual fantasy.

My findings in *The Beetle* thus adds a new perspective on the masochistic tendency that was already detected in the novel by its few critics. In order to demonstrate how the Masochean masochistic tendency is not only applicable to *The Beetle,* which is a fairly unexplored novel, but to the general understanding of the subtext of the Modern Gothic, I applied the same analysis to *Dracula. Dracula* is a novel that has been analysed in depth by many scholars before me, but it was in fact chosen as a comparison, not only because it was written at the same time as *The Beetle* and has so many similarities, but also because it is, perhaps, the most genre-typical Modern Gothic novel there is. Thus finding the Masochean masochistic tendency in *Dracula* as well as *The Beetle* suggests that is is

a genre-typical tendency, more so than if found in *The Beetle* alone.

And as shown in chapter 3, the Masochean masochistic tendency can be traced in *Dracula,* even though the tendency takes a slightly different shape compared to *The Beetle.* The sexually dominant female villains in *Dracula* are in direct connection with a sadistic father figure, and together they make up one whole monstrous force of femininity to which the novel's 'new man', Jonathan Harker, submits. This, however, does not make the Masochean reading any weaker as we in the works of Masoch find 'the Greek' - the father figure who plays a part in the 'Oedipal' and/or 'oral' mother's dominance of the Masochean subject. The Greek is a gender-bender, occasionally dressing in drag and enjoying both male and female attention, which resembles my interpretation of Dracula as possessing certain female characteristics connected to his otherness. Both the female vampires as well as Dracula attack, like the Beetle, in a fashion that resembles the idea of vagina dentata; their over-eroticised mouths are linked to the female sex, and the fact that Dracula has such a mouth feminises his otherness. Thus I read the force of vampires, including both Lucy and Dracula, as representing the trinity of mother figures, as well as the Masochean Ideal.

In Stoker's novel we once more find an awkward masculinity in Harker whose honest and self-reflective diary entries make him come across as insecure and slightly co-dependent on his fiancé Mina. Harker thus falls into the same category as Lessingham; a problematic masculinity that is struggling to live up to be the sexually dominant male that he is expected to be. Harker is completely broken by his stay in Dracula's castle and has to be nurtured back to life and sanity, leaving him the same inconsistent masculinity as Lessingham is. That Harker is set in contrast to the strange, gender-bending yet profoundly dominant quasi-masculinity of the Count, only enhances the view of him as being a weaker male; incapable of competing with the feminine force of otherness

dominating him.

What is so crucial about the masochistic tendency in *Dracula* is that the subjection is welcomed by the victims. This is, of course, induced by the mesmeric powers that the vampires have in common with the Beetle, but it is very interesting how it is inherited in the vampires as some kind of animal magnetism, aiding them in their predation. The same goes for the 'contract' that Harker enters into when he has to step over the threshold of Dracula's castle by his own volition, as this, in addition to the induced desire to submit, creates a strong idea of a hidden sexual fantasy being actualised in the narrative.

What I have found in this thesis opens up for new research opportunities in more than one way. First of all, this Masochean masochistic tendency can be traced much further in the Modern Gothic, for instance in H. R. Haggard's novels, particularly *Allan Quatermain* (1887) and *She* (1887). In *Allan Quatermain*, a group of three British men, Allan Quatermain, Sir Henry Curtis and Captain John Good, travel to Africa accompanied by a Zulu warrior named Umslopogaas. In a hidden oasis they discover the Zu-Vendis – an ancient tribe that, amazingly, have fair skin and a culture resembling that of ancient Greece. The Zu-Vendis are ruled by the two Sister Queens, Nylephta and Sorais, who are both breathtakingly beautiful and terrifying in their royal power positions.

In *She* we once more have a party of male protagonists who travel into Africa's jungle. The party consists of Horace Holly, his foster son Leo, and their comical servant Job. The crew is on a mission to unravel the secrets of Leo's ancestry, and deep in the delirious swamps of Africa they find a matriarchal tribe called the Amahaggars lead by an immortal, white skinned, infinitely cruel queen called Ayesha, or '*She'.* Ayesha is so beautiful that all men who see her fall in love with her, but after slaying her lover in a rage of jealousy millennia ago, she is now waiting for his reincarnation, and treats all other

suitors mercilessly.

Both of Haggard's novels feature strong, powerful female villains with fantastic qualities and evil agendas fuelled by what can be read as sexual aggression. In *Allan Quatermain* the evil queen, Sorais, is described as having an air of 'passion in repose', like the sea 'that even on the bluest days never loses its visible stamp of power' (Haggard 2004, chapter XII), and this potential for cruelty has an ambiguous effect on the protagonists; they lust for her and fear her all at the same time. In *She* Ayesha has the same fear-inducing yet attractive influence on the male characters, and she possesses powers of the mind that puts her in the same boat as the Beetle and the vampires. Thus in these novels we find the same fascination mixed with fear that it has been established is a crucial part of the Masochean masochistic fantasy. We also find problematic masculinities who are particularly prone to dominance; the narrator in *She,* Holly, is pinned as a misogynist who has been unlucky with women due to his degenerate appearance, yet his brilliant mind makes him a sort of inside-out Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde concoction, and it is naturally he who gets to articulate the submissiveness that Ayesha induces in men.

There is a whole body of work in which the Masochean mascohsictic tendency can be found, featuring the monstrous, cruel, (sexually) aggressive, female villains that represent the obscured fantasy of the Masochean Ideal. These narratives will also hold the problematic masculinities that are so common in late-Victorian fiction. Haggard's novels belong to the Imperial Gothic genre that Kucich discusses in his work on Imperial masochism, and this furthermore opens up for discussions on how the colonial and Imperial discourses fit into the Mascohean masochism found in Victorian literature. In chapter 2 I only briefly touched upon how Mercer's theory of racial fetishism and the male gaze impacts on my reading of *The Beetle*, but this opens up for more research on how the need for relief of sexual dominance perhaps coincides with the need for relief of

political and colonial responsibility, and how this is expressed in the Modern Gothic genre[1].

Apart from proposing Masochean masochism as a genre-typical tendency, I also wish to open up for a broader exploration of Richard Marsh's authorship. *The Beetle* was and still is the most popular of Marsh's books, but he published a large numberof other works, over 80 novels and many short stories, including *The Goddess: A Demon* (1900) and *The Magnetic Girl* (1903). Marsh utilised various genres apart from the Modern Gothic such as romance, detective fiction, and mystery, and the narratives have great potential for scholarly analyses. A lot of Marsh's works are concerned with gender, and interestingly seem to promote female prosperity, which resonates well with the tendency of the Belle Epoque.

In this thesis I have otherwise refrained from commenting into the personal lives of respectively Marsh and Stoker in aid of my analyses, even though this is something that has been done by many scholars, especially with regards to Stoker, the homoerotic undercurrent in *Dracula,* and Stoker's connection to Oscar Wilde. This has created a strong foundation for the homoerotic readings of Stoker's work, and looking into the implications of both Stoker and Marsh's personal lives could potentially aid my argument of the Masochean masochistic tendency in the same way. As I noted in chapter 2, the eventual matrimonial union of the protagonists in *The Beetle* seems somewhat anticlimactic, and this is possibly a comment made by Marsh on the rigidity of conventional marriage, perhaps due to factors in his personal love life. However, at the end of the day we can only speculate as to the the sexuality of the authors, as well as what inspired their literary agendas, and thus cannot assign the sexual subtext to be mirroring their personal lives. Also, what I have shown with this thesis is that the Masochean masochistic tendency is a concept, not tied to *The Beetle* and *Dracula*, but present in the Modern Gothic genre

1 Tim Youngs has analysed both *The Beetle* and *Dracula* as being concerned with reversed colonialism, and dedicates a chapter to the two novels in his book *Beastly Journeys* (2013).

as whole.

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