Scenes of Masochism and Male Homosocial Desire from Tobias Wolff's *In Pharaoh's Army* and Pat Barker's *Regeneration*.

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Abstract:

This article, *"Scenes of Masochism and Male Homosocial Desire from Tobias Wolff's In Pharaoh's Army and Pat Barker's Regeneration,"* seeks to develop a historically contingent reading of the term "masculinity" as it is elaborated in relation to sexuality and discipline. More specifically, I am interested in looking at the layers of discursive meanings that construct or clothe the body as "masculine." My aim is not to undress this body of its prosthetic signifiers, but address this body, or to locate it in relation to its social surroundings, and disciplinary institutions. By examining a series of scenes, passages and arguments from Tobias Wolff's *In Pharaoh's Army* and Pat Barker's *Regeneration*, I will revise Gilles Deleuze's notion of "masochism" to highlight the political stakes in formulating a male homosocial masochistic scene.

Key words: Pharaoh's Army, Regeneration, masculinity, masochism

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Tobias Wolff'ün *Pharaoh's Army* ve Pat Barker'ın *Regeneration isimli eserlerinde Mazoşizm ve Homososyal Arzu Sahneleri.*

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Özet:

"Tobias Wolff'ün Pharaoh's Army ve Pat Barker'ın Regeneration isimli eserlerinde Mazoşizm ve Homososyal Arzu Sahneleri" isimli bu makale cinsellik ve disiplinle bağlantılı olarak ele alınan "erkeklik" teriminin tarihe bağlı bir okumasını yapmayı amaçlar. Özellikle, bedeni "erkeksi" olarak giydiren ya da inşa eden söylemsel anlam katmanlarıyla ilgiliyim. Amacım bu bedenin prostekik belirleyicilerini soymak değil, onu incelemek ve sosyal çevresi ve terbiye edici kurumları ile ilişki içerisinde yeniden konumlandırmaktır. Tobias Wolff'ün Pharaoh's Army ve Pat Barker'ın Regeneration isimli çalışmalarından bir dizi sahne, pasaj ve argümanı inceleyerek bir erkek homososyal mazoşistik sahnenin oluşumundaki politik riskleri vurgulamak için Gilles Deleuze'ün "mazoşizm" kavramını gözden geçireceğim.

Anahtar kelimeler: Pharaoh's Army, erkeklik, mazoşizm

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This essay draws on literary scenes of male masochism that subvert some of the gender norms that limit masochism in psychoanalytic theory. I am interested in exploring, therefore, how masochism, a concept firmly rooted within a sex-gender system, can both perpetuate and interrupt traditional notions of masculinity. My aim is not to undress masculine bodies of their prosthetic signifiers, but address such bodies, or to locate them in relation to their social surroundings and, in this case, their disciplinary surroundings. By examining a scene from Tobias Wolff's *In Pharaoh's Army* and several key passages from Pat Barker's *Regeneration*, I argue that the figure of the 'male mother,' despite his/her exclusion from psychoanalytic theories of masochism, opens male homosocial disciplinary settings to alternative and politically resistant forms of desire, pleasure and solidarity.

Before turning to Pat Barkerand exploring the genderedforms of masochism represented in *Regeneration*, Iwant to set the stage for this analysis by first looking at a single crystalizing image from a different novel, Tobias Wolff's *In Pharaoh's Army.* This short scene, in particular, introduces the conceptual ties that bind discipline andmasculinity to questions of cynicism and masochism.In the scene from Wolff's novel, then, the narrator describes his first encounter with his friend Huge Pierce.

> This went on all night. Toward morning, wet, filthy, weaving on my feet as two drill sergeants took turns yelling in my face, I looked across the platoon bay at the morose rank of men waiting their ration of abuse, and saw in one mud-caked face a sudden lunatic flash of teeth. The guy was *grinning*. At *me*. In complicity, as if he knew me, had always known me, and knew exactly how to throw the switch that turned the most miserable luck, the worst degradations and prospects, into my choicest amusements. Like this endless night, this insane, ghastly scene. Wonderful! A scream! I grinned back at him. We were friends before we ever knew each other's names. (Wolfe, 1994, p. 50)

If we posit that this scene of "abuse" functions as a disciplinary practice within the military—as a method to train bodies—then how do Pierce's grinning teeth interrupt this practice? Does this interruption constitute a perversion of military authority, where the supposedly docile body begins to resist "the worst degradations" of a disciplinary regime? Or is Pierce's grin merely a fetishization of discipline, where the narrator and Pierce's imagined "complicity" only makes their bodies more docile and accepting of punishment? These questions might broadly be categorized as "political," in that they seek to locate the power of bodies (individual/collective) in relation to the power of the institution (state).

Likewise, a slightly different set of interconnected questions has to do with how sexuality or desire is functioning in this scene. In as much as this scene imagines *pleasure* as flowing from an act of discipline to an act of complicity, it raises at least three questions. Is Pierce's pleasure in discipline "masochistic"? How does desire function in the formation of this friendship (a friendship without or before names)? And, finally, what is the relationship between masochism and male homosocial desire?

At one of the possible intersections between these lines of enquiry is a formation of a particular "masculine" subject. That is to say, "masculinity" must position itself in relation to a series of social forces, including an axis that run through questions of authority and sexuality. In order to unpack these relationships, I want to begin by elaborating a distinction between cynicism and masochism.

In SlavojZizek's essay, "How did Marx Invent the Symptom," he argues for a notion of ideology that is rooted in material practices rather than imaginary or cognitive perceptions. He points out that "the cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and social reality, but none the less insists upon the mask…one knows the falsehood very well…but still one does not renounce it" (1989, p. 29). This "cynical" subject is characterized by a disjunction between what they *know* and what they *do*. Despite the fact that the subject is aware of the 'real social relations,' they willfully act 'as if' they reject what they

know. Here Zizek deploys Marx's concept of "commodity fetishism" to explain the seeming breakdown between knowing and doing. A commodity fetish allows the subject to overcome or temporarily disavow their knowledge of social relations by obscuring the relationship between humans and things. While the subject might not subscribe to an illusory model of social relations, "*the things (commodities) themselves believe in* [the subject's] *place*" (1989, p. 34). In other words, the responsibility of acting in accordance with what you know is relieved by a fetishistic object who thinks in your place. For example, every Sunday, millions of spectators disavow the knowledge that they are not a professional athlete (or in anyway affiliated with a football team) when they put on the jersey of their favorite football team. Although the fan knows very well that their social relation to the team is fundamentally different than the athletes, *the jersey itself* disavows this knowledge; the jersey "believes" what and where the fan cannot. In this way, the fan, after three hours of sitting in front of a TV, nevertheless feels the thrill of victory along with the athletes.

This mode of fetishism, where the cynical subject acts according to the ideological imperatives through a process of disavowal offers us one reading of Pierce's grin. Here the grin would not figure as a perversion of or resistance to the disciplinary authority, but would, in fact, be the very sign of its cynical efficacy. The grin, therefore, suspends the reality of bodily punishment and it knows pleasure, enjoyment, and "amusement" in the place of the soldier. This reading of Pierce, however, is overly functionalist. It primarily focuses on the material outcome of Pierce's pleasure, namely, that he becomes a better, more docile soldier.

An alternative reading of the grin—a masochistic reading—would focus more on the interplay of psycho-sexual forces that give rise to pleasure. In Gilles Deleuze's work, *Masochism*, he points out that the "masochistic hero appears to be educated and fashioned by the authoritarian woman[1] whereas basically it is he who forms her, dresses her for the part and prompts the harsh words she addresses to him. It is the victim who speaks through the mouth of his torturer, without sparing himself" (1991, p. 22). The masochistic scenario, for Deleuze,

constitutes an inversion of the apparent power relations. The appearance of the disciplininggauthority dominating the docile body of the obedient masochist "conceals a criticism and a provocation" (1991, p. 88). The masochist "simply attacks the law on another flank. What we call humor…is a downward movement from the law to its consequences…By scrupulously applying the law we are able to demonstrate its absurdity and provoke the very disorder that it is intended to prevent or to conjure" (1991, p. 88). Indeed, by staging an extreme and literal enactment of the disciplinary rules, the masochist perverts the spirit of the law. That which the law seeks to prohibit not only becomes permissible but also logical, necessary and sanctioned. "By observing the very letter of the law, we refrain from questioning its ultimate or primary character; we then behave as if the supreme sovereignty of the law conferred upon it the enjoyment of all those pleasure that it denies us; hence by the closest adherence to it, and by zealously embracing it, we may hope to partake of its of its pleasures" (1991, p. 88).

In other words, Deleuze developshis argument about masochism along two lines. First of all, it humorous and pleasurable to see the law's intentions subverted through a "naïve" adherence to them, but secondly, the pain involved in punishment, as an enforcement of the laws, forms the "necessary precondition for achieving" pleasure. It is not so much that the masochist experiences pain as pleasure, but rather the "masochist regards the law as a punitive process and therefore begins by having the punishment inflicted upon himself; once he has undergone the punishment, he feels that he is allowed or indeed commanded to experience the pleasure that the law was supposed to forbid" (1991, p. 88). So long as one is already being punished for transgressing the law, the law necessitates that the transgression take place – the punishment seeks the crime, just as the pain gives sanction to the pleasure.

While the psychosexual dynamics of the masochistic subject can be elaborated in classical psychoanalytic terms, this sort of analysis relies on the structuring force of sex-gender differences. For instance, Deleuze posits that the apparent weakness of the masochist's ego "is a

strategy by which the masochist manipulates the woman into the ideal state for the performance of the role he has assigned to her. If the masochist is lacking in anything, it would be the superego and not the ego at all" (1991, p. 124). The superego is instead externalized onto the figure of the beating woman, but this externalization is ultimately unstable. This instability arises, for Deleuze[2], due to a recasting of the Oedipal drama, where the beating woman is figured as an "oral mother" on to whom a fetishistic "maternal phallus" is attached. Here "the process of disavowal is linked to castration not contingently but essentially and originally; the expression of fetishistic disavowal, 'No, the mother does not lack a phallus,' is not one particular form of disavowal among others, but formulates the very principle from which the other manifestations of disavowal derive" (1991, p. 127-128). At the root of the classic masochistic scene, according to Deleuze, is an attempt to suspend a gendered relation to phallic power from the point of view of the beaten subject.

Indeed, it is through this disavowal that Deleuze accomplishes a series of reversals. The "oral mother" can only be "allowed" to function as an externalization of the masochist superego because she is figured as retaining a "maternal phallus." In turn, however, this fetishistic appearance of a maternal phallus hides a more fundamental operation, in which the masochist's ego and the "oral mother" become complicit in the overthrowing of the father. Deleuze argues, "for in reality the superego is dead – not, however, as the result of an active negation but of a 'disavowal.' The beating woman represents the superego superficially and in the external world, and she also transforms the superego into the recipient of the beating, the essential victim. This explains the conspiracy of the mother-figure and the ego against the father's likeness. *The father's likeness represents both genital sexuality and the superego as an agent of repression: one is expelled with the other*" (1991, p. 125). That is to say, the superego is cut out of a scene that takes place between the mother and ego through a dialectical process whereby the masochist externalizes his superego onto the beating woman by disavowing her lack of a phallus, and, in return, it is supposedly the superego (the

(im)moral element) within the masochist that the woman punishes. In either case, the authority of the superego as a "father-image" is destabilized as it shuttles between the beating woman and masochistic subject, finding a home with neither.

An interpretation of Pierce's grin as the sign of a masochistic subject is compelling, if imperfect. While a provisional reading of a masochistic Pierce might refigure his obsessive obedience as a humorous and pleasurable perversion of the disciplinary law, it could only do so by disavowing the lack of the woman-figure in this homosocial scene. This "lack of a lack," to use Lacanian phraseology, already demonstrates the insufficiency of the Freud-Lacan-Deleuze description of masochism. To expose this insufficiency is to ask, *what are the psychosexual dynamics of a male-on-male masochism?*

According to Deleuze, Freud *rules out* this version of masochism because of the double-threat of castration and homosexuality: "Since, according to the theory, the masochist's aim is to escape from the consequences of the transgression against the father, he proceeds to identity with the mother and offers himself to the father as a sexual object; however, since this would in turn renew the threat of castration which he is trying to avert, he chooses 'being beaten' both as a exorcism of 'being castrated' and as a regressive substitute of 'being loved'; at the same time the mother takes on the role of the person who beats, as a result of repression of the homosexual choice[3]" (1991, p. 106). This formulation of the masochistic subject must be countered with at least two major objections[4]. On the one hand, "being beaten," and the bodily threat entailed therein, seems just as likely to function as a regressive substitute for "being castrated" as for "being loved." That is to say, "being beaten" seems to stand in an ambivalent relationship to castration and love, and certainly not as a straightforward "exorcism" of the possibility of castration. The second, and perhaps more damming objection has to do with the selection of the mother as a means to repress the homosexual choice. Since the choice of "being beaten" and the repression of homosexual desire are described as occurring "*at the same time*," the possibility of homosexual or homosocial masochism is excluded from

this construction. In addition, the simultaneity of the two choices also implies that "being beaten" functions as a regressive substitute for "being loved" only because of the repression of homosexual desire. In this way the repression of homosexual desire not only forces the masochistic subject to displace the father with the mother, but also to substitute the possibility of "being loved" with the reality of "being beaten". Suddenly, it becomes apparent, in this formulation, that homosexual desire is central to the formation of the masochistic subject.

Before proposing a theory of how a male homosocial masochism might work, I think it is important to review the two readings of Pierce's grin that have already been offered. One must recall what is at stake in a theory of male homosocial masochism. If one reads Pierce's grin as a cynical response to military authority, then it functions as the sign of his fetishistic acceptance of disciplinary power. Like the football jersey worn by spectators to disavow their 'real' relationship to the team, Pierce wears or performs his grin so as to suspend his knowledge about his 'real' relationship to the military. The implication of this reading is that Piece allows his grin to think for him. That is to say, the materiality of the grin itself allows Pierce to enjoy his full and repeated acceptance of discipline, to act 'as if' he doesn't know he is being psychically controlled. Such a reading figures Pierce as fully interpellated by a dominant ideological and disciplinary system. The alternative, psychosexual reading argues that Pierce's grin is a symptom of a masochistic desire, where his full compliance with regulative norms (discipline) produces a humorous and pleasurable perversion of the disciplinary intensions. Such a reading focuses on Pierce's ability to experience precisely the pleasure the law seeks to forbid, not by negating the law but by scrupulously following it. Indeed, by following the economic logic of the law connecting each pleasurable transgression to a painful punishment, Pierce is able to experience each punishment as a license or directive to pleasure. In this way, by reading Pierce as a masochist, one is able to open the possibility of a resistance to socially regulative regimes that seek to discipline the body.

The persuasiveness of this masochistic reading, however, is ultimately mitigated by the failure of psychoanalytic discourse to account for male homosocial masochism. Furthermore, while much is at stake in these two interpretations of Pierce's grin, neither of them explains the full complexity of the disciplinary scene. This grin does not occur in isolation, nor in a private encounter between the sergeant and Pierce. Indeed, the grin is directed "at *me*," at the narrator, at the reader. The sociality of "complicity" must be taken up at least as urgently as the psychology of the grin. Consequently, any theorization of male homosocial masochism needs to breakout of classical psychoanalytic discourse and situate itself in a socio-historical context. To make room for such an analytic shift, I would like to add a few more disciplinary scenes by way of comparison.

Pat Barker's novel *Regeneration* offers us a series of elaborations on the ideological and psychosexual questions under dispute. Additionally, with its focus on homosocial relationships, (both in the trenches and psychiatric ward) it lays out a diverse textual field for analyzing the social-sexual dynamics of male relationships. Before addressing these particular scenes, passages and relationships, it is worth pointing out that the very thematics of *Regeneration* rests on the question of male masochism. Doctor Rivers' conflict over the redeployment of Siegfried Sassoon is rooted in his inability to determine if Sassoon's desire to return is masochistic, and thus the humorous culmination of an anti-war resistance, or merely a disavowal of his 'real' relationship to his country/military/fellow soldiers. Put differently, it is a matter of determining if Sassoon and Rivers disavow their knowledge about the war and let their respective uniforms think for them or if they use their uniforms to make homosexuality—that which the uniform prohibits—the uniform's humorous and pleasurable mandate.

Consider the scene that immediately follows Prior's traumatic recollection depicting the onset of his mutism:

> Rivers watched the play of emotions on Prior's face as he fitted the recovered memory into his past. He was unprepared for what happened next.
>
> '*Is that all?*' Prior said.
>
> He seemed to be beside himself with rage.
>
> 'I don't know about all,' Rivers said. 'I'd've thought that was a traumatic experience by any standards.'
>
> Prior almost spat at him. 'It was *nothing*.'
>
> He put his head in his hands, at first, it seemed, in bewilderment, but then after a few moments he began to cry. Rivers waited a while, then walked round the desk and offered his handkerchief. Instead of taking it, Prior seized Rivers by the arms, and began butting him in the chest, hard enough to hurt. This was not an attack, Rivers realized, though if felt like one. It was the closest Prior could come to asking for physical contact. (1993, p. 104)

Since Prior cannot imagine himself as "the kind of person who breaks down," it is unlikely that he would find any traumatic memory a satisfactory excuse or account of his mutism (1993, p. 105). This prohibition against mutism is itself a symptom of a larger prohibition. Rivers, who suffers from a stammer, explains that mutism and stammering arise from the same "conflict between wanting to speak and knowing w-what you've got to say is not acceptable" (1993, p. 97). In this way, not speaking is to reveal a desire to transgress. Accordingly, in the excerpted scene, when Prior butts his head against River's chest, he is not only seeking "physical contact," but also an absolution through the medium of physical pain and punishment. Prior's relationship to Rivers is unstable because Rivers functions both as a "military doctor" (a sergeant of discipline) and as a fellow victim of the war[5] (a peer or friend). This confusion about Rivers role is dramatized by Prior's desire to externalize his superego in the figure of the disciplinarian, while simultaneously commiserate with him. Here, through the head butt, we can read the regressive substitution of "being loved" by the father with the reality of "being beaten." Only, of course, Rivers is a reluctant beater,

and has to be literally dragged into the masochistic scene by Prior. In this way Rivers is a weak superego, making him an excellent beater for a masochist. Remember, in the masochistic scene the point is merely to produce the simulacra of the father-image in the beating oral-mother. The masochist must disavow the mother's "lack of a phallus," just as Prior must disavow Rivers "lack of the phallus." This disavowal is readily accomplished because Rivers, as a military doctor, is *supposed* to wield the "phallic power" of the disciplinary institution—just as Yealland does. This question of Rivers functioning as the "beating woman" in the masochist scene will be explored more fully later, but first, it is necessary to address the glaring fact that this "physical contact" takes place between two men – it is seemingly not subject to the prohibition against homosexuality.

Eve Sedgwick's work *Between Men: English Literature and Homosocial Desire* (1985) offers us an socio-historical accounting of the prohibition against homosexuality. Sedgwick's study seems to follow from a now famous argument made by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*. Here Foucault states, "the nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being an anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality…Homosexuality appeared as one of the forms of sexuality when it was transposed from the practice of sodomy onto a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (1985, p. 43). This historically contingent appearance of the "homosexual subject" in the nineteenth-century had the effect of essentializing and pathologizing the love and desire between men. No sexual act or non-act was sufficient to identify the homosexual. Instead, what counted as male love or desire could only be determined by an analysis of the subject's interiority, through an investigation of their desire.

Exploring the larger consequences of this investigation is part of Sedgwick's project. She elaborates on Foucault's argument by pointing out that the distinction between "normal" homosocial behaviors and

"abnormal" homosocial desire is a gendered distinction. That is to say, it has become a cultural normative belief that homosocial friendships between women, where women seek to promote each other's interests, is not radically different than homosexual desire between women. For Sedgwick "it seems at this moment to make an obvious kind of sense to say that women in our society who love women, women who teach, study, nurture, suckle, write about, march for, vote for, give jobs to, or otherwise promote the interests of women, are pursuing congruent and closely related activities. Thus the adjective 'homosocial' as applied to women's bonds…need not be pointedly dichotomized as against 'homosexual'; it can intelligibly denominate the entire continuum" (1985, p. 3). Indeed, the possibility of a continuum or spectrum of homosocial bonds, ranging from social interest to social desire, is precisely the social space that is obscured by the dichotomous distinction between hetero- and homosexuality. "To draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire,' of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual"[6] (1985, p. 2).

At this historical moment, in contrast to the "obvious kind of sense" that a continuum exists between women's homosocial and homosexual activities, men's homosocial and homosexual activities are generally read as radically discontinuous. This separation of men's social interests and sexual desires is a carefully monitored disciplinary distinction in contemporary western culture. Sedgwick is interested in the ways this constructed boundary works to control how male bodies are allowed to interrelate. For Sedgwick, "the importance—an importance—of the 'homosexual' … comes not necessarily from its regulatory relation to a nascent or already-constituted minority of homosexual people or desires, but from its potential for giving whoever wields it a structuring definitional leverage over the whole range of male bodies that shape the social constitution" (1985, p. 86). The ability to detect, interpret and name homosexual desire becomes the power to legitimize or pathologize the male body in general. A whole symptomology of "homosexual" tendencies becomes the target and the

threat for *all men* who wish to avoid becoming pathologized as "homosexual."

Accordingly, "what modern European-style homophobia delineates is thus a space, and perhaps a mechanism, of domination. So far as it is possible to do so without minimizing the specificity and gravity of European homosexual oppression and identity, it is analytically important to remember that the domination offered by this strategy is not only over a minority population, but over the bonds that structure all social form" (1985, p. 87). Thus, the conceptual construction the "homosexual" creates a new law within male social behavior. This law takes the form an invisible and interior distinction, at once Manichean and ubiquitous. The logic here is that "not only must homosexual men be unable to ascertain whether they are to be the objects of 'random' homophobic violence, *but no man must be able to ascertain that he is not (that his bonds are not) homosexual"*[7](1985, p. 89). It is through this constant threat that certain forms of masculinity are formed, "for to be a man's man is separated only by an invisible, carefully blurred, always-already-crossed line from being 'interested in men.'" (1985, p. 89).

The relationship between knowledge and the threat of violence in the construction of masculine homophobia is revealing in Prior's relationship to Rivers, and the possibility of a male masochism more generally. During one their interviews Rivers pushes Prior to describe what he "felt" while walking in front of machine gun fire. Prior eventually replies that he felt "'*Sexy*,'" like one of "those men who lurk around in bushes waiting to jump out on unsuspecting ladies and – *er-um* – display their equipment?" (1993, p. 78). Prior's vulnerability to the snipers undoubtedly accounts for his sense of nakedness or exposure, but it is precisely this undressing of the uniform—as the sign of disciplined masculinity—that also accounts for the sexual feeling on the homosocial battlefield. Although Prior attempts to reinscribe his feeling into a heterosexual scenario of exhibitionism, there are no "ladies" in the trenches, only men. The order for the soldier to walk "in a straight line…at normal walking speed" in front of machine gun fire takes the

form of "an *extremely* ridiculous event." The soldier is being punished by a law intended to insure order (the straight line) and bravery (the normal walking speed). As a practice or exercise, the command functions to reinforce a notion of masculinity. The soldier is supposed to suspend their knowledge of the 'real' relationship between their bodies and bullets, and instead let the uniform think in their place. It is the uniform that believes in the order, in bravery and in a version of masculinity that prohibits homosocial desire. The humor, or "extreme ridiculousness" of the event arises as the faithful soldiers find themselves unprotected by the uniform. Indeed, by following the law of the uniform, they become undressed. The command, as a type of punishment, seeks its crime in the transgressive pleasure (of) following the order. It is precisely the homosocial desire prohibited by the uniform that now becomes its greatest demand. Speaking of a fellow soldier, Prior tells Rivers, "he had very blue eyes, you know, Towers" (1993, p. 106). The constructed division between homosocial camaraderie and homosocial desire is dismantled because there can be no more punishment – they are already, as it were, being punished for being gay. All that is left is the pleasure of transgressing the line between homosocial friendship and desire.

The novel makes male homosocial masochism available primarily through the character of Rivers, and the concept of a "male mother" (1993, p. 107). If Freud would have the masochist choose to be beaten by his mother due a prohibition against homosexuality, the category of the so-called "male mother" would interrupt this prohibition. Recall, in the Freud-Deleuze formulation, due to a disavowal of the mother's "lack," a type of "female father" ends up serving as the masochist's disciplinarian. However, because the psychoanalytic discourse itself lacks a sense of its own historicity, it cannot see what Foucault and Sedgwick show to be historically contingent, namely, that the prohibition against "homosexuality" is a socially constructed method of controlling various bodies by forcing a continuum of libidinal energies into a binary division. Such a disciplinary regime, organized at the level of the superego or symbolic order, is precisely the law that the masochistic destabilizes. In other words, the choice of the "oral mother" as the masochist's

disciplinarian has less to do with a historically contingent prohibition against homosexuality, and more to do with the need to create a "fake father" to stand in as an externalized and weak superego. Because Rivers' project entails "redefining what it [means] to be a man," using his supposed authority as a military doctor to deconstruct the division between male homosocial interest and desire, he is able to "allow" his patients "to understand that breakdown [is] nothing to be ashamed of, that horror and fear [are] inevitable responses to the trauma of war and [are] better acknowledged than suppressed, [and] that feelings for other men [are] natural and right" (1993, p. 48). Like the "female father," the "male mother" is able to serve as the fetishistic simulacra of the father-image. Furthermore, by ordering his patients to "remember the traumatic events that had led to their being sent [to Craiglockhart], he [is], in effect, inflicting pain" (1993, p. 47). Put together, the fetishistic disavowal made possible by the 'male mother' and the infliction of pain through the command to recall traumatic events, signals the invention of a male homosocial masochism.

It is important, before concluding, to register Rivers complaint with the term 'male mother.' Rivers "distrusted the implication that nurturing, even when done by a man, remains female, as if the ability were in some way borrowed, or even stolen from women…If that were true, then there was really very little hope" (1993, p. 107). This distrust might be reformulated from the perspective of the "female father," where there is an implication that punishment, even when done by a women, remain essentially male, essentially phallic. Such reservations seem to simultaneously miss the point and be the point. Masochism, as I have situated it, functions primarily as mode of resistance to already well-established societies of discipline. In the moment of disavowal, where the masochist acts 'as if' the mother is the father or the nurturer is the disciplinarian, this misrecognition depends precisely on a "borrowing" of one normative gender category by the other. In the process of this "borrowing," however, the coercive forces of a disciplinary system cease to control the subject's body or sexuality.

Another way to conceive of this dynamic is through the term "dressing down." On the one hand "dressing down" refers to a state of being underdressed or dressed casually. The masochistic subject seeks to externalize his superego onto someone who functions as a "dressed down" father. Prior and Sassoon exchange their military uniforms for more casual uniforms, khakis, civilian clothing, even hospital gowns. Likewise, their superiors and those responsible for maintaining discipline also become "dressed down." Rivers' medical uniform is a relatively "dressed down" version of the high-ranking military uniforms of superiors in field. In this way, Rivers uniform is "dressed-up" just enough to be fetishized by his patients. Rivers uniform believes in Rivers' authority for his patients, despite their knowledge of Rivers 'real' social relationship with then, which is generous and nurturing. On the other hand, within the military, to give someone a "dressing down" is to scold or discipline them. Each act of punishment is a type of "dressing down." Thus, in the masochistic scene, a weak or "dressed down" superego "dresses down" or punishes the masochistic subject. As a result the masochist is metaphorically undressed or released from constraints of the superego. Indeed, in the male homosocial society of this novel, uniforms hide and discipline the male body. To be "dressed right" or "dressed left" is to describe on which side of the pant leg the penis rests, and on which side of the hetero/homo divide desire is curbed. If the masochistic scene does, in fact, allow the subject to escape the disciplinary enclosures of cultural norms, it will also free desire to pass through a continuum of possible social relations.

[1] The question of the torture's gender will be taken up later in this paper. For now, it is important to indicate that Deleuze—working from Sacher-Masoch's novels—figures the torturer as an "oral-mother" who works in alliance with the masochist's ego to dispel the image of the father and superego.

[2] Here Deleuze stages his argument within the basic constraints of the Oedipal drama as formulated by Freud.

[3] Although Deleuze goes on to reject this formulation by Freud, he does so for different reasons, what I would argue are the wrong reasons.

[4] An equally important objection, which is in great need of examination, is the apparent blindness of these theories to female-on-female masochism, and female masochists in general.

[5] Prior is always attempting to get Rivers to show his "personal" side. The suggestion that mutism and stammering flow from a similar transgression is merely one way in which Prior breaks down the barrier between patient and doctor. This leveling of power relations is accelerated when Rivers states: "I imagine most of us could [have broken down] if the pressure were bad enough. I know I could." Prior takes this as moment of bonding between the two, asking, "Did the wallpaper speak?" (106).

[6] It is important to note that the sexualization of political relationships is not unproblematic. Depending on the specific circumstances, such a sexualization can function to help or hinder a group or individual's political aspirations. For example, the conflation of feminist activism with lesbian desires has been just one way in which women's sexuality has been used as a tool to marginalize and pathologize their political claims. The instrumentalization of sexuality in the political arena, however, has been predicated on a binary sexuality and not a continuum. In this way lesbianism is essentialized as the 'true' subject of feminism, whereas an understanding of sexuality along a historically changing spectrum of sexualities would allow women (and men) to acknowledge the role of desire in homosocial bonding and activism without that desire becoming the single and essential cause and goal of the political action.

[7] My emphasis

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