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SADOMASOCHISM IN *JANE EYRE*:
A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXCHANGE OF POWER

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

BY

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ABSTRACTSADOMASOCHISM IN *JANE EYRE*:

A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXCHANGE OF POWER

BY KHUSHI BHASIN

At first glance, the concept of a sadomasochistic relationship seems to be relatively modern as its presence often co-exists with the practice of BDSM (Bondage, Discipline/ Domination, Sadism/ Submission, Masochism) in the 21st century. However, as this thesis argues, the nineteenth-century roots of the term demonstrate that the practice of sadomasochism is not only apparent in Victorian fiction but central to its discussions of power. By examining Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*, this thesis will explore the ways in which different characters in the novel gesture towards performing sadism, masochism, and sadomasochism in their relationships. The analysis of these practices will take place through a psychological lens, thus reflecting on how sadomasochism occurs in *Jane Eyre* as a psychological exchange of power instead of a sexual one. Furthermore, by looking at different institutions in Jane's life, including Gateshead, Lowood School, Thornfield Hall, Moor House, and Ferndean Manor, I will investigate how they helped her come to terms with suffering, find pleasure in pain, and develop sadomasochistic desires.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Professor Megan Stephan who helped me throughout the process of producing my paper. Without her guidance and knowledge, it would not have been possible to write this thesis. Professor Stephan, thank you so much for your constant support and belief in me. Thank you for sitting with me through numerous meetings and sharing your invaluable ideas. Your kindness and patience are things that I deeply appreciate and will always carry with me. Thank you.

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Introduction

In *Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Bronte depicts the journey of finding pleasure in pain through the character of Jane Eyre. She portrays how her character accepts the presence of suffering in her life and learns to seek pleasure from it to make her experiences bearable. This coping mechanism that Jane develops allows her to exhibit sadomasochistic desires and seek an exchange of power and control in her relationships. Before looking at Jane's relationships with others through a sadomasochistic lens, it is important to pay attention to the origin of this term. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the word *Sadism* first appeared in 1818 and was named after the French aristocrat and writer Donatien Alphonse Francois, the Marquis de Sade. His works heavily focus on the sexual pleasures his characters derive from cruelty, torture, and humiliation. OED defines *Sadism* as an "Enthusiasm for inflicting pain, suffering, or humiliation on others; *spec.* a psychological disorder characterized by sexual fantasies, urges, or behavior involving the subjection of another person to pain, humiliation, bondage, etc." A person who is a sadist or practices sadism asserts dominance and desires physical and psychological control over his subject. The act of inflicting pain on others puts them in a position of power in which they find immense sexual and emotional pleasure.

The term *Masochism* first appeared in 1892 and was named after an Austrian writer, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. *Masochism* is defined by OED as "The urge to derive pleasure, esp. sexual gratification, from one's own pain or humiliation; the pursuit of such pleasure. Also in weakened sense: deliberate pursuit of or enthusiasm for an activity that appears to be painful, frustrating, or tedious." Unlike sadism, the concept of masochism revolves around deriving

pleasure from experiencing pain and humiliation. A masochist plays the role of a submissive in a relationship and seeks pleasure through one's own pain. The combination of these two words, *sadism* and *masochism*, is *sadomasochism*, a term which was coined in 1919 and is defined as a "Psychological tendency or (esp. sexual) practice characterized by both sadism and masochism" by OED. A sadomasochistic relationship typically involves a dominant and a submissive partner; one is a sadist and the other is a masochist. This kind of relationship successfully fulfills the desires of both partners as one seeks pleasure from inflicting pain and the other derives pleasure from experiencing pain.

In *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty*, Gilles Deleuze analyzes the works of Leopold Sacher-Masoch and claims that "The sadist thinks in terms of institutionalized possession, the masochist in terms of contracted alliance. Possession is the sadist's particular form of madness just as the pact is the masochist's" (20-21). The mind of a sadist desires power, control, and submission, and it derives psychological pleasure from being the dominant one in a relationship. On the contrary, a masochist desires to be controlled and possessed and it derives pleasure from being the submissive one in a relationship. In *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Special Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study*, Richard von Krafft-Ebing examines the mental state of murderers and rapists by focusing on their sexual desires and practices. He argues that the aggressive role in a relationship belongs to a man and the defensive role belongs to a woman: "It affords man great pleasure to win a woman, to conquer her; and in the *ars amandi*, the modesty of woman, who keeps herself on the defensive until the moment of surrender, is an element of great psychological significance and importance" (79). By classifying the man as the aggressive one and the woman as the defensive one in a relationship, he sheds light on the

stereotypical gendered roles of a man and a woman. However, he further goes on to state that “This aggressive character...under pathological conditions may likewise be excessively developed, and express itself in an impulse to subdue absolutely the object of desire, even to destroy or kill it” (79). The extreme form of sadism is seen when the aggressive character in the relationship loses control over his desire and lust to the extent that he ends up killing his subject. This form of sadism goes beyond the desire of seeking pleasure from inflicting pain on others and turns into something dangerous and destructive. In terms of masochism, Krafft-Ebing states that individuals who classify themselves as a masochist are “controlled by the idea of being completely and unconditionally subject to the will of a person of the opposite sex; of being treated by this person as by a master, humiliated and abused” (115). A masochist not only derives pleasure from experiencing pain but also derives pleasure from the idea of experiencing pain. For this reason, the idea of inflicting pain on themselves is something that brings pleasure and arouses them as well.

In *Jane Eyre*, the presence of constant suffering in Jane’s life makes her learn how to derive pleasure from pain. Jane Eyre’s relationships with others within the different institutions she lives in depict both growth and her journey of developing sadomasochistic desires. The institutions play an important role in Jane’s life as they reflect on the teachings she receives and her refined understanding of submission and dominance. However, this desire of seeking pleasure from experiencing or inflicting pain on others remains psychological and not overtly sexual in this book. The examination of the relationships between different characters in *Jane Eyre* through a sadomasochist lens showcases the unconventional power dynamics and psychological exchange of power between its characters.

Literature Review

Charlotte Brontë's text *Jane Eyre* revolves around unconventional power dynamics and bases some characters' relationships around sadomasochism to depict the psychological exchange of power between its characters. In *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, Sally Shuttleworth explores the psychological exchange of power in *Jane Eyre*. She focuses on three characters' relationships from *Jane Eyre*: Jane and Rochester, Jane and St. John, and Rochester and Bertha. Discussing Jane and Rochester's relationship, Shuttleworth claims that "Sexuality is displaced into erotic power play. While Jane might not openly defy Rochester, she is not meekly submissive. Both figures treat their association as a fierce battle for the preservation of autonomy" (170). She highlights how Jane and Rochester's relationship revolves around a shifting power dynamic and how none of these characters stick to dominant or submissive roles. They are continuously portrayed as challenging each other's power and control over one another. Another relationship that Shuttleworth throws light on is that of Jane and St. John. According to Shuttleworth, Jane and St. John's relationship heavily relies on reading each other as if they're texts instead of humans: when St. John looks at Jane, "Jane feels reduced to the status of an object, examined and controlled by the scientific gaze. St John waits, looking like a physician watching with the eye of science an expected and fully-understood crisis in a patient's malady" (511). However, unlike Jane and Rochester's relationship, there is not a lot of exchange of power here. St. John clearly holds the dominant role and Jane the submissive. St. John's character conforms to stereotypical masculine gender roles and he sees Jane as someone he can decode. There is no love in their relationship and his intention of wanting to marry Jane revolves

around his desire to fulfill his duty as a missionary and to control her: “St John fixes Jane with his ‘freezing spell’, exerting on her the imperial authority he hopes to unleash overseas” (508). The fact that Jane will lose her independence after marrying St. John is one of the main reasons why she decides against it. Even though she does not object to men having power over her, she likes to choose which men get to control her and what kind of power they get to assert over her. Since Jane does not want to be dominated by St. John, she does not want to marry him as she would not have any kind of control in a relationship with him. Lastly, Shuttleworth sheds light on Rochester and Bertha’s relationship by stating that “There is a phase of insanity which may be called moral madness, in which all that is good or even human seems to disappear from the mind and a fiend-nature replaces it” (14). Bertha Mason, Rochester’s rejected and imprisoned wife, is depicted as a “mad-woman” who physically wants to hurt Rochester, which gives Rochester the control to lock her up in a room. In Rochester and Bertha’s relationship, there is a constant power struggle, as both characters want to play the dominant role and showcase their sadistic desires. This desire to be the dominant one in the relationship leads to Bertha’s downfall.

In “Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of ‘Jane Eyre,’” Susan L. Meyer talks about the ways in which the presence and influence of British colonialism can be identified in Charlotte Bronte’s works. All her major works depict the knowledge she had of events that took place in different countries that were being colonized by the British at that time. Meyer notes that:

Bronte uses references to colonized races to represent various social situations in British society: female subordination in sexual relationships, female insurrection and rage

against male domination, and the oppressive class position of the female without family ties and a middle-class income. (249)

Bronte uses the act of colonization abroad to shed light on issues that exist within British society at home, especially the expectation that women will follow gender stereotypical roles of staying submissive to men while men take over the dominant role. Meyer also uses the example of Bertha Mason as a character in *Jane Eyre* who exposes on the racism and oppression faced by the minority groups at the hands of the British colonizers: “The story of Bertha, however finally unsympathetic to her as a human being, nonetheless does indict British colonialism in the West Indies and the ‘stained’ wealth that came from its oppressive rule” (255). The act of showing Bertha as an oppressed individual who is wronged by her husband as he confines her within the four walls for about ten years highlights the treatment of minority groups under British rule. Another colonizing perspective that Meyer brings up in her discussion is the portrayal of Britain colonizing India in *Jane Eyre*. She refers to the relationship between St. John and Jane and highlights how their relationship mimics colonial oppression. St. John’s desire for marrying Jane and taking her to India puts Jane in a submissive position where she loses all control:

Bronte's anxiety about British colonialism is everywhere apparent in the ending of *Jane Eyre*. . . . *Jane Eyre* is thus a fascinating example of the associations - and dissociations - between a resistance to the ideology of male domination and a resistance to the ideology of colonial domination. (268)

She highlights how St. John is the dominant one in his relationship with Jane and wants to maintain that status by marrying her. This again reflects on the oppressive nature of colonization and imperialism that Bronte chooses to bring up in her works.

Elizabeth Carlin, in her essay, “‘Fancies Bright and Dark’: Sadomasochism and the Sublime in *Jane Eyre*,” discusses the shifting power dynamic between Jane and Rochester. Carlin argues that in *Jane Eyre*, Jane and Rochester’s relationship subverts the traditional gender roles of males being dominant and females being submissive. However, throughout the novel, the authority in their relationship keeps shifting, which does not let power stay in only one person’s hands. The instability of their relationship creates space for an exciting tension between Jane and Rochester that allows Jane to feel both pleasurable and painful emotions. She mainly focuses her argument around Jane displaying masochistic tendencies and Rochester exhibiting sadist tendencies. One incident that Carlin uses to defend this claim is when Jane decides to create portraits of herself and Blanche Ingram in an attempt to punish herself for developing feelings for Rochester. Carlin says, “Jane undertakes this repressive, flagellant tasking ostensibly for her own good, noting that she ‘derives benefit’ from painting Blanche, which [Michelle] Massé [in *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic* (1992)] calls her ‘self-imposed punishment’... Jane is using painful discipline in order to avoid further emotional pain” (28-29). The action of making this portrait clearly highlights Jane’s masochistic behavior: she derives pleasure from inflicting pain on herself. On the other hand, Carlin suggests, Rochester mostly exhibits sadistic desires and derives pleasure from inflicting pain or humiliation on Jane. An incident that Carlin uses to defend this claim is when Rochester forces Jane to appear in the drawing room while he has guests over, knowing fully well that his guests do not approve of Jane and will make fun of her. He also exhibits sadism through harsh language and threats of punishment and violence: “He insists that she appear among his houseguests, and anticipating her reluctance, dictates this threat be communicated to her: ‘If she objects, tell her it is my

particular wish; and if she resists, say I shall come and fetch her in case of contumacy” (38).

Rochester’s desire to intentionally put Jane in an uncomfortable situation throws light on his sadistic tendencies. He derives pleasure from Jane’s humiliation and does not seem to even attempt to hide it.

In the article “Telepathy and Sadomasochism in Jane Eyre,” Anthony Michael D’Agostino argues that Jane and Rochester’s relationship, in addition to depending on pleasure and pain, displays evidence of a telepathic union that enhances intimacy in their relationship and binds them to a marriage of minds. D’Agostino suggests that it is their telepathic connection that adds to the pain and pleasure in their relationship and allows them to construct a new self by becoming each other’s desired traits. According to Agostino, Jane and Rochester’s relationship is not only about desiring pleasure and pain but is also about the desire to become one shared entity with a single mind. Also, as noted by the critics discussed above, power keeps shifting in their relationship: “The sadomasochistic dialectic of dominant and submissive has proved reversible, and Rochester, rather than feeling rebuffed or frustrated, only exhibits renewed interest and desire. Like Jane, he exhibits a pleasure in alternating, intensified states of power and powerlessness” (162). Agostino also brings the reader’s attention to the first meeting between Jane and Rochester where Rochester tells Jane to hand him the whip when he gets back on his horse. The symbol of the whip is very powerful here as it depicts the act of willingly placing power in someone else’s hands. Agostino claims that: “Jane’s handing him the whip, however, makes the attribution of dominance and submission in their relationship vis-a-vis possession of the whip impossible to determine, for she does not describe the actual handing over of the whip” (163). Agostino highlights a very important thing here: Jane is never shown handing the whip to

Rochester in the novel. Rochester asks for the whip from Jane but Brontë's narrative never specifies that he receives it. This act demonstrates the inconsistency and ambiguity of power in Jane and Rochester's relationship even more - it keeps shifting from one's hand to another. Lastly, Agostino also claims that "Jane does not merely wield power over Rochester; she becomes the power that constitutes him. At the close of her autobiography, she is both herself and her husband" (168). Agostino claims that Jane and Rochester continue to show the desire to become one another by desiring each other's desired traits. They are linked by a telepathic union that binds their souls and minds together.

In "There never was a mistress whose rule was milder': Sadomasochism and Female Identity in Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*," Abigail Boucher discusses the portrayal of consensual sadomasochistic relationships in Charlotte Brontë's text. Boucher refers to Hegel's Master/Slave Dialectic, which claims that a sadomasochistic relationship equally binds and is dependent on both master and slave, to support her argument. In order for the master to exert dominance, he needs a submissive, and in order for submission to take place, a dominant is needed. She also claims that Charlotte Brontë's texts always represent sadomasochistic relationships as consensual acts and not domestic abuse: "Brontë consistently represented consensual sadomasochistic relationships in her texts, relationships which are very much divorced from any sense of domestic abuse and deal far more with negotiation, with enhancing power structures mutually important to the participants, and with prolonging sexual gratification" (182). The characters are involved in a consensual exchange of power and no suffering is inflicted against their consent. Boucher also brings up the character of Bertha Mason in her article and suggests that Bertha and Rochester's similar sadistic desires prevent their relationship from thriving: "Bertha's supposed

madness and harsh imprisonment may well stem from Rochester's attempts to force her into a role to which she is unsuited and to which she does not consent" (188). Here Boucher reflects on how Rochester's attempts to make Bertha submissive might have led to her madness. It is highly possible that when Rochester's attempts to make Bertha submit did not work, he decided to lock her up in the room and ignore her existence altogether. Her sadistic desires and incompatible nature with Rochester were portrayed as her being insane as Rochester could not control them.

Margaret-Ann F. Hanly's "Sado-masochism in Charlotte Brontë's 'Jane Eyre': A Ridge of Lighted Heath" also reflects on the theme of sadomasochistic desires in *Jane Eyre*. Hanly focuses her argument on how Jane Eyre's upbringing and childhood led to her showcasing sadomasochistic desires in adulthood. According to Hanly, it is necessary to look at other parts of Jane Eyre's life to fully understand her love for Rochester: "But framing this passionate relationship, with all its gothic elements, are still darker parts of the tale: the realistic painful episodes in Jane Eyre's childhood at the Reed's and in her relationship with St John Rivers at Marsh End" (1049). The pain and suffering of Jane's childhood at Gateshead and her relationship with St. John at the Moor House both help the reader understand her sadomasochistic desires. Mrs. Reed and John Reed are two people who inflict the maximum amount of pain on Jane: "The first pages of the novel tell a tale of child abuse and the dramatic engagement of the child with her hated and despised abusers" (1051). Hanly claims that Jane's experiences at Gateshead introduce her to the feelings of pleasure and pain. She makes reference to John Reed's punishments and Mrs. Reed locking her up in the Red Room. The Red Room holds great significance in understanding Jane's masochism because that incident deeply traumatized Jane as a child:

Her terror of Mr. Reed's coming down to her there would be multiply determined: by fear of her own badness and hell (this terror becomes clear in the interview with Brocklehurst), and by fear of her hatred of Mrs. Reed, which included a possessive feeling towards this father/king who had loved, protected, and preferred her for a short while before he died. (1052)

However, many scholars have also critiqued Jane's experience in the Red Room as a depiction of an "incest fantasy." Since Jane was only shown love by Mr. Reed in her childhood, scholars have claimed that there is a possibility that Jane's terror is directly related to her fearing the visit from Mr. Reed's ghost in the bedroom. According to Hanly, it is this incident that makes Jane depict sadomasochistic desires in her relationships: "The traumatic and sadomasochistic oedipal fantasy suggested in this central passage symbolically informs the darker aspects of her passion with Rochester and her relationship with St John Rivers" (1052). Hanly suggests that another reason why Jane's experience in the Red Room holds so much importance is because she shows signs of remembering and revisiting that experience later as an adult. Hanly claims that Jane's experience at Gateshead never leaves her because there is an implication that Jane attempts to recreate the Red Room at the Moor House: "When Jane remakes Moor house with the money from the legacy Mrs. Reed had almost deprived her of, she refurnishes a spare bedroom and parlour entirely with old mahogany and crimson upholstery" (1055). This action of Jane raises the question of how far she has journeyed from her life at Gateshead. Her attempts to recreate this room imply that she has not moved on from this incident or perhaps even consciously wants to hold onto it as it has helped instill the sadomasochistic desire in her heart.

In his essay, "Passionate Reserve and Reserved Passion in the Works of Charlotte Bronte," John Kucich argues that "Bronte, the English novelist who first fully develops a logic of emotional reserve, destabilizes her characters in relation to struggles for power" (914). Through his essay, Kucich asserts that Bronte's decision to make her characters struggle for power and not letting power stay in only one character's hand, she allows her characters to feel a kind of pleasure that is "undefinable" in Kucich's eyes. Throughout his essay, Kucich uses the terms "self-disruptive," "self-control," "self-separation," and "self-conflictual suffering" to refer to the sadomasochistic desires showcased by Jane and Rochester in *Jane Eyre* instead of directly referring to their actions and feelings as sadistic or masochistic. One of the masochistic desires of Jane that Kucich touches on in relation to the term "self-disruptive" behavior is when Jane decides to leave Thornfield Hall without any belongings, food, or money after discovering that Rochester is married: "Both Jane and Lucy, by throwing themselves on the world without resources, display a kind of indomitability and preference for risk that even covets the danger of death... the paleness of tranquility and satisfied desire as opposed to the vitality of disruptive change, even if - or precisely because-change brings isolation and 'passionate pain'" (925). Kucich uses the term "passionate pain" to indicate that Jane is a masochist - she experiences pleasure and pain by inflicting pain on herself. By throwing herself into the world without any resources, living in isolation, and willingly putting herself in a humiliating position, she demonstrates masochistic desires. Kucich also goes back to Jane's childhood to explain where her masochistic desires might have emerged from. He refers to how in Lowood School, under the friendship of Helen Burns, Jane learned to feel pleasure in her suffering: "Though Jane Eyre defiantly claims at first that she is 'no Helen Burns,' she does learn something of this

self-transcendence from her. When punished unjustly by Mr. Brocklehurst, she absorbs some of Helen's euphoric relation to suffering from the look Helen gives her" (928). The character of Helen Burns plays an important role in Jane's life. She teaches her to be less rebellious, stay quiet, and accept pain. Jane always admires Helen Burns and took inspiration from her to be like her. According to Kucich, Jane completely embraces Helen's "specialness" when she "dares death by starvation." Through Jane's action of taking nothing from Thornfield when she decides to permanently leave her life with Rochester, she becomes a version of Helen Burns. She willingly and completely welcomes pain, starvation, and humiliation and feels pleasure and power from this solitary experience. Lastly, Kucich talks about the imbalance and interchange in power in Jane and Rochester's relationship: "Jane and Rochester's relationship is always constituted as a battleground- but a battleground with power flowing alternately in two directions, thanks in part to the often-neglected power of Jane's reserve" (931-932). Kucich claims that Jane and Rochester's romantic relationship revolves around a "master/pupil" relationship with shifts in power and dominance. Power never stays in only one person's hand and this imbalance is what keeps them together and in love. However, Jane always reveals masochistic desires and Rochester showcases sadistic desires which keeps Jane "subservient to Rochester" and allows Rochester to have control over Jane.

In *Charlotte Bronte and Sexuality*, John Maynard argues that throughout Charlotte Bronte's work "there is a fundamental continuity in concern with the strength of sexual forces in human life and the tensions and difficulties posed by that strength. Certainly this is the essential subject of the first of Bronte's two masterworks, *Jane Eyre*" (Maynard 93). According to Maynard, *Jane Eyre* depicts the sexual exchange of power between its characters. Maynard

considers the impact of male characters on Jane Eyre and how they influenced her future relationships with other men she met in her adult life. He talks about how the character of Uncle Reed was the only positive relationship Jane ever had with a male. All the other male figures in her childhood abused her: “She is threatened alike by the intrusive assertiveness of cousin John Reed, who fills her with the pointed edge of a book, and the Reverend Mr. Brocklehurst, hypocrite philanthropist, who is presented metaphorically as a black marble pillar” (Maynard 101). John Reed and Brocklehurst are both authoritarian male figures who miss no chance to make Jane suffer and humiliate her with their actions. Their actions constantly put Jane in an inferior position in front of them and she becomes a figure which can be easily dominated and tortured. Maynard also claims that Bronte’s rough childhood and trauma might have contributed to her later strong feelings towards men who are rough and dominant:

Jane is aware, and makes us aware, of Rochester's strongly sexual nature from his masterful presence as well as his accounts of his past. The master of Thornfield arrives in Jane's life on a strong horse accompanied by a large black dog, wearing a riding coat with steel clasps... most allusions or images applied to him, perhaps that of the horse itself, convey not only masculine power but, conjointly, masculine sexual force. (Maynard 111)

At first sight, Jane immediately develops an interest in Rochester. His rough face and figure appeals to Jane since she finds comfort in his roughness. Jane has never been surrounded by comfort or softness in her childhood which makes her develop a fear towards those attributes. Dominance, roughness, and master-like figures do not scare her anymore which helps the reader understand her attraction to Rochester. Maynard's essay revolves around Jane being a submissive

female whose childhood contributes in her learning to like roughness and develop attraction towards older and master-like male figures.

Instead of avoiding the term “masochism” in her study of Victorian fiction, *Exquisite Masochism*, as Kucich does, Claire Jarvis comes up with her own definition of the term.

Although Jarvis’s work only talks about Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* and some works of different Victorian authors, given the critical attention that has been paid to sadomasochistic elements in *Jane Eyre*, it is relevant to use her essay to understand Charlotte Bronte’s portrayal of masochism. In reference to the Victorian time period, Jarvis claims that “During this period, too, sexual plotting, illegitimacy, bigamy, and adultery- became more and more central to the novel's form. Exquisitely masochistic scenes represent one way that novelists staged the forceful pull of sex on their respectable characters” (Jarvis 2). According to Jarvis, Victorian authors showcased masochistic tendencies in their characters to highlight the sexual exchange of power between their characters. Jarvis further goes on to assert that:

Ongoing negotiation centrally defines exquisite masochism, a form that also can include decadent, performative scenes of humiliation... these masochistic features allow writers to reference sexual desire without representing sexual acts. The respectable nineteenth-century novel may not (often) graphically depict sex acts, but the sexual charge of the masochistic scene enables a novelist to detail sexual connection without an explicit account of it. (Jarvis 10)

Here, Jarvis highlights how in 19th-century novels explicitly talking about sex or sexual exchange of power was not acceptable, meaning that authors relied on masochistic behaviors or actions like deliberate humiliation and self-infliction of emotional pain to signify sexual desire.

All these features can be seen through Jane and Rochester's relationship, specifically when Jane decides to bear the humiliation that Rochester deliberately puts her through by making her stay in the drawing room with his guests, Jane inflicting emotional pain on herself by creating a portrait of Blanche Ingram and herself, and by her leaving Thornfield without any money or food. These and other incidents in the novel highlight how Jane and Rochester's relationship includes the infliction of emotional pain and humiliation to derive and reveal both sexual desire and the need for psychological control.

Gateshead: First Encounters with Pain and Punishment

I. Jane and the Red Room

The first repressive structures that Jane encounters in her early childhood are at Gateshead at the hands of Mrs. Reed and her cousins, and more specifically around her experience in the red room there. She is locked in this room on the orders of Mrs. Reed, her aunt, as a punishment for hitting John Reed, Mrs. Reed's son. She is dragged and tied up in this room by Miss Abbot and Bessie, the servants: "If you don't sit still, you must be tied down," said Bessie. "Miss Abbot, lend me your garters; she would break mine directly." Miss Abbot turned to divest a stout leg of the necessary ligature" (Bronte 12). Bessie and Miss Abbot threaten to tie Jane's arms and legs if Jane refuses to calmly submit and stay on the stool. This threat reflects on how Jane was forced to submit from the beginning of her childhood and was threatened with physical bondage if her submission was not politely given. Shortly after this incident, when Miss Abbot and Bessie leave Jane alone in the room, Jane feels the presence of Mr. Reed's spirit. She screams, cries, and begs to be taken out of the room. The fear of encountering Mr. Reed's ghost gets so intense for Jane that she ends up losing consciousness.

Even after such a traumatic incident, Jane is shown no sympathy by Mrs. Reed, who instead accuses her of being a liar. This experience of the red room not only traumatizes Jane, but also becomes the most striking and extreme incident in her time at Gateshead where she begins to understand how punishment comes with suffering. The idea of enduring pain and humiliation allows Jane to learn how to develop masochistic desires. Since the presence of pain and suffering is permanent in Jane's life, she makes her suffering bearable by seeking pleasure in it. Later on in

the novel, the traumatic red room experience stops reminding Jane of the suffering she endured in Gateshead and instead becomes a reminder of her journey with pleasure and pain. To make sure that the image of the red room and the impact it made in Jane's life does not fade away, she creates a similar-looking room at the Moor House: "A spare parlour and bedroom I refurnished entirely, with old mahogany and crimson upholstery: I laid canvas on the passage, and carpets on the stairs. When all was finished, I thought Moor House as complete a model of bright modest snugness within" (Bronte 381). Since Jane's journey of enduring and then enjoying pain and humiliation starts at Gateshead, more specifically in the red room, she attempts to recreate it at the Moor House, perhaps to remind herself of how far she has come and what helped her become who she is today.

Lowood School: Power in Submission

I. Mr. Brocklehurst's Discipline

Jane's experiences at Lowood School mark the beginning of her journey towards learning about submission and its pleasures. She carries her experiences of punishments being cruel and unjust from Gateshead to Lowood, which limits her in believing that pain and humiliation are bad things and should be rebelled against. Mr. Brocklehurst, a supervisor at Lowood School, replaces the figure of Mrs. Reed from Gateshead. However, it is in this institution that Jane develops an understanding of how pleasure can be retrieved from punishment and submission, specifically the kind that causes pain and humiliation. The act of submission and accepting pain is taught to Jane by Helen Burns, a student at Lowood. Even though Helen's teachings are directed towards submission to God and enduring pain to reach heaven, Jane applies her teachings to find pleasure in pain which allows her to later develop masochistic desires.

The punishments given to students at Lowood are often public ones. Brocklehurst's first punishment for Jane is to make her stand on a stool in front of the whole class and blame her for lying. He also goes on to tell other students and teachers to beware of her:

You must be on your guard against her; you must shun her example: if necessary, avoid her company, exclude her from your sports, and shut her out from your converse.

Teachers, you must watch her: keep your eyes on her movements, weigh well her words, scrutinize her actions, punish her body to save her soul. (Bronte 65)

There is no sadomasochistic desire present here since Jane derives no pleasure from this publicly humiliating punishment. The cruel words uttered by Brocklehurst only cause Jane to feel pain

and embarrassment. However, it is Helen's presence that makes this punishment bearable for Jane. This punishment acts as the first experience in Jane's life where she tries to tame her rebelliousness and submit to the punishments given to her.

The kind of words Brocklehurst uses for Jane also adds to the intensity of the punishment as it portrays her as someone who does not belong in this institution and is not a good person who would reach heaven. He refers to her as a "a little castaway," "an interloper," and "an alien." These dehumanizing words make Jane's experience at Lowood more unbearable as they tell her that she does not belong there. By referring to her as an "alien," Brocklehurst attempts to highlight that Jane lacks awareness about society, its rules, and what it means to be a good human. It is very humiliating and hard for a child to hear these words, especially when they have never felt accepted and have just escaped a terrible place with hopes of creating a new identity. By putting Jane on the spot and in front of everyone's sight, he intentionally makes it a humiliating experience for her. It is not clear if Brocklehurst derives pleasure from punishing Jane, which makes it difficult to call him a sadist. However, by asserting dominance, he makes it clear that he is in the position of power, which seems to bring him satisfaction.

II. Helen Burns's Teachings

The figure of Helen Burns allows Jane to find pleasure in pain. When Helen gets publicly flogged by Miss Scatcherd, Jane finds it very difficult to wrap her head around Helen accepting the punishment and not rebelling against it. When she questions Helen about it and expresses how she would never bear such punishments quietly, Helen says "'Yet it would be your duty to bear it, if you could not avoid it: it is weak and silly to say you cannot bear what it is your fate to

be required to bear” (Bronte 54). According to Helen, not bearing punishments is a sign of weakness. Her beliefs say that a good Christian would bear any kind of hardships or sufferings as it would be their duty to endure and welcome them without any rebelliousness. Helen sees power in submission and tries to help Jane by changing her perspective on submitting and making her see how submission can bring her closer to God.

Helen’s teachings seem to have an effect on Jane when she chooses to quietly endure Brocklehurst’s punishment. She controls her instinct of rebelling against the punishment and defending herself from the false allegations. In that moment, Helen helps Jane realize the power in endurance as her presence alone allows Jane to feel good even during a humiliating punishment: “How the new feeling bore me up! It was as if a martyr, a hero, had passed a slave or victim, and imparted strength in the transit” (Bronte 66). Jane not only finds a friend in Helen, but also a teacher who she aspires to be like. The intention behind Helen’s teachings was to help Jane turn to God and submit to him. Even though Jane wanted to be like Helen and was inspired by her, however, she could not be her. Helen’s teachings show Jane the importance of having faith and submitting to someone. Since she could not completely submit to God, she grasped what she could through Helen’s teachings and applied that faith and submission in her later relationship with Rochester. Instead of directly submitting to God, Rochester becomes Jane’s God who she submits to and has faith in.

Thornfield Hall: A Sadomasochistic Relationship

I. Jane's Masochism and Rochester's Sadism

The first exchange of power between Jane and Rochester happens when she is in the woods near Thornfield Hall on her way to post a letter and hears a sound of someone falling. When she approaches the alley she heard the noise from, she spots Rochester getting up from the ground. Jane is not aware that the traveler in front of her is Mr. Rochester, the owner of Thornfield Hall and her master. She looks at Rochester and comes to the conclusion that she does not fear him because of his imperfect outer appearance: "I felt no fear of him, and but little shyness" (Bronte 111). Rochester does not appear intimidating to Jane because of his rough and dark features. Since Jane's upbringing has lacked love and care, she has learned to find comfort in roughness and stern features. On the other hand, soft features, polite behavior, and love scares her and makes her uncomfortable: "If even this stranger had smiled and been good-humoured to me when I addressed him; if he had put off my offer of assistance gaily and with thanks, I should have gone on my way and not felt any vocation to renew inquiries; but the frown, the roughness of the traveler set me at my ease" (Bronte 111). Even if it seems that Jane holds some power here since she stays to help Rochester and does not fear him, the true power and control is in Rochester's hands as he chooses to hide his identity from Jane.

Rochester withholds information from her about his identity, keeping her in the dark and disempowered. In Jane's eyes, she has met a stranger; however, for Rochester, he has met the governess he hired, his employee and dependant. This secrecy around Rochester's identity automatically puts him in a position of power. In the article "Telepathy and Sadomasochism in

Jane Eyre,” Anthony Michael D’Agostino comments on the scene where Rochester tells Jane to hand him the whip when he gets back on his horse. The symbol of the whip holds a lot of power in this scene as it highlights how Jane first picks up (and thus controls) and then willingly gives away power back to Rochester. Agostino claims that:

[The] ownership of the whip is an unequivocal sign of a BDSM participant's dominance or, at least, their occupation of the dominant role. The precise narrativization of Jane's handing him the whip, however, makes the attribution of dominance and submission in their relationship vis-a-vis possession of the whip impossible to determine, for she does not describe the actual handing over of the whip. (163)

Whip as an object is a recognized symbol of power, control, and dominance. By including this object in the first meeting between Jane and Rochester, Charlotte Bronte establishes the pattern of power exchange between these two characters. She also prepares the reader to expect the presence of tension in their relationship throughout the novel. Agostino also observes an important detail here by pointing out that the act of Jane handing the whip to Rochester is never shown to the readers. The readers are aware that Rochester asks for the whip from Jane: “‘Now,’ said he, releasing his under lip from a hard bite, ‘just hand me my whip; it lies there under the hedge’” (Bronte 113); however, she is never shown handing the whip to him. The choice Charlotte Bronte makes to not show the moment when Jane hands the whip to Rochester creates a starting point for the power dynamics they will continue to encounter in their future relationship together.

Soon after living in Thornfield Hall, Jane starts to fall in love with Rochester and realizes that her feelings for him make her vulnerable. The depiction of Blanche Ingram, a beautiful lady

and Rochester's future house guest, by Mrs. Fairfax makes Jane face the reality of her not being beautiful and being inferior to Mr. Rochester: "Tall, fine bust, sloping shoulders; long, graceful neck: olive complexion, dark and clear; noble features; eyes rather like Mr. Rochester's: large and black, and as brilliant as her jewels" (Bronte 155). In order to deal with her emotions and anger, after hearing praises of Blanche from Mrs. Fairfax, Jane belittles herself and makes a biased portrait of her and Blanche to make herself see all the ways in which Blanche is superior to her. However, Jane's keenness to know about Blanche Ingram and her deliberate actions of abusing and humiliating herself portray masochistic desires.

Jane uses the term "you" to address herself and her feelings while she creates the two portraits. By using "you," Jane, as the narrator, takes hold of lots of power by using this familiar term to demean herself. The word "you" also contributes to putting all the blame for falling in love with Mr. Rochester on Jane. The tone in which she uses "you" to address herself is very unpleasant as well. She italicizes "you" in the beginning to emphasize and elevate the act of degrading herself: "'*You,*' I said, 'a favourite with Mr. Rochester? *You* gifted with the power of pleasing him? *You* of importance to him in any way?'" (Bronte 156). By using this tone and asking these questions, she deliberately makes herself go through emotional distress.

Another instance of Jane displaying masochistic behavior can be seen through the terms or phrases she uses to address and describe herself here. Throughout the passage, Jane remains cruel and shows no sympathy for herself. She calls herself names that are degrading and disrespectful: "your folly sickens me," "to a dependent and a novice," "Poor stupid dupe!" "Cover your face and be ashamed!" "Blind puppy!" (Bronte 156). As a character, Jane is in a lot of pain here; however, she is shown to choose to increase the pain for herself by using degrading

words. Usage of such words will ease no amount of pain and will only cause more damage which Jane does not seem to mind. She derives pleasure from inflicting pain on herself and continues to reveal how Mr. Rochester and Blanche Ingram are superior to her. In her book *Exquisite Masochism*, Claire Jarvis argues that “Ongoing negotiation centrally defines exquisite masochism, a form that also can include decadent, performative scenes of humiliation... these masochistic features allow writers to reference sexual desire without representing sexual acts” (Jarvis 10). Jarvis claims that since it was not typical for 19th-century authors to depict sexual acts, they relied on representing masochistic desires through the characters humiliating or inflicting emotional pain on themselves. Jane’s attempt to inflict pain on herself by creating a superior-looking portrait of Blanche and an inferior-looking portrait of herself indicates how she participates in a performative scene of deliberate masochism here. There is no one in the room who witnesses Jane or causes pain to her, except herself. This infliction of humiliation, specifically through the tone and words she chooses to address herself, is solely conducted by her to satisfy her desire for painful pleasure.

Jane’s masochistic behavior reaches an extreme when she decides to make portraits of herself and Blanche Ingram. She uses the action of creating them to make herself visualize all the flaws within herself and the flawlessness of Blanche Ingram. She uses little time and coarse materials to make her own portrait, and on the other hand, takes less than a fortnight and delicate materials to make Blanche’s portrait. The time she takes and the materials she uses to make the portraits play a vital role here. By using less time and chalk to make her image, she convinces herself that she holds no beauty and is someone a person would not like to spend time with. On the contrary, she uses “most delicate camel-hair pencils” (Bronte 157) to make the portrait of

Blanche, and takes a comparatively longer time to complete it. By devoting more time and using soft materials to make Blanche's image, she convinces herself that Blanche Ingram is a lady who holds elegance, rank, and beauty. She also names her portraits: Jane's portrait is called "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain" and Blanche's portrait is called "Blanche, an accomplished lady of rank." This deliberate action of Jane brings her both pain and satisfaction. She derives benefit and pleasure from inflicting pain on herself and sees no harm in having a portrait that will continually be a reminder of Blanche's superiority over her. In the essay, "Fancies Bright and Dark': Sadomasochism and the Sublime in *Jane Eyre*," Elizabeth Carlin argues that:

Overall, Jane's approach to her 'course of wholesome discipline' seems to align with Mr. Brocklehurst's philosophy at Lowood—that she must 'punish her body to save her soul.' For Jane, pain and punishment are transcendent. She finds that her disciplinary measures are to her ultimate benefit. (29)

Carlin identifies the source of Jane's actions of humiliating herself and deliberately inflicting emotional pain as the teachings she received at Lowood under Mr. Brocklehurst. It is at Lowood where Jane learns about submission and enduring pain and humiliation as a form of discipline. She implements this teaching in this passage as she tries to discipline herself by inflicting pain and humiliation. In order to "save her soul" from falling in love with Rochester, she punishes her body to teach herself a lesson.

Another incident where Jane displays masochistic desire is when she deliberately chooses to carry no food and little money before leaving Thornfield. After discovering the truth about Bertha being Rochester's wife, Jane decides to leave Rochester. However, the emotional pain she

experiences at parting from him is not enough for Jane, leading to her increasing the pain by putting herself in a physically vulnerable and humiliating position.

The extent to which Jane puts herself in a degrading and humiliating state could have easily led to her death because of starvation: “With that refreshment I could perhaps regain a degree of energy; without it, it would be difficult to proceed” (Bronte 317). However, death is something that Jane is not afraid of as she willingly puts herself in this humiliating state. Before leaving Thornfield, Jane was fully aware that it would be a long journey for her to find a new place. Her deliberate avoidance of packing necessities and taking money that will only help her get away from Thornfield indicates that this humiliating experience was another way of her punishing herself for falling in love with Rochester. She derived immense pleasure and pain from challenging and forcing her body to starve. Even though the act of begging for food or fainting from hunger was humiliating, it was not something she was unaware of: “I did not know whether either of these articles would be accepted: probably they would not; but I must try” and “it would be degrading to faint with hunger” (Bronte 317). Jane knew full well what she was getting herself into by leaving Thornfield with no resources and few valuables. Her deliberate infliction of pain and humiliation on herself showcases her masochistic desires and how she derives pleasure from this humiliating experience.

In his essay “Passionate Reserve and Reserved Passion in the Works of Charlotte Brontë,” John Kucich refers to Jane’s masochistic desires of inflicting humiliation and degradation on herself. He refers to this behavior through the term “self-disruptive”:

Both Jane and Lucy, by throwing themselves on the world without resources, display a kind of indomitability and preference for risk that even covets the danger of death... the

paleness of tranquility and satisfied desire as opposed to the vitality of disruptive change, even if - or precisely because-change brings isolation and 'passionate pain.' (925)

Kucich uses the terms "self-disruptive" and "passionate pain" to indicate that Jane is a masochist who derives pleasure from willingly inflicting pain on herself. The word "self-disruptive: highlights the dangers involved in the portrayal of masochistic behavior and desires. In Jane's case, her masochistic desires were so intense that their consequence could have been death. The passion she held towards inflicting pain on herself was greater than her desire to live in this world. Jane's unrealistic preparation also acts as a calculated performance of extreme masochism where she tries to replace the emotional pain caused due to Rochester's betrayal by making herself physically suffer.

Rochester asserts his power and dominance over Jane multiple times in the novel. Most of the time this dominance is welcomed by Jane, leading to a consensual portrayal of a sadomasochistic relationship. However, one of the few incidents where Rochester challenges this consensual relationship is when he orders Jane, against her wishes, to continue to appear in the drawing room every evening till the time his guests leave: "Well, tonight I excuse you; but understand that so long as my visitors stay, I expect you to appear in the drawing-room every evening: it is my wish; don't neglect it. Now go, and send Sophie for Adèle" (Bronte 176). Rochester is clearly aware that his guests do not approve of Jane and consider her to be inferior to them because of her lower rank and lack of beauty. He is also aware that none of his guests are interested in talking to Jane, leading to her spending the entire time in the drawing room by the window with Adele, her student, overhearing the guests talking critically about her. Despite knowing all these facts, Rochester insists Jane still appear in the drawing room each evening,

which deliberately puts her in a humiliating position and gives Rochester another chance to assert his dominance over her.

By putting Jane in a humiliating position, Rochester showcases his sadistic desires since he derives pleasure from this situation. The act of forcing Jane to stay within a room full of people who make fun of her allows Rochester to assert power and control over Jane. Jane, unable to say no to his demands, also reflects on Jane's submissive position in their relationship. In "‘Fancies Bright and Dark’: Sadomasochism and the Sublime in *Jane Eyre*," Elizabeth Carlin talks about how Rochester's sadistic desires result in Jane experiencing emotional and mental pain:

He insists that she appear among his houseguests, and anticipating her reluctance, dictates this threat be communicated to her: 'If she objects, tell her it is my particular wish; and if she resists, say I shall come and fetch her in case of contumacy'. This shows both his desire to see her in distress, and his readiness to provide consequences should she disobey him. (38)

Rochester's desire to humiliate Jane and his readiness to punish her if she disobeys his orders showcase the amount of pleasure he derives from her pain and the amount of control he has over her, irrespective of her consent. When Rochester claims that he desires Jane's presence in the drawing room, Jane, feeling humiliated, is on the verge of tears: "‘But I affirm that you are: so much depressed that a few more words would bring tears to your eyes- indeed, they are there now, shining and swimming; and a bead has slipped from the lash and fallen on to the flag’" (Bronte 176). Rochester, seeing Jane this vulnerable in front of him, shows no sympathy towards her and instead derives pleasure from her tears. Through this action, he also depicts how his

sadistic desire to make Jane suffer is capable of turning into animalistic behavior in a civilized drawing room. By showing no care towards the impact of his actions on others, especially Jane who he starts to fall in love with, Rochester reflects on how inflicting pain on Jane brings him great satisfaction. Moreover, the act of confining Jane in a room full of people who don't approve of her limits her ability to act as she wishes to and prevents her from being at ease. This uncomfortable state puts Jane in a vulnerable position and gives Rochester immense power not only to control her actions but also her emotional and mental state.

Rochester also showcases his sadistic desires toward Jane when he dresses up as a gypsy and a fortune teller to find out what Jane thinks of him and to make her confess her love for him. He manipulates Jane and intentionally brings up Blanche in their conversation to see how she feels about his and Blanche's relationship. Rochester is very calculating about the kind of questions he asks Jane to get the desired information: ““Is there not one face you study? One figure whose movements you follow with, at least, curiosity?/ ‘I like to observe all faces, and all the figures.’ ‘But do you never single one from the rest - or it may be, two?’” (Bronte 193). Hearing Jane confess that she observes him or Blanche will give Rochester the satisfaction of capturing Jane's attention and will give him the power to control her and her thoughts, although she pushes back by suggesting that she is interested in everyone there.

Rochester also pays great attention to each word that comes out of Jane's mouth and does not leave any opportunity to make her talk about him: ““Detecting! You have analyzed, then. And what did you detect, if not gratitude?’” (Bronte 194). Rochester immediately holds Jane's words against her and tries to put words in her mouth when she chooses to stay silent or not reply. Throughout their conversation, Jane chooses to stay silent when it comes to talking about

Rochester. Just like Jane's performance of masochism when she decides to create portraits of her and Blanche, Rochester disguising himself as a gypsy and Jane's unwillingness in expressing her feelings about Rochester both make this scene a portrayal of sadism as a performance. Rochester holds complete power here as his identity is hidden and his role of a fortune teller allows him to ask any kinds of questions from Jane, without any repercussions. This deliberate concealment of identity here is similar to the role Rochester plays of being a stranger during his first encounter with Jane in the woods. The way in which he hides his identity from Jane then and refuses to reveal that he is the owner of Thornfield Hall, in the same way, he again takes control and power in his hands by dressing up as a gypsy. He also derives immense pleasure by manipulating Jane and watching her being uncomfortable. However, Jane, having no idea about the reality of the gypsy, has no control over this situation. She is treated as a mere object that Rochester decides to play with.

II. Rochester and Bertha's Sadistic Desires

Through the characters of Rochester and Bertha, Charlotte Bronte depicts a relationship that revolves around calculated cruelty. Both Rochester and Bertha depict sadistic desires which lead to constant clashes in their relationship. Bertha is portrayed as a "lunatic" and a "fierce ragout" by Rochester. By comparing Bertha to a strongly flavored dish, Rochester remarks on how she is something that he can consume or bite into. Since the nature of this dish is spicy and highly seasoned, he also reflects on how consuming her would be physically uncomfortable and will cause him pain, as well as referring to her "exotic" colonial origins. Rochester's description of Bertha often seems cannibalistic as he dehumanizes her and shows no respect toward her. In

their relationship, Rochester always sees himself as the victim and Bertha as a “mad-woman.” In *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, Sally Shuttleworth talks about Rochester and Bertha’s relationship on the grounds of “moral insanity”: “There is a phase of insanity which may be called moral madness, in which all that is good or even human seems to disappear from the mind and a fiend-nature replaces it. . . . male medical theory acts as guarantee of the verisimilitude of her writing” (14). Shuttleworth highlights how Bertha’s mental state was shown to be replaced by a “fiend-nature.” Her behavior and actions were not seen as human which allowed Rochester to disown her as his wife. This “fiend-nature” of Bertha also gave Rochester the reason to lock her up on the third floor for years without any legal consequences.

Rochester and Bertha both yearn for control in their relationship. Their encounters often begin with Bertha being violent towards Rochester: “the lunatic sprang and grappled his throat viciously, and laid her teeth to his cheek: they struggled” (Bronte 285). By showing Bertha as someone who immediately charges at Rochester and attacks him, Rochester paints a picture of Bertha always desiring to be the dominant one in their relationship. Through his descriptions, he asserts that Bertha was never a submissive woman and could not be controlled by anyone. In “‘There never was a mistress whose rule was milder’: Sadomasochism and Female Identity in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*,” Abigail Boucher argues that it was Bertha and Rochester’s similar sadistic desires that prevented their relationship from thriving:

One could argue that *Jane Eyre*’s Bertha Rochester is incompatible with her husband Edward Rochester because of their mutual expression of sadistic traits; Bertha’s supposed madness and harsh imprisonment may well stem from Rochester’s attempts to force her into a role to which she is unsuited and to which she does not consent. (188)

Boucher highlights that since Rochester fails to control Bertha, he locks her up in the room which results in her losing her mind. Her madness can also be the result of Rochester forcing her to submit to him - a role she is unsuited for.

Throughout the novel, Rochester is shown to be attracted to the dominance asserted by Jane. He appears to like the exchange of power that happens in their relationship. This allows for a kind of consensual sadomasochistic relationship to exist between Jane and Rochester. However, in terms of Bertha and Rochester, Bertha's assertion of dominance is not welcomed by Rochester in their relationship: "I restrained myself: I eschewed upbraiding, I curtailed remonstrance; I tried to devour my repentance and disgust in secret; I repressed the deep antipathy I felt" (Bronte 298). This change in expectations seems to depict that their relationship was built on calculated cruelty, a game that they both agreed to play. Bertha and Rochester both display sadistic desires and every move of theirs is to deliberately inflict pain on one another: "Bertha Mason - the true daughter of an infamous mother, - dragged me through all the hideous and degrading agonies which must attend a man bound to a wife at once intemperate and unchaste" (Bronte 298). Their marriage depicts sadistic desires on both sides as every action of theirs showcases the desire of asserting control, dominance, and power. However, it seems that as their marriage progressed, Rochester started to lose his patience with Bertha and did not desire to play this game of power struggle anymore. By having her declared mentally ill by the doctors and separating his bedroom from hers, Rochester attempts to gain back control in his marriage. However, Bertha refuses to give in and retaliates by mentally torturing him with her words and screams: "My ears were filled with the curses the maniac still shrieked out; wherein she momentarily mingled my name with such tone of demon-hate, with such language! - no

professed harlot ever had a fouler vocabulary than she: though two rooms off, I heard every word” (Bronte 299). This instance becomes the last time when Rochester bears what he describes as mental torture at the hands of Bertha. Soon after this incident he moves to England, along with Bertha, and locks her up on the third floor of Thornfield. It is in Thornfield Hall where he manages to take back control of his relationship and assert dominance by shutting Bertha away from society. His desire and success in permanently controlling her is also highlighted when he ties Bertha up to a chair with the help of Grace Poole: “At last he mastered her arms; Grace Poole gave him a cord, and he pinioned them behind her: with more rope, which was at hand, he bound her to a chair” (Bronte 285). By binding Bertha to a chair and limiting her abilities, Rochester accomplishes his sadistic desire of wanting complete control over her.

Bertha’s insanity and sadistic desires come to life specifically when she feels that Rochester is moving away from her, permanently. Even though Rochester’s and Bertha’s relationship lacks love, they are still legally bound together as husband and wife. This legal fact seems to be enough for Bertha, however, Jane’s closeness to Rochester soon becomes a threat for her. Whenever she feels that her marriage is in danger, she takes control of the situation and does not shy away from harming Rochester in the process as well. In *Charlotte Brontë and Victorian Psychology*, Sally Shuttleworth states that:

The ‘real madwoman’ of Thornfield breaks out on each occasion when Jane allows herself to be almost submerged within Rochester. On the night when she follows him in thought through the new regions he disclosed, and slips free from her usual ‘painful restraint’ his bed is set on fire (p. 180). Her sense of union with Rochester in his gypsy guise is similarly followed by the attack on Mason, and the final eruption occurs before

the wedding when Jane has been absorbed, imaginatively, in Rochester's world (p. 354).
(174)

Every act of violence by Bertha has been committed in an attempt to save her marriage with Rochester or to make him suffer for transgressing against her. This highlights how Bertha's and Rochester's relationship might have started out on terms where they equally shared sadomasochistic desires for each other. However, it was Bertha's mostly sadistic and unmanageable desires that threatened Rochester, making him lock her up in a room. Both partners mostly having sadistic desires and wanting to be in control arguably leads to the end of their relationship. The minute Rochester realizes that it would be nearly impossible to control Bertha, he takes advantage of his presumed masculine power, and locks her up on the basis of mental illness.

However, it is important to note that all these descriptions of Bertha and her behavior come solely from Rochester. The reader never hears Bertha's voice and only gets to hear Rochester's perspective on his relationship with Bertha as he is attempting to construct a sympathetic portrait of his relationship with her for Jane. It is possible that Bertha may indeed show sadistic behavioral tendencies, but the reader never gets to hear her side of the story. This lack of Bertha's voice leaves the possibility of Rochester's narrative being not entirely true. Their overall relationship highlights the broader condition of women in the 19th century, when women who were perceived as transgressive could be classified as insane and were locked up in attics or asylums, away from society.

Moor House: Sadomasochism and Imperialism

I. St. John's Dominance and Jane's Unwilling Submission

Jane and St. John's relationship is very different from the one she had with Rochester. Even though St. John desires power and control and asserts dominance over Jane and others, unlike Rochester, he does not seem to derive pleasure from it. This changes the power dynamic of Jane's and St. John's relationship, as it does not rely on sadomasochistic tendencies. Moreover, Jane's submission to St. John does not come from the heart. Her submission is forced, as he requires it. The fact that Jane later finds out that she is related to St. John does not change the fact that it is St. John who provided Jane with shelter and prevented her from dying. This automatically puts Jane in debt to him and her unwilling submission acts as a form of paying back the debt. Their relationship also lacks emotion and appears as a form of duty from the start: "When he said 'go' I went; 'come,' I came; 'do this,' I did it But I did not love my servitude: I wished, many a time, he had continued to neglect me" (Bronte 387). The way Jane describes St. John's dominance seems very restricted as there is no love behind the control. Jane's unwilling submission is also evident through her choice of words as she uses "complied" or "consented" to address that she submitted to St. John's commands, whereas she always uses "obey" to address her submission to Rochester. The words "complied" and "consented" signify how her submission is required by St. John, while the word "obey" signifies how her submission is happily given to Rochester.

Looking back at Jane's and St. John's relationship through a sadomasochistic lens, it is clear that Jane occupies the submissive role but not the masochistic one, since she does not

derive pleasure from her submission. St. John clearly holds the dominant role but it is unclear whether he has sadistic desires or motives. In the article “‘Fancies Bright and Dark’:

Sadomasochism and the Sublime in Jane Eyre,” Elizabeth Carlin claims that:

Though St. John possesses a stern manner and an air of command, and is in some ways even more dominant than Rochester, he takes no satisfaction or sadistic pleasure in this. If anything, whatever pleasure he feels is decidedly masochistic: martyring himself in India, rejecting his consuming love of Rosamond Oliver, torturing himself with a deliberate study of a painting of her likeness. St. John is also beautiful, and does not possess the ‘roughness’ of appearance which attracts Jane and puts her ‘at ease.’ (35)

Carlin argues that St. John’s act of devoting his whole life to a mission in India and rejecting his love for Rosamond Oliver is a huge sacrifice he makes, knowing fully well that it is giving him pain. However, at the same time, St. John’s dominance and Jane’s unwilling submission make it complicated to look at their relationship through a sadomasochistic lens, as consent is a crucial part of the sadomasochistic relationship. The details of St. John possessing no “roughness” in his facial features greatly contributes to the fact why Jane did not feel any kind of attraction towards him. From the beginning, Jane is attracted to dark and stern features. Soft features and politeness scare her and make her feel uncomfortable. This difference between St. John’s and Rochester’s appearance contributes in establishing why Jane might have been repelled by any possibility of forming a romantic relationship with St. John.

In terms of asserting dominance and control, St. John stays completely aware of the effect of his actions on Jane; however, he continues to use silence to torture her. This behavior of St. John acts as a perfect example of how Jane’s and St. John’s relationship is never a

sadomasochistic one and instead is entirely defined by his sadism. The power in their relationship always stays in St. John's hands as he asserts his sadistic desires on Jane without caring about its effect on her.

Jane describes St. John as someone who has no emotions and lacks the qualities of a breathing human. The words she uses to describe St. John portray him as a mere "speaking instrument" whose eyes appear to be "a cold, bright, blue gem" with no feelings or care behind them. St. John's silent treatment shows Jane how she would not have survived her marriage with him as his torturous coldness would have killed her. Jane also talks about how her tears and suffering had no effect on him: "He experienced no suffering from estrangement - no yearning after reconciliation; and though, more than once, my fast-falling tears blistered the page over which we both bent, they produced no more effect on him than if his heart had been really a matter of stone or metal" (Bronte 400). St. John's lack of acknowledgement for Jane's tears showcases his lack of empathy. He always sees her as a possession who could help him on his mission in India, not another human being.

Unlike St. John, Rochester always seems to be affected by Jane's sorrow and tears. Even though Rochester was often behind Jane's tears, he always showed concern towards them and even sought pleasure from her crying. However, even though St. John clearly knows that he is causing Jane pain and is the reason behind her tears, he feels no emotion towards them. Moreover, after St. John stops talking to Jane, he starts to be more affectionate and kind towards his sisters to amplify the feeling of banishment for Jane. St. John makes sure that Jane suffers because of her refusal to his marriage proposal and makes every second of her stay at the Moor House unbearable and torturous after that.

II. Marriage: Not for Love but for Duty and Empire

St. John asks Jane to accompany him to India as his wife. The purpose behind his proposal was to use Jane to educate Indian women by making her a “conductress” in Indian schools: ““God and nature intended you for a missionary's wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary's wife you must - shall be” (Bronte 391). However, Jane does not accept St. John’s proposal, not because she does not want to go to India but because she does not want to marry him and be under his control.

Jane’s role of being a conductress and accompanying St. John, a missionary, to India as his wife raises the question of what kind of education will be forwarded to Indian women in schools under the control of British colonists. During this time, Christians did not approve of anyone submitting to God other than Christ and looked at other religions with skeptical eyes. Brocklehurst’s teachings and mindset are a good example of how Christians during this time saw other religions: “this child, the native of a Christian land, worse than many a little heathen who says its prayers to Brahma and kneels before Juggernaut - this girl is - a liar!”” (Bronte 65). He talks like a fanatic and states that Jane is worse than someone who worships Hindu Gods. This statement reflects on what St. John’s mission to India would be, the kind of religious ideas he will be promoting there, and how forced conversion would be an essential part of his mission.

If Jane would have agreed to marry St. John, she would have been the missionary’s wife. Then, her role as a conductress in Indian schools would highly depend on her making sure that St. John’s mission is accomplished. Moreover, St. John claiming that Jane’s assistance will be invaluable to him shows how it is Jane’s labor that is important to him and not Jane herself. He

does not see his marriage to Jane as a bond between a husband and wife but instead sees it as a contract. If Jane doesn't provide him with the kind of assistance he is seeking, she will hold no value or importance to him.

Later in the section, Jane says ““If I do go with him - if I do make the sacrifice he urges, I will make it absolutely: I will throw all on the altar - heart, vitals, the entire victim” (Bronte 394). If Jane agrees to go to India with St. John, she will be confined within his control. Every step of hers will be decided by St. John and the kind of education she transmits to Indian women will also be under his control. Jane's own approach toward Christianity is depicted as completely opposite to how St. John thinks about and sees Christianity. St. John is harsh, judgmental, not emotionally attached to anyone, and is committed to the role of a “Christian Philosopher - a follower of the sect of Jesus” (Bronte 365). St. John's values and behavior highlight how the contradictions between his and Jane's religious views will not allow Jane to have much control over her life.

In the article “Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of ‘Jane Eyre,’” Susan L. Meyer comments on how St. John's and Jane's relationship reflects on colonial dominance as St. John desires complete control over Jane and her identity:

St. John...wants to force Jane into an inegalitarian marriage and to take her to the unhealthy atmosphere of British India (both of which she says would kill her), to help him preach his rather different values of hierarchy and domination to dark-skinned people. (265)

St. John and his relationship with Jane highlights how St. John mimics the role of a colonist and Jane becomes the oppressed subject in their relationship. The imperial project in India becomes a

form of sadistic dominance that St. John desires Jane to undergo under his control. Later, Jane also says that “He prizes me as a soldier would a good weapon; and that is all” (Bronte 394). Here India and Jane’s marriage to St. John are both seen as a resource to reap. Both the land and the woman are limited as a commodity. According to Jane, she will be a resource, a useful tool, that will help St. John. The only reason why she holds value is because her purpose is to help St. John be successful on his mission to India.

Ferndean Manor: An Exchange of Power

I. Rochester: Powerless Without Jane

Towards the end of the novel, Jane's and Rochester's sadomasochistic relationship takes a turn as Jane takes the dominant role in their relationship. This reversal in power roles is seen because Rochester becomes crippled and blind due to a fire that happened in Thornfield. Rochester's disability allows Jane to step in as the leader in their relationship and to a lesser degree, she takes over the sadistic role that once Rochester had. After Jane leaves Thornfield, Rochester becomes desperate for her presence and her absence makes him emotionally disabled. Once Jane comes back to him in Ferndean Manor, Rochester becomes completely dependent on Jane and starts to fear her leaving him again: "If a moment's silence broke the conversation, he would turn restless, touch me, then say, 'Jane'" (Bronte 425). Rochester's fear of Jane's absence highlights the power she has over him. Her mere presence is enough to control him which lets Jane easily take over the dominant role. In "Telepathy and Sadomasochism in Jane Eyre," Anthony Michael D'Agostino states that: "At Ferndean, where she finds him crippled and blinded, Jane enjoys an ambiguous dominance over her husband... Further, like his injury on Flay Lane, his disability allows her to experience the physical mastery she finds so attractive in Rochester himself" (167). According to D'Agostino, Jane finds joy in being the dominant figure in her relationship with Rochester. It gives her the chance to experience the physical and emotional power that Rochester held over her before. Moreover, Jane uses this chance to switch roles with Rochester as well as she takes over his power to manipulate and tease her:

‘He asked me to marry him.’ ‘That is a fiction - an impudent invention to vex me’...

‘Miss Eyre, I repeat it, you can leave me. How often am I to say the same thing? Why do you remain pertinaciously perched on my knee, when I have given you notice to quit?’

‘Because I am comfortable there.’ ‘No, Jane, you are not comfortable there: because your heart is not with me: it is with this cousin--this St. John. Oh, till this moment, I thought my little Jane was all mine!’ (Bronte 431)

In this passage, Jane is aware that talking about St. John will make Rochester jealous and will disturb him, however, she continues to talk about him and his interest in marrying her to tease Rochester. In this moment, Jane loves being in power and depicts her latent sadistic desires by enjoying the sight of Rochester feeling betrayed and jealous. It almost feels like that at this moment Jane is taking revenge on Rochester by making him feel what she felt once. In Thornfield, Rochester made sure that Jane felt inferior and jealous of Blanche. He used his relationship with Blanche to manipulate and tease Jane to an extent where she felt emotionally drained and caused herself immense physiological pain. Jane uses this change in power to show Rochester what being inferior and dependent feels like. However, soon after Rochester and Jane marry, the readers are made aware that Rochester is starting to get his eyesight back: “He had the advice of an eminent oculist; and he eventually recovered the sight of that one eye. He can not now see very distinctly: he cannot read or write much; but he can find his way without being led by the hand: the sky is no longer a blank to him - the earth no longer a void” (439). This instance of Rochester gaining power in one of his eye’s acts as an indication that a reversal in power might happen again in his and Jane’s relationship where he might take back the control he lost because of his disabilities.

Conclusion

Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* functions as an important model for examining the presence of sadism, masochism, and sadomasochism in Victorian fiction through a psychological lens. The characters portrayed in this novel and their relationships with one another allow scholars to explore the numerous ways in which they take part in the practice of sadomasochism. Moreover, the different institutions portrayed in *Jane Eyre*, including Gateshead, Lowood School, Thornfield Hall, Moor House, and Ferndean Manor, serve as vital examples of how these institutions play different roles in Jane's life and help her develop sadomasochistic desires. Jane's journey of finding pleasure in pain also highlights that sadomasochistic tendencies are not always inherited but can also be learned. This ability to learn and develop sadistic and masochistic desires also helps separate the practice of sadomasochism from abuse.

In his book *Three Essays on The Theory of Sexuality* (1905), Sigmund Freud explores the concept of sadism and masochism and describes three types of masochism: erotic, feminine, and moral. He claims that "A person who feels pleasure in producing pain in someone else in a sexual relationship is also capable of enjoying as pleasure any pain which he may himself derive from sexual relations. A sadist is always at the same time a masochist" (58). Freud asserts that a person with sadistic tendencies always has masochistic tendencies as well. Since a sadomasochistic relationship relies on consensual power exchange between consenting adults and derives pleasure from its practices, it does not fit in the description of abuse whose use takes away the freedom of choice and consent from its sufferer. Charlotte Brontë uses this consensual nature of sadomasochism to depict gendered power dynamics in her novel *Jane Eyre*.

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