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Whipping up Community : Reworking the Medieval Passion Play,
from Ron Athey to Mel Gibson

Since the middle of the twentieth century, artists have included self-inflicted pain in performance events, quite often as a form of social and political critique. In some cases, the suffering has explicitly taken on both sexual and spiritual overtones. Although these events are hardly a straightforward renaissance of the medieval Passion play, I propose that their revival and repositioning of the spectacular male body in pain bears examination. I have discussed the torments staged in medieval saint plays at length in earlier SITM papers and won't dwell on them here. They replicate the Passion of Christ and provide a means for the spectator's compassionate suffering. Clifford Davidson and Veronique Plesch both argue that the suffering in Passion plays was intended to draw the spectator into the scene, to produce a visceral and emotional engagement with the Passion while watching, and furthermore to provide a memorable image for later contemplation.¹ Davidson proposes that such images were intended to provoke the free choice to perform the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy. This suffering was to be in fact joyful, because it would result in freedom from the eternal suffering occasioned by the Fall.² Plesch notes that scenes of torment became longer (in lines) and larger (in number of actors) over the course of the late Middle Ages not because they appealed to the debased tastes of the crowd, as some have assumed, but because they are meaningful. She further asserts that the goal of this development was post-performance meditation, aiming to produce "an almost sensory identification with the holy figure," being thus "intensely private" rather than communal.³ I see an inverse trajectory for the postmodern passions that I will discuss here.

This paper centers on the work of two male performers, Ron Athey and Fakir Musafar, whose work is spiritual, sexual, and political. I will explain the various contexts that inform this work: the art historical context that created a genre and an audience; the punk and neo-primitive movements that nurtured participants; and the marketing of male masochism that facilitated a crossover between marginal art performance and mainstream culture during the 1990s. The paper's coda examines the reclamation for conservative Christianity of the suffering male body in the twenty-first century and argues that the queer and the conservative are intimately related.

Queered Passion

Ron Athey's work exemplifies a trend in performance by male artists during the 1990s that I characterize as queering the Passion. Athey was born in 1961 to a family that had been Pentecostal Christians for generations, and the grandmother and aunt who raised him in Southern California believed that he was born with a "calling" to fill the role of John the Baptist for the second coming of Christ. His aunt was to serve as the new Virgin Mary. As a child, Athey cooperated by speaking in tongues, having visions, and preaching. When he was fifteen, he revealed his "calling" to his girlfriend. "Under the weight of her incomprehension, the house of cards suddenly collapsed" and his faith was shattered.⁴ He began to cut himself in order to dissociate while praying (because the kind of psychic transport to which he was accustomed was no longer available to him) and also to connect with reality. As Armando Favazza explains:

The cutting causes blood to appear and stimulates nerve endings in the skin.

When this occurs cutters first are able to verify that they are alive, and then are able to focus attention on their skin border and to perceive the limits of their

bodies. The efficacy of this process is startling; skin cutting almost always terminates episodes of depersonalization.⁵

The act of wounding therefore initiates a healing process, with the pain often less important than the production of blood or some other visible sign. Self-injury can also give a sense of control that is otherwise missing, and produce sensation for those who feel benumbed. Finally, cutting serves to define the body's boundaries. Didier Anzieu suggests that self-inflicted pain is a strategy for reclaiming a body experienced as existing only "on sufferance." When one's body is "emptied of affect, reduced to a mechanical functioning, adequate but bringing no satisfaction... merely a body of need, of mishandled need at that," then the voluntary embodiment of pain is an experience lived "in one's own name."⁶

Cutting was only one symptom of Athey's distress. He spent ten years addicted to heroin, tried to kill himself a number of times, and was finally redeemed by a vision of himself covered with black tribal designs. He began getting tattoos and also began to perform again in 1990, but in a venue much different from the revival tent—that is, he began go-go dancing at Club Fuck in Los Angeles among "a lot of extreme people who were extreme for private reasons, and the private went public."⁷ Before long, he began to include live piercings and his new performance career was underway. Invited by Dennis Cooper to present work at Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE) in 1992, Athey compiled the scenes he had developed at the club into *Martyrs and Saints*. He describes the piece as an attempt to understand why his HIV-positive status makes him feel like a martyr and how that relates to his religious upbringing. *Four Scenes from a Harsh Life* (1994) includes multiple varieties of piercing and cutting, as well as the entire cast dancing until the bells and limes stitched to their skin with fishing line tear free.⁸ The final section of this trilogy, *Deliverance* (1995), dealing with death, healing, and mysticism, zips its

martyrs into body bags and buries them under a mound of dirt. Catherine Gund Saalfield's documentary *Hallelujah! Ron Athey: A Story of Deliverance* (1998) includes sections of all three, with a dozen of Athey's friends from the body modification subculture as performers.

Although the narrative content of these pieces is drawn from Athey's life experience, he does not perform alone and is not the only one to suffer. For example, *Four Scenes* begins with a naked, arrow-pierced St. Sebastian figure (an androgynous female performer identified as Pigpen) trembling next to Athey, who is dressed as a holy woman from his childhood who supposedly bore stigmata. He tells the story of this faith healer and his disappointment that she did not actually bleed when he met her. In the absence of religion, a functional belief system, or an effective support system, borrowed ritual practices provide Athey and his fellow performers with the means to perform *communitas* on stage in defiance of a homophobic culture. Athey brought onstage just the sort of modern tribe that other so-called neo-primitives were talking about, and both the tribe as a whole and the individual performers were remarkable for confounding any binary gender analysis. Athey has mostly presented his work outside the United States since 1995, although he has been teaching in Los Angeles, and he now works alone or in collaboration with one other performer. His most recent work is a collaboration with Juliana Snapper, an operatic duet called *Judas Cradle* (2004) after the so-called medieval torture device upon which Athey impales himself. An excerpt from this piece at Participant Inc on New York's Lower East Side in 2005 was Athey's first New York performance since 1998. In 2007, London's Chelsea Theatre has commissioned a collaboration between Athey and Dominic Johnson that uses the story of Philoctetes in an exploration of queer relations across generations.⁹

Athey was hardly alone in staging ritualized spectacles of pain in the 1990s, and a brief examination of two other masochistic performers will help to place his work in context. Fakir

Musafar, commonly called the father of the modern primitive movement, does not call his body play “art,” although he has avidly documented his body modifications and ritual performances since his early teens. The documentary *Dances Sacred and Profane* shows his version of the Lakota and Mandan O-Kee-Pa suspension ritual: After extensive preparation, including the search for an appropriate cottonwood tree in a favorable location, a companion hoists Fakir into the air by means of hooks through his pectorals. Fakir describes in voiceover his sexual and spiritual transcendence.¹⁰ Fakir also performs Ibitoe waist constriction and the Kavandi-bearing, with close to 100 spears inserted into his torso. He has piercings all over his body and various genital modifications.¹¹

Fakir grew up with the name Roland Loomis on an Indian reservation in South Dakota and in his early teens began to experiment secretly with body modifications gleaned from encyclopedias. He discovered that painful body play produced a tremendous relief from intense experiences of dissociation, hallucinations, and loneliness. His first out-of-body experience, alone and lashed to the wall of his family’s coal bin at age 17, produced the insight: “Your body belongs to you. Play with it.” Repeated dreams convinced him that he was the reincarnation of an Indian mystic who died in a gruesome accident, and he took the name Fakir Musafar. By “coming out” as both masochist and spiritual seeker in 1977 at a tattoo convention and continuing to proselytize for body play, Fakir changed the context for his own subsequent actions *and* for anyone self-consciously performing within the context that he helped to establish. Rebecca Novick describes him as “a misfit who, unable to find a mold to fit into, simply fashioned one for himself.”¹² The “mold” took some time to fashion, however. Notably, Fakir did not find his way directly into the art world; rather, he met like-minded spiritual seekers when he moved to San Francisco to do graduate work in technical theatre. (As he tells the story, the

connection to theatre is purely incidental.) In the 1970s he became involved with the Janus Society and with tattoo and piercing “show-and-tell” parties in Los Angeles. Charles Gatewood, a photographer documenting the tattoo-and-body-modification subculture, brought him wider attention.¹³

Interest in Fakir is to some extent a product of cultural trends, but he has been instrumental in promoting these trends—his career as an advertising executive should not be overlooked. The release of *Dances Sacred and Profane* and publication of *Modern Primitives* in the mid-1980s fed into a growing interest in body modification within youth culture.¹⁴ At the time that the film was made, Fakir felt it necessary to tone down his conversation and to couch his pursuits in primarily spiritual terms reminiscent of Joseph Campbell. Even “neo-pagans” perceived the pursuit of pain in negative terms, as mortification of the body. Only within S/M circles did Fakir find understanding and acceptance. By the mid-1990s, though, he could talk openly and enthusiastically to audiences of young people searching for “new ways to reclaim their bodies, to do their own rites of passages, to do group rites of passage.”¹⁵ Fakir began to publish *Body Play and Modern Primitives Quarterly* in 1991 and instituted the *Fakir Body Piercing and Branding Intensives* in 1993. By 1996, *Modern Primitives* had been reprinted six times and 60,000 copies were in circulation.¹⁶ Fakir retired from advertising to devote himself to publishing and teaching, with workshops that fill up far in advance.¹⁷ May 2007 brings his *Spirit + Flesh* tour to London, with shamanic piercings, a suspension event, and a panel discussion together with Ron Athey for which all seats were booked within two weeks of the announcement.

Fakir calls *pain* a “prejudicial word” for intense sensations which, *if* actively sought and expected, are not aversive.¹⁸ He describes the pursuit of intense sensation as a form of spirituality

and observes that people engaged in sadomasochistic sex “seem to go *someplace*, to unseen worlds that are disconnected from the time and space of the seen world.”¹⁹ Pain alone is not sufficient for the type of spiritual experience that Fakir describes, nor is it reliable. He stresses the need for an experienced guide and proposes that a modern-primitive shaman (such as himself) can provide much-needed new rituals for modern tribes.²⁰

The *Modern Primitives* volume that features Fakir also includes a profile of Sheree Rose, who discusses her transformation from discontented Southern California housewife to happy dominatrix. In 1993, Re/Search published a volume dedicated to Rose’s slave, Bob Flanagan, who I will discuss here only briefly.²¹ Flanagan (1952-1996) described his sexual masochism as a way to take control of his bodily experience—that is, to feel pain that he controlled, in contrast with the painful and depersonalizing medical treatments for cystic fibrosis (CF) that he endured from his earliest childhood. Dennis Cooper describes him as “a complex man who wanted simultaneously to be Andy Kaufman, Houdini, David Letterman, John Keats, and a character out of a de Sade novel.”²² For Flanagan and Rose’s installation *Visiting Hours* he was present in the museum, sometimes talking with visitors as he lay in a hospital bed, at other times hoisted up to the ceiling by his ankles, naked. Aside from the suspension and whatever may have been going on due to his illness, he performed pain only in video and photo installations.²³ To Flanagan’s surprise, strangers sat by his bedside in the museum and talked about their own experiences with grave illness, inspired to such intimate exchanges by the charm and humor that were even more notable than his masochism. The documentary *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Super-Masochist* (1995) turns S/M into the everyday backdrop that makes it possible to communicate about the normally hidden, even taboo, experience of terminal illness and grief.

Sick presents Flanagan's illness as, finally, wrenching and unmitigated by his attempt to control bodily experience through volitional pain.²⁴

All three of these men began self-mutilating privately during adolescence and then came out into the performance genre that had been prepared by conceptual and performance artists. All three were subsequently the subject of documentary films with enough commercial potential to warrant a home-video release. I propose that these suffering male artists caught the attention of documentary filmmakers in part because they fit into a heroic (or antiheroic) mold and in part because of a more general interest in male masochism on the part of the news media. But in addition, and perhaps more importantly, instead of criticizing the marketplace in the tradition of twentieth-century conceptual art, these performers created a new market (or brought an underground market into the open). Although they are obscure by industry standards, even an obscure film gets more exposure than an art performance. The Blockbuster website lists all three, although none is available for rental. *Sick* appears on the Amazon site as well, and I was able to rent it at a commercial video store.

The history of twentieth-century art performance provides a crucial framework for understanding the genre within which Athey, Fakir, and Flanagan's performances took place at the end of the century. In disparate locations during the 1950s and 1960s, people who identified themselves as visual artists began to perform actions instead of or in addition to making objects. Although body art's roots clearly extend back at least to the historical avant garde of the early twentieth century (especially Futurist and Dada performance), art historians typically acclaim Jackson Pollock as the progenitor: Pollock's action paintings of 1949 begat environmental installations, which begat Happenings and Fluxus events, the Gutai group in Japan, and Vienna Actionism. The four artists associated with the last of these, in particular, link Pollock's reluctant

performance to the artists with whom I am primarily concerned here. Aghast at a growing complacency and conformism that seemed likely to restore the cultural formations that led to WWII, Hermann Nitsch (b. 1938), Otto Mühl (b. 1925), Rudolf Schwarzkogler (1940-69), and Günter Brus (b. 1938) exuberantly degraded themselves and others in the course of more than 150 actions between 1962 and 1974. The work of these four artists shared distinctive features during this period, as Malcolm Green points out: Like many other body artists, even though they moved from representational painting to “real actions performed in real time,” their actions remained grounded in their work as painters. The actions arranged the human body and other elements of reality “in ways that unsettle the observer” and, in so doing, emphasize the “thingness” of the body as the “subject, material and surface for performance.”²⁵ Brus and Mühl describe their desire to expand painting off the wall, incorporating the human body in it as material but also fracturing the signification process. The jam that splats onto a visually isolated ear looks like blood, for example, but some time is required to recognize the ear *as* an ear.²⁶ The actions create unexpected physical associations through proximity, while they disrupt symbolic associations. Often working with Kurt Kren, the Actionists filmed group sex, acts of bestiality, bondage and discipline (which looks more silly than painful).²⁷ Philip Ursprung notes that the beginning of these artists’ careers in the late 1950s coincided with a “nostalgic revival of *fin de siècle* Vienna, which recycled as positive the ambivalent image of the artist as hero/martyr.”²⁸

These mid-century bursts of radical art experiment inspired diverse conceptual art actions, exemplified by the early career of conceptual artist Chris Burden. By the time he started college in the late 1960s, Happenings and Fluxus had significantly changed the academic art curriculum: As his thesis project at the University of California at Irvine in 1971, Burden spent five days in a locker.²⁹ *Shoot* (1971) remains his most widely known work, and he describes it in

typically clinical fashion: “At 7:45 p.m. I was shot in the left arm by a friend. The bullet was a copper jacket 22 long rifle. My friend was standing about fifteen feet from me.”³⁰ *220* (1971) was a group event: After Burden flooded a room with six inches of water and the three participants climbed onto wooden ladders, he dropped a live 220-volt line into the water. The piece ended at 6:00 a.m. when, by prior arrangement, someone cut the power to the building. For *Bed Piece* (1971), Burden got into a bed in the Market Street Gallery and stayed there for 22 days. He gave no instructions, leaving it up to gallery personnel to figure out that they should provide essentials such as water and toilet facilities (which they did). He said that the first two days were very difficult and painful but that he began to enjoy the peacefulness by the second week and to consider staying; however, he knew that he would not be able to do so, even if he tried, and that people would think he was crazy. During *Bed Piece*, Burden noticed that he seemed to have a kind of power, like a repulsive magnet: There was a sort of invisible bubble around him, and people seemed afraid to come close.³¹

Burden’s early actions bring the social contract into question, as Kathy O’Dell argues, not only by requiring the participation of others who are not always “performers” or “artists” but also by pushing the relation between performer and spectator into the foreground. In most cases, spectators did not participate physically in Burden’s self-endangerment, but their presence and failure to interfere implied consent to his actions. O’Dell uses *Shoot* to introduce and explain her use of the label “masochistic” because of its implied contractual relationship, not Burden’s subjective relation to pain.³² The masochist sets the terms of the S/M contract; therefore, in a peculiar and paradoxical way, the masochist suffers only physically but produces emotional suffering for any non-sadistic participant or spectator who doesn’t enjoy filling the dominant role. Unwitting or naive spouses of masochists often enough end miserable, drafted into

dominance against their own inclinations.³³ If the Chris Burden of the 1970s qualifies as a masochist on any level, it is as the controlling drafter of contracts. O'Dell argues that “masochistic performance artists of the 1970s, such as Burden, sought to call attention to *the structure of the contract* to emphasize that the real power of the agreement lies there.... [B]y pushing their actions to an extreme, they could dramatize the importance of a transaction that is often overlooked or taken for granted.” According to O'Dell, the masochistic contract served these artists as a metaphor for other contractual arrangements, those that structure political and domestic relationships. By causing spectators to question their participation in his self-damage, Burden stimulated a questioning of “the everyday agreements—or contracts—that we all make with others but that may not be in our own best interests.”³⁴

Burden represents an intermediate step in the transformation of the action artist's masculinity between 1949 and 1994: As Paul Schimmel describes the causal chain, Pollock's paint flinging was an action intended to produce an object (a painting), but Hans Namuth's photos and films of Pollock emphasized the action itself (and with it, the artist's body). Other artists took this focus shift farther, emphasizing the process of creation instead of the object and eventually eliminating the object entirely.³⁵ The narrative of descent from Pollock, centering on America and promulgated by Alan Kaprow during the generative phase, remains influential because of its coherence and explanatory value.³⁶ Its truth is almost irrelevant, because so many artists have understood the movement in these terms. The genealogical narrative also highlights the role of the artist as hero, as maverick, as suffering genius. According to what Amelia Jones calls a “melodramatic myth,” the completion of Namuth's film precipitated Pollock's descent into alcoholism and eventual death by car crash.³⁷ The European progenitors of action art also died prematurely, contributing to the appearance of a pattern: Yves Klein, the French artist who

used models' bodies to transfer paint to canvas in the early 1960s, died of a heart attack at age 34 in 1963, the same year that Piero Manzoni, the Italian who sold balloons filled with *Artist's Breath* and cans of *Artist's Shit*, died at 30 of cirrhosis.³⁸ None of this is exceptional: Romanticism and Modernism typically deployed the image of the tortured artist or poet as hero. If Pollock is the father of the postmodern pain artist, Vincent Van Gogh must be the grandfather. Yet something had changed. A critical component of Pollock's creative crisis was that the film caused him to see himself "as a performer" and his actions as "histrionics" instead of as authentic acts of painting. Furthermore, his body was displayed not only in *Art Journal* but also in mass-market magazines such as *Life* and *Look*, alongside performers proper. The media fit Pollock into the mold shaped by (or for) Marlon Brando and James Dean; that is, "nonconformist hypermasculinity." But the display of virility for mass-market delectation in the 1950s paradoxically feminized these rebels and cowboys.³⁹ Conceptual art and popular culture are never as far apart as the practitioners of either might wish to believe. David Savran argues persuasively that the phantasm of the white male as victim plays a central role in contemporary American culture, beginning with the Beats imagining themselves in the 1950s as "white niggers"; developing into the hippie and the political radical of the 1960s; and culminating in "the angry white male, the sensitive male, the male searching for the Wild Man within, the white supremacist, the spiritual male." Savran says that the formerly dissident and marginal position of the masochist became central and hegemonic in the 1970s

because it represents an attempt by white men to respond to and regroup in the face of particular social and economic challenges: the reemergence of the feminist movement; the limited success of the civil rights movement in redressing gross historical inequities through affirmative action legislation; the rise of the lesbian

and gay rights movements; the failure of America's most disastrous imperialistic adventure, the Vietnam War; and, perhaps most important, the end of the post-World War II economic boom and the resultant and steady decline in the income of white working- and lower-middle-class men.⁴⁰

To put it another way, the media began queering its rebels in the 1950s by positioning them as masochists, a queerness that remained veiled and contested until the late 1980s.

Like the story (or myth?) of Jackson Pollock's alcoholic post-performance regret, Burden's unemotional descriptions reinforce his gender conformity. Amelia Jones refers to the "tragic existentialist artist-hero" persona and says that "Chris Burden's body woundings act as tests to ensure and reinforce the ultimate impermeability of his masculine subjectivity."⁴¹ His deadpan voiceover makes his actions sound like science projects: He posits that his "experiments" gave him "knowledge that other people don't have," asking, "How do you know what it feels like to be shot if you don't get shot?"⁴² He has gone on to create art from the toys of a typical mid-century American boyhood: Erector sets and electric trains. Popular culture has even provided a new conceptual framework for his dangerous acts: An article about this more recent work referred to *Shoot* as a "proto-'Jackass' gesture."⁴³ The clean and controlled, intellectual nature of Burden's actions is far different from 1990s performance by Athey, Flanagan, and Fakir. Burden's art may have been masochistic, but it was not queer.

Unlike Burden's work, though, the earlier Vienna Actionism was overtly and polymorphously sexual. In spite of the fact that Nitsch, Mühl, Schwarzkogler, and Brus performed their actions 30 years earlier, Actionism is in many respects a product of the 1980s and 1990s. There never was a unified movement as such at the time the actions were performed. Peter Weibel first used the term "Vienna Actionism" in 1970 but applied it more inclusively, and

it did not become a clear label for these four artists until the mid-1980s. They had generally performed with a photographer and perhaps a few guests present, ignored or derided by art critics. But then in the late 1990s, as Malcolm Green notes, the Actionists were transformed “from *personae non gratae* to ‘state artists.’”⁴⁴ During the resurgence of painful art in the 1990s, Brus, Mühl, Schwarzkogler, and Nitsch shared an audience with Fakir, Flanagan, and Athey.⁴⁵

Conceptual and performance art genres and venues prepared an audience for masochistic performance; however, Flanagan, Fakir, and Athey were not nurtured by art school performance programs but by the S/M club scene in Los Angeles. *Hallelujah!* helps to place that scene in the context of post-punk alternative culture. Piercing, branding, and tattooing were logical extensions of the punk body-marking of the late 1970s and early 1980s that affirmed and displayed as quasi-virtues unhappiness, disenfranchisement, and lack of a viable future. Turning to “primitive” sources made sense, particularly given the birth of punk in late 1970s Britain: What better affront to neo-conservatism than to honor the civilizations that the British empire tried to eradicate? Philippe Liotard points out that the neo-primitives take their inspiration from bodies “that were stigmatized and displayed during colonial exhibitions in Europe and the United States right up to the early 20th century. ... Seen through European eyes, piercing, body scars and elongated lips, necks and ears were evidence of ‘barbarism,’ justifying the West’s self-appointed duty to civilize.”⁴⁶ In contrast to the primitivism of the high modernists, those who identify as modern primitives generally recognize the complexity and sophistication of the cultures that inspire them, and Athey and his company acknowledged that their tribal tattoos and ritual dances are a form of imperialistic stealing. Yet there are limits to willful recontextualization; for example, Athey finally covered the Tibetan swastika tattoo on the back of his neck because he couldn’t bear having it misinterpreted as a hate symbol, an interpretation all too easily reinforced

by his other “skinhead” features; that is, his shaved head and leather jacket. Even as the acerbic body markings of punk culture rewrote the tattoo and the nose ring, they were themselves gradually domesticated and became fashion rather than culture. At the same time, they mixed with S/M culture, which had itself been transformed by processes of commodification.

Inspired by Marlon Brando in *The Wild One*, the gay leather community got its start in the late 1950s and revolved around motorcycles until the 1970s, when the focus switched to clothing. According to Daniel Harris, early leather functioned as “a social fetish, an acquired fetish that [had] little to do with an inherently kinky predisposition for alternative erotic practices.”⁴⁷ Until the 1970s, “leather” was not about pleasure and pain or even dominance and submission but instead about masculinizing homosexuality and unifying a community.⁴⁸ The gay movement to rehabilitate leather coincided with the human potential movement, and pain science provided useful tools starting in the late 1970s, when the discovery of opiate receptors on nerve cells, endorphins, and enkephalins led to research on endogenous pain-control systems.⁴⁹ The term “endorphin” quickly found its way into popular discourse, from the “runner’s high” to S/M.⁵⁰ Leo Bersani observes that biochemical descriptions of leathersex in effect de-pain masochistic pain. In other words, an emphasis on the release of opioids as a result of painful practices leads to the conclusion that “the masochist, just like everyone else, pursues only pleasure”; in fact, the masochist wants *more* pleasure and is willing to tolerate the extreme pain needed to reach “that biochemical threshold.”⁵¹ Harris describes the discursive shift in power from the dominant partner (top) to the submissive (bottom):

In traditional accounts of sadomasochistic sex, the burden of sexual responsibility rested squarely on the shoulders of the slave; it was his duty to wait hand and foot on the sensual needs of his master, who, in some cases, professed disdainful

indifference to the erotic fulfillment of the contemptible creature stretched out like a doormat before him. In more recent accounts, however, the recipient of erotic pleasure has moved from the top to the bottom; it is the master's responsibility to arouse his slave, to play the role, not of a callously detached torturer, but of an empathetic sensory engineer who plays on his subject like a musical instrument until he cries out in ecstasy, with billions of firing neurons inducing in him a trance-like state of sensual intoxication.⁵²

Note that the "sadist" has disappeared from S/M, which has become a safe and loving role-playing game. Gilles Deleuze plays a significant role in changing conceptions of S/M. He first published his translation of Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* and accompanying essay in French in 1967, with an English translation in 1971 and a second edition in 1989.⁵³ Deleuze separates masochism from sadism and negates the combined term, sadomasochism. He argues that masochism is contractual, reciprocal, and exists in dialogue, whereas sadism is indifferent to the other except for the desire to annihilate.⁵⁴ After being transformed into a positive force for social and psychological health, S/M was further recuperated as politically subversive, fueled in part by Michel Foucault's explication of power relations and Judith Butler's work on gender performativity.⁵⁵ As Bersani notes, the "political rescue" of S/M depends upon the claim that it is a game, within which the master-slave relation is aestheticized.⁵⁶

S/M is a frontier (if probably not a last frontier): The battles for women's rights and gay rights made queer practices increasingly acceptable to many and increasingly visible to everyone. Yet visibility is not fashion, and S/M became fashionable in the 1990s. Interestingly enough, the gay "leatherman" of the 1980s faded away in the 1990s, morphed into neo-primitive "leatherfolk" and kinky (but not gay!) executives in need of release. Leather liberation and

community formation led to criticism from mainstream culture and the psychiatric establishment, followed by feminist condemnation. The “sex wars” within feminism during the 1980s linked anti-S/M and anti-pornography efforts. Gayle Rubin, an anti-anti-S/M feminist, notes the further connection between these efforts and overall repression resulting from social, political, and economic instability. Paradoxically, the Meese Commission’s collaboration between anti-porn feminists and political conservatives, followed by the attack on Robert Mapplethorpe (and other transgressive artists) by Jesse Helms, promoted acceptance and visibility for S/M as a form of liberal backlash.⁵⁷ Mapplethorpe’s photographs came to much wider attention than their fine art context would otherwise have occasioned when the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati was tried for pandering obscenity in 1990. The right-wing attempt to crack down on NEA funding for “obscenity” paradoxically brought bondage and discipline into many American living rooms, where Madonna’s 1992 combination book (*Sex*) and CD (*Erotica*) followed them—again, if not the book itself, at least awareness of its contents. S/M was central to the film *Basic Instinct*, released the same year, and to one storyline on ABC-TV’s “One Life to Live.” Fashion shows featured leather harnesses (Jean-Paul Gaultier), chain-mail bracelets (Perry Ellis), and studded collars (Claude Montana). Celebrities wore leathers by Gianni Versace to benefits. *Vogue* published a “Women in Chains” layout and *Cosmopolitan* paired a bondage-wear cover with an article on S/M.⁵⁸ Before long, *Redbook* found practitioners in its pages,⁵⁹ and reporters could make fun of the banality, noting that an annual European gathering was “more like a convention of Dracula extras than a scene from Caligula.”⁶⁰ Mental health professionals identified AIDS and the recession as primary reasons: “You have a lot of men under a tremendous amount of pressure, trying to hold onto jobs, trying to run companies in trouble. They’re exhausted. They go to these women and give up control for an hour.”⁶¹

Bersani suggests that the inversion of power relationships in such representations of S/M simply solidifies the existing order of things:

The transformation of the brutal, all-powerful corporate executive (by day) into the whimpering, panty-clad servant of a pitiless dominatrix (by night) is nothing more than a comparatively invigorating release of tension. The concession to a secret and potentially enervating need to shed the master's exhausting responsibilities and to enjoy briefly the irresponsibility of total powerlessness allows for a comfortable return to a position of mastery and oppression the morning after, when all the "other side" has been, at least for a time, whipped out of the executive's system.⁶²

In a similar line of argument, Savran notes that masochistic fantasy "allows the white male subject to take up the position of victim, to feminize and/or blacken himself fantasmatically, and to disavow the homosexual cathexes that are crucial to the process of (patriarchal) cultural reproduction, all the while asserting his unimpeachable virility."⁶³ He suggests that "the masochistic male subject is both a function of the rise of capitalism and a necessary cog in the process that reproduces patriarchal, heterosexualized relations." Far from seeing masochism as a route to radical subversion, Savran calls it "a kind of decoy," and points out that "the cultural texts constructing masochistic masculinities characteristically conclude with an almost magical restitution of phallic power."⁶⁴ In short, placing oneself temporarily in the victim role makes it easier to cope with one's actual role as victimizer. Note also that mainstream S/M is largely heterosexualized. However "queer" Flanagan may have been, he is reassuringly inscribed within a loving male/female relationship. Fakir is similarly coupled, although his public persona is less thoroughly defined by a private relationship. For some spectators, these two men might provide a

relatively safe ground for identificatory fantasy—a “walk on the wild side” that unsettles but does not derail standards of normalcy. Athey is much more difficult to assimilate within heteronormative bounds. Bersani’s and Savran’s analyses do not explain away Flanagan’s, Fakir’s, or Athey’s sexuality; however, they do explain something about the fascination with masochists that opened a tiny niche for films about them at the end of the twentieth century.

Ever since Freud, we have understood masochism as a psychological apparatus, although its precise nature remains open to debate. As Fakir’s extensive commentary about his own experience of pain makes clear, it can also serve as a spiritual technology. We can presume that images of suffering, actual or simulated, have the capacity to evoke both sexual and spiritual responses in susceptible individuals. Unlike the medieval Passion play, however, performances of actual physical suffering by the artists I have discussed here do not support a coherent theological doctrine. Against a backdrop of rejected and reworked Christianity, they counterpose bodily practices borrowed from non-Western traditions. As private practices they may be spiritual and sexual. As performances, though, they are resolutely political, new rituals to form new communities. Athey and Fakir work with but are not entirely encompassed by the body-mod commodity culture: they remain too radical for complete assimilation, not a game or a pose, quite distinct from the 1990s S/M vogue.

Since 2004, with photos of torture by Americans at Abu Ghraib prison in circulation, S/M images are no longer fashionably sexy; instead, their sexual component has been a source of widespread consternation. Conceptual categories have once again been reshuffled in the public imaginary. The hooded figure was posed not by Robert Mapplethorpe but by Pfc. Lynndie England. The picture was not gorgeously printed on high quality paper with fine-grained emulsion for display in an art gallery but circulated digitally via email before hitting the mass

media. The fact that the soldiers took pictures of sexual humiliation “interleaved” with pictures of their own sexual activities certainly speaks to the overwhelming presence and widespread acceptance of pornography and self-documentation in popular culture.⁶⁵ Having moved from the transgressive underground to mainstream culture, S/M has now further shifted from high-style naughtiness to appear glum, mundane, and working-class. Yet as Frank Rich points out, attempts to blame these photos on the soldiers’ “steady diet of MTV and pornography” shifts blame away from the Bush administration.⁶⁶ And at the same time as S/M was losing its gloss, the suffering male body was being reclaimed for conservative religious and political agendas.

Coda: Reclaimed Passion

As an actor, Mel Gibson fit the macho but suffering male stereotype as outlined by Savran. The fetishizing camerawork of *Mad Max* (1979) introduces him in bite-sized portions for visual delectation: tall black leather boots, leather-encased midriff, hands pulling on leather gloves. The film progresses to a climactic confrontation, with “Max” shot in the knee, his arm run over, and a long straight-on shot of his leather-clad buttocks as he pulls himself up from the ground, legs spread wide, and drags himself towards his car. The motorcycle gang overtly echoes *The Wild One*, and both the police force to which Max belongs and the bikers look like the denizens of a late-1970s San Francisco leather bar. In one particularly curious scene, Max delivers his resignation from the police force to a boss who is wearing leather pants but no shirt, with a black silk scarf around his neck. The 1981 sequel *Road Warrior* manages to seamlessly combine homoeroticism and homophobia. Here Max’s antagonists are done up in full dungeon drag, sporting various masks, chains, and bottom-baring leather chaps. The most agile and angry of them carries a blond boyfriend on his bike.

After this auspicious beginning as a cinematic body in pain, Gibson worked through numerous iterations on and behind the camera. In an outrageous meditation on age, blood, and sensual allure, Joanna Frueh writes, “Mel’s extravagances of blood entrance me. He bleeds from just about anywhere. Because he doesn’t have my sex’s gift, he does the best he can. I do my best to forgive him for savagery. I am not a proper man.”⁶⁷ She was writing before Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* (2004), which Peter Boyer notes is not a religious movie but a war movie.⁶⁸ I propose that Gibson waged this war at least in part to take back the suffering male body from the queering to which critics like Frueh and performers like Fakir, Flanagan, and Athey have subjected it. In keeping with time-honored tradition, fame brought Gibson to a point of crisis in his mid-thirties, “a desperate, horrible place” out of which he “had to use the Passion of Christ and wounds to heal [his] wounds.”⁶⁹

Quite apart from Gibson’s personal spiritual relationship to the Passion, his film’s unrelenting laceration provides a community-building focus for Christians. Groups and churches bought up tickets and distributed them free to anyone who would attend a prayer meeting. One result inverts the twelfth-century advice to imagine familiar people in the scene in order to intensify one’s meditation on the Passion: Devout viewers said that it was hard to get the film’s images out of their minds. Invoking another star who has flickered through this essay, one young woman compared it “to visualizing Marlon Brando when reading ‘A Streetcar Named Desire.’”⁷⁰ Some priests commended its persistent memory images; others resented them. Attacks on Gibson (motivated by fears that the film would incite anti-Semitism) enabled Christian spectators to feel like they were supporting a brave warrior for the faith: He became the “Mad Max” of evangelical film. His production company went on to produce *Paparazzi* (2004), replaying the masochistic revenge scenario in a frenzy of paranoid amorality, with the bikers transmuted into unscrupulous

photographers of celebrities; the policeman hero, into an action-movie star. *South Park: The Passion of the Jew*, which manages to combine *Road Warrior*, *The Passion*, and *Paparazzi*, offers up a surprisingly insightful comment on Gibson's spectacular masochism. This cartoon also presents a broad panoply of spectator response, from devotional tears to antisemitic frenzy to vomiting and demanding a refund.⁷¹

The brand of Catholicism to which Gibson returned from despair has not been exactly doctrinaire. He is a traditionalist who rejects the reforms of Vatican II (1962-65). But Pope John Paul II rolled back those reforms and returned suffering to the center of the Catholic faith, demolishing liberation theology and discouraging debate. Early experience as an actor and playwright in Soviet-bloc Poland helped Karol Wojtyla to understand the "iconic nature of power" very well indeed. Long before becoming pope, he presented an "odd mixture of the theatrical and the ascetic."⁷² After surviving a 1981 assassination attempt, he wrote in 1984 that "human suffering evokes compassion," but "in its own way it intimidates."⁷³ Although the Vatican denied reports of illness until very close to the end of his life, the pope announced a change in leadership style as early as 1994, saying that he would lead the church with suffering: "The pope must suffer so that every family and the world should see that there is, I would say, a higher gospel: the gospel of suffering, with which one must prepare the future."⁷⁴ As he "serenely abandon[ed] himself to God's will" during the weeks before his death, the Vatican issued no statements but broadcast images of the physically frail pope in pain, explicitly glossed as reminders of Christ's passion.⁷⁵

Both John Paul II and Mel Gibson understood the performative power of pain and worked to wrest its mainstream incarnation away from the overtly sexual, openly pleasurable masochism so visible during the 1990s, providing renewed opportunities for bonding among

fundamentalist spectators of every stripe. But they have not simply revived the medieval Passion play. Their pain exists in dialogue with queered passions as well as with Christian tradition.

Notes

¹ Clifford Davidson, "Sacred Blood and the Late Medieval Stage," *Comparative Drama* 31.3 (1997): 436-58; "Suffering and the York Plays," *Philological Quarterly* 81.1 (2002): 1-32; Véronique Plesch, "Étalage Complaisant? The Torments of Christ in French Passion Plays," *Comparative Drama* 28.4 (1994): 458-86. Davidson catalogues the likely torments staged in lost English saint plays in "Violence and the Saint Play," *Studies in Philology* 98 (2001): 292-314.

² Davidson, "Sacred Blood," 20-21.

³ Véronique Plesch, "Étalage Complaisant?" [online edition, n.p.].

⁴ C. Carr, "The Rite Stuff," *Village Voice*, 15 December 1998, 81.

⁵ Armando R. Favazza, *Bodies Under Siege: Self-Mutilation and Body Modification in Culture and Psychiatry*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 148.

⁶ Didier Anzieu, *The Skin Ego*, trans. Chris Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 205-6. See also Barent W. Walsh and Paul M. Rosen, *Self-Mutilation: Theory, Research, and Treatment* (New York: Guilford, 1988).

⁷ Unless otherwise identified, Athey's statements and details about his life and work are cited from Catherine Gund Saalfeld, dir., *Hallelujah! Ron Athey: A Story of Deliverance* (1998). See also Ron Athey, "Gifts of the Spirit," in *Unnatural Disasters: Recent Writings from the Golden State*, ed. Nicole Panter (San Diego: Incommunicado, 1996), 70-80.

⁸ Public response to *Four Scenes* focused not on the pain but on the blood: the NEA was attacked for its \$150 contribution in support of performances at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, and conservative hysteria over purportedly dangerous bloody towels generated increased attention in the mainstream liberal press for a short time. See Stephanie Cash, "Ron Athey at P.S. 122," *Art in America*, February 1995, 99-101; John Edward McGrath, "Trusting in Rubber: Performing Boundaries During the AIDS Epidemic," *The Drama Review* 39.2 (1995): 21-39; Patrick Cambell and Helen Spackman, "With/without An-aesthetic: The Terrible Beauty of Franko B.," *The Drama Review* 42.4 (1998): 56-67.

⁹ Kateri Butler, "The Art Issue; Ron Athey; In Extremis and in my Life," *Los Angeles Times* 28 January 2007: I.26; "Ron Athey and Dominic Johnson: Incorruptible Flesh (Perpetual Wound)," n.d., <<http://www.chelseatheatre.org.uk/ron.htm>> (accessed 22 March, 2007); also see the "History" section of Athey's website, n.d., <<http://www.ronathey.com>> (accessed 31 January 2007).

¹⁰ Dan Jury and Mark Jury, dirs., *Dances Sacred and Profane* (1986), released for home video as *Bizarre Rituals: Dances Sacred and Profane*.

¹¹ See "About Fakir Musafar: Father of the Modern Primitive Movement," n.d., <<http://www.fakir.org/aboutfakir/index.html>> (accessed 10 April 2005); *Modern Primitives: An Investigation of Contemporary Adornment and Ritual*, ed. Andrea Juno and V. Vale (San Francisco: Re/Search Press, 1989).

¹² Rebecca McClean Novick, "Skin Deep: Interview with Fakir Musafar," 1992, <<http://www.levity.com/mavericks/mus-int.htm>> (accessed 10 April 2005).

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- ¹³ Fakir Musafar, "Body Play," in Favazza, *Bodies Under Siege*, 326-27; *Modern Primitives*.
- ¹⁴ Musafar, "Body Play," 326-27; *Modern Primitives*.
- ¹⁵ Gloria Brame, "Interview with Fakir Musafar," *The Internet Companion to Different Loving: The World of Sexual Domination and Submission*, 2001, <<http://gloriabrame.com/diflove/fakir.html>> (accessed 10 April 2005).
- ¹⁶ Fakir Musafar, "Body Play," 327.
- ¹⁷ Diane Sussman, "Fakir Musafar: A Theory Full of Holes," 1995, <http://www.paloaltoonline.com/weekly/morgue/news/1995_Mar_29.PEOPLE29.html> (accessed 24 April 2005).
- ¹⁸ Novick, "Skin Deep."
- ¹⁹ Joseph W. Bean, "Magical Masochist: A Conversation with Fakir Musafar," in *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice*, ed. Mark Thompson (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1991), 309.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 313-17.
- ²¹ Re-issued, Andrea Juno and V. Vale, eds., *Bob Flanagan: Supermasochist* (New York: Juno Books, 2000).
- ²² Dennis Cooper, "Flanagan's Wake," *Artforum* 34.8 (1996): 77.
- ²³ Santa Monica Museum (1992); New Museum, New York (1994); Boston School of the Arts (1995).
- ²⁴ Kirby Dick, dir., *Sick: The Life and Death of Bob Flanagan, Super-Masochist* (1995). Linda Kauffman points out that Flanagan focused attention on two aspects of sexuality that are usually denied: the sexuality of children and of those who are sick and dying. *Bad Girls and Sick Boys: Fantasies in Contemporary Art and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 33.
- ²⁵ Malcolm Green, introduction to *Brus, Muehl, Nitsch, Schwarzkogler: Writings of the Vienna Actionists* (London: Atlas Press, 1999), 14.
- ²⁶ *Das Ohr* (1967), Otto Mühl and his Direct Art Group with Peter Weibel, Oswald Wiener and others; camera, Helmut Kronberger.
- ²⁷ In addition to other sources cited here, Russell Ferguson, ed., *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1998), includes many photos of their work, and essays by Paul Schimmel, Hubert Klocker, and Kristine Stiles all discuss them at some length.
- ²⁸ Philip Ursprung, "'Catholic Tastes': Hurting and Healing the Body in Viennese Actionism in the 1960s," in *Performing the Body/Performing the Text*, ed. Amelia Jones and Andrew Stephenson (London: Routledge, 1999), 145.
- ²⁹ Paul Schimmel, "Leap Into the Void: Performance and the Object," in *Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object 1949-1979*, ed. Russell Ferguson (New York: Thames and

Hudson, 1998), 94. For all of Burden's work, see esp. Chris Burden, *A Twenty-Year Survey* (Newport Harbor, CA: Newport Harbor Museum of Art, 1988).

³⁰ Chris Burden, *Chris Burden 71-73* (Los Angeles: Chris Burden, 1974), 24.

³¹ Chris Burden, "Documentation of Selected Works, 1971-75" ([New York]: Electronic Arts Intermix, 1975).

³² Kathy O'Dell, *Contract With the Skin: Masochism, Performance Art, and the 1970s* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 2. Most central to her analysis are Theodor Reik, "Masochism in Modern Man," in *Of Love and Lust: On the Psychoanalysis of Romantic and Sexual Emotions* (1949; reprint New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984), 206-54; Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism, Coldness, and Cruelty* (New York: Zone, 1989). Many of the relevant psychoanalytic texts are now conveniently collected in Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick Hanly, ed., *Essential Papers on Masochism* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).

³³ See Victor E. Taylor, "Contracting Masochism," in *One Hundred Years of Masochism: Literary Texts, Social and Cultural Contexts*, ed. Michael C. Finke and Carl Niekerk (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2000), 64; Estela V. Welldon, *Sadomasochism* (Cambridge: Icon, 2002).

³⁴ O'Dell, *Contract With the Skin*, 2.

³⁵ See Schimmel, "Leap Into the Void," 17. For a full discussion of Pollock, see Amelia Jones, "The 'Pollockian Performative,'" in *Body Art/Performing the Subject* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 53-102.

³⁶ Allan Kaprow, "The Legacy of Jackson Pollack," *Art News* Oct. 1958: 24-26, 55-77.

³⁷ Jones, *Body Art*, 80.

³⁸ RoseLee Goldberg, *Performance Art: Futurism to the Present*, revised ed. (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 149. Of the Viennese Actionists, Schwarzkogler best fits the stereotype of the suffering artist but is least typical of the group. Reluctant to get as dirty as actions devised by the others would have entailed, he participated in only one. He staged his actions privately for the camera, generally photographing the artist Heinz Cibulka rather than himself to produce startling images such as the simulated penis amputation for which he is best known. During the last year or so of his life, Schwarzkogler wrote prescriptions for ascetic purification regimens with an aesthetic orientation, seeming to withdraw from life into art before leaving both through a window in 1969. See Kristine Stiles, "Uncorrupted Joy: International Art Actions," in *Out of Actions*, 290-96; Brus, Muehl, Nitsch, *Schwarzkogler: Writings of the Vienna Actionists*, ed. Malcolm Green (London: Atlas Press, 1999).

³⁹ Jones, *Body Art*, 82.

⁴⁰ David Savran, *Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism, and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 5.

⁴¹ Amelia Jones, "Survey," in *The Artist's Body*, ed. Tracey Warr (London: Phaidon, 2000), 32.

⁴² Paul Schimmel, "Just the Facts," in Chris Burden, *A Twenty-Year Survey*, 17-18.

⁴³ Christopher Bedford, "This Boy's Toys: Chris Burden's *Bridges and Bullets*," *Angle: A Journal of Arts + Culture* 1.8 (October 2003), <http://www.anglemagazine.org/articles/This_Boys_Toys_Chris_Burden_2132.asp> (accessed 10 April 2005); also see David Colman, "Art and the Zen of Garden Trains," *New York Times* 25 January 2004.

⁴⁴ Green, *Writings of the Vienna Actionists*, 9-11.

⁴⁵ 1995, for example, brought the exhibit *Endurance Art* to Exit Art/The First World and Ron Athey's *Four Scenes from a Harsh Life* to P.S. 122, and the French artist Orlan's plastic surgeries were catapulted into wider notoriety by the first Performance Studies conference at New York University. Orlan participated in a panel on "Gendering the Medical Body" that included a videotape of one of the surgeries and generated a furious discussion on an email listserv, excerpts of which were later published. See Richard Schechner, ed., "From perform-l: The Future in Retrospect," *The Drama Review* 39.4 (1995): 137-41; Tanya Augsburg, "Collaboration within the Field," *ibid.*, 166-72. New York was not unique or even in the forefront. Athey was based in Los Angeles, where he had already presented his work. The same was true for Bob Flanagan, whose exhibition *Visiting Hours* had come to New York's New Museum for Contemporary Art in 1994. Orlan was already well known in Europe. In London, the Institute of Contemporary Art presented the *Rapture* series in 1995, with Orlan, Fakir Musafar, and Franko B, who had just made the transition from clubs to art venues. See Patrick Cambell and Helen Spackman, "Surviving the Performance: An Interview with Franko B.," *The Drama Review* 42.4 (1998): 67-74; Hannah Hurtzig, "Rituals of the Body (Interview with Lois Keidan)," *Ballett International/Tanz Aktuell*, June 1997, 40-42. Two New York gallery shows in 1998 were my introduction to Actionism, the same year as the exhibit *Out of Actions* in Los Angeles. "Actionism," Baron/Boisanté Gallery, New York, 18 April - 13 June 1998; "Kurt Kren: Film, Photography, Viennese Actionism," Janos Gat Gallery, New York, -31 May, 1998; "Out of Actions: Between Performance and the Object, 1949-1979," The Geffen Contemporary at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 8 Feb - 10 May, 1998.

⁴⁶ Philippe Liotard, "The Body Jigsaw," *UNESCO Courier*, July/August 2001, 22-25. As Margo DeMello points out, the discourse of the modern primitive movement denies the working-class history of tattooing in the United States. *A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 182-83.

⁴⁷ Daniel Harris, "Metamorphosis of the Modern Dungeon," *The Harvard Gay & Lesbian Review* 4.2 (1997): 29.

⁴⁸ Savran, *Taking it Like a Man*, 229. Savran points out that the top's masculinity is reinforced because he dominates; the bottom's, because he "can take it like a man."

⁴⁹ Ronald Melzack and Patrick Wall, *The Challenge of Pain*, 2nd ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 169-73. Endorphins are "endogenous morphine-like substances." Enkephalins are "opioid substances 'in the brain.'"

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Geoffrey Mains, *Urban Aboriginals: a Celebration of Leathersexuality* (San Francisco: Gay Sunshine Press, 1984); "The View from a Sling," in *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice*, ed. Mark Thompson (Boston: Alyson Publications, 1991), 233-46.

⁵¹ Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 93, 99.

⁵² Harris, "Metamorphosis."

⁵³ See Gilles Deleuze, *Masochism, Coldness, and Cruelty*, orig. pub. *Le Froid et le Cruel*, in *Presentation de Sacher-Masoch* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1967).

⁵⁴ See Taylor, "Contracting Masochism," 62, quoting Deleuze, 134.

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Anne McClintock, "Maid to Order: Commercial S/M and Gender Power," in *Dirty Looks: Women, Pornography, Power*, ed. Pamela Church Gibson and Roma Gibson (London: British Film Institute, 1993), 207-31.

⁵⁶ Bersani, *Homos*, 89-90. Lynda Hart attributes the emphasis on power to the long history of denial within psychoanalytic theory that masochists actually desire pain. *Between the Body and the Flesh: Performing Sadomasochism (Between Men—Between Women)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 134.

⁵⁷ See Savran, *Taking it Like a Man*, 218, citing *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate*, ed. Lynne Segal and Mary McIntosh (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Gayle Rubin, "The Leather Menace: Comments on Politics and S/M," in *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M*, ed. SAMOIS (Boston: Alyson, 1981, rev. ed. 1987), 194-229.

⁵⁸ Dana Kennedy, "S&M Enters The Mainstream," *San Francisco Chronicle* 21 December 1992: D.3.

⁵⁹ "I Was a Middle-Aged Suburban Dominatrix," *Redbook* August 1994: 64.

⁶⁰ Alex Duval Smith, "Game for a lash? One minute Madonna was in rubber and the next a spanking good time was being had in suburban bedrooms everywhere. So why has S&M moved into the mainstream so fast? We visit the Europerve ball in Amsterdam and find that the Brits are undisputed kings of kinkiness," *The Guardian* 16 December 1994.

⁶¹ Kennedy, "S&M Enters The Mainstream," quoting Dr. Barry Lubetkin, clinical director of the Institute for Behavior Therapy in New York.

⁶² Bersani, *Homos*, 87.

⁶³ Savran, *Taking it Like a Man*, 33.

⁶⁴ Savran, *Taking it Like a Man*, 36-37.

⁶⁵ Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *New York Times Magazine* (23 May 2004): 27.

⁶⁶ Frank Rich, "It Was the Porn That Made Them Do It," *New York Times* 30 May 2004: 2.1, 16, quoting Charles Colson, "Watergate felon turned celebrity preacher."

⁶⁷ Joanna Frueh, "Bloodred Beauty: a Meditation on Mel Gibson's Midlife Allure," *Art Journal* 60.3 (2001): 28. Frueh pays particular attention to *Braveheart* (1995) and *Payback* (1999).

⁶⁸ Peter J. Boyer, "The Jesus War: A Reporter at Large," *The New Yorker* 79.26, 15 September 2003, 58.

⁶⁹ Boyer, "Jesus War."

⁷⁰ Daniel J. Wakin, "A Season of Faith and a Film: Gibson's Movie Goes to Church," *New York Times* (9 April 2004): B.1.

⁷¹ Matt Stone and Trey Parker, dir. Stone, Episode 804, 31 March 2004, *Comedy Central*, <<http://www.southparkstudios.com/show/guide.php?season=8>> (accessed 28 April 2005).

⁷² Terry Eagleton, "Spiritual Rock Star," *London Review of Books* (3 February 2005): 19-20.

⁷³ "Salvifici Doloris," quoted in Christopher Dickey and Rod Norland, "'Precious' Suffering," *Newsweek*, 28 February 2005: 24, 5 pgs.

⁷⁴ Quoted in Dickey and Norland, "'Precious' Suffering."

⁷⁵ See Sylvia Poggioli, "Ailing Pope to Sit out Easter Ceremony," *Morning Edition*, 25 March 2005 <<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4560705>> (accessed 25 April 2005).