



The Mastery of Submission: Inventions of Masochism (Cornell Studies in the History of Psychiatry)

John K. Noyes

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"A very erudite, comprehensive, and searching study, which investigates masochism from a variety of perspectives". -- Elaine Showalter, Princeton University

Individuals sometimes derive sexual pleasure from submission to cruel discipline. While that predilection was noted as early as the sixteenth century, masochism was not codified as a concept until 1890. According to John K. Noyes, its invention reflected a crisis in the liberal understanding of subjectivity and sexuality which continues to inform discussions of masochism today. In essence, it remains a political concept.

Viennese physician Richard von Krafft-Ebing coined the term masochism, based on the work of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. Noyes analyzes the social and political problems that inspired the concept, suggesting, for example, that the triumphant expansion of European colonialism was in part animated by an ambivalence in masculine sexuality.

Noyes documents the evolution of the concept of masochism with scenes in literature from John Cleland's *Fanny Hill* through Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs* and Pauline Reage's *Story of O*. Analysis of Freud's vastly influential rereading of masochism precedes an exploration of the work of his successors, including Wilhelm Reich, Theodor Reik, Helene Deutsch, and Karen Horney. Noyes suggests that the thematics of feminine masochism emerged only gradually from an exclusively male concept.

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