THE SPECTER OF MASOCHISTIC MOURNING IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË’S *TALES OF ANGRIA, THE PROFESSOR, AND VILLETTE*

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ABSTRACT

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Charlotte Brontë’s literary oeuvre, while replete with characters that are cold and cruel, continues to spark interest in readers and scholars today. Characters such as Lucy Snowe in *Villette*, William Crimsworth in *The Professor*, and the Duke of Zamorna and Mina Laury in Brontë’s *Tales of Angria* frustrate and delight readers with their unreliable narration and frozen visages. The coldness that renders these characters distant from their respective narratives has been widely discussed by scholars as an effect of the repressive society of Victorian England and the result of Brontë’s inexperience as a writer, etc. A closer examination of these characters’ psyches and personal histories reveals an extended process of mourning that leads to their masochistic tendencies throughout texts like *Villette*. Brontë’s characters, throughout her works, are well acquainted with loss and it is this loss that becomes the impetus for their masochistic mourning. The extended mourning process that Brontë’s characters suffer from begins to take a masochistic turn as the lost love object becomes the fetish for their masochistic pleasure. These love objects represent people that have abandoned Brontë’s characters at some point in their personal histories. This loss can occur as the result of a traumatic death or at the hands of a negligent lover. Regardless of how the love object abandons a character, I argue that in the narratives of Brontë’s *Tales of Angria*, *The Professor*, and *Villette* Brontë’s characters move toward coldness and isolation because of their desire to fetishize their lost loved ones. Therefore, the intersection of Deleuzian masochism and Freudian mourning provides another lens through which readers can engage with Brontë’s intoxicatingly cold characters.
For Enid Music, for teaching me the importance of faith, fresh air,

and good books.

Isaiah 41:10
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AN INTRODUCTION

*She is on friendly terms with death - Julia Kristeva, Black Sun*

Throughout the duration of Charlotte Brontë’s literary career her readers have encountered several cold and withdrawn characters that unreliably narrate and drive their various texts. This isolation and coldness haunts the ‘god-like’ Duke of Zamorna from “The Spell” and the devoted Mina Laury in “Mina Laury” in Brontë’s *Tales of Angria*. Coldness also affects William Crimsworth in Brontë’s first novel *The Professor* and Lucy Snowe in Brontë’s final novel *Villette*, and this coldness is what prevents these characters from clearly and directly connecting with their fellow characters and their audience. So the questions that arise are: how do these isolated characters place readers in a difficult position as interpreter of silences and missing pieces of narrative? And what are the motivations behind these characters and their coldness? Is their coldness a result of the historically repressive Victorian Society stifling the voices of these female characters? Or is it more fitting to claim that Brontë’s leading protagonists are repressed individuals who have developed an interior life of masochistic mourning that is far more satisfying than the larger movements of society?

These questions, which focus on the consistent representation of coldness and isolation within the span of Brontë’s work, have been a part of a scholarly discussion surrounding Brontë’s work. This discussion includes notable writers such as Anne Cheng, John Kucich, Robert Keefe, and Janet Gezari who note how many of Brontë’s main protagonists seem to withdraw from the readers and resist divulging a complete understanding of the power dynamics at play in a specific work. This thesis builds upon several of these scholars’ work in order to begin to untangle the masterful web of mystery in which Brontë has enshrouded her characters.
This thesis strives to work through several possible theories behind the coldness of characters in Brontë’s work in order to claim that the masochistic aspect of these characters’ mourning processes is a critical component to their coldness.

Scholars have long noted that Brontë’s characters are cold and withdrawn from their audiences. For example, Anne Cheng asks, “Why do almost all readers of Villette respond to Lucy Snowe with either resentment or a disturbing insistence? Why do we find her voice so dispossessing when she is offering us her autobiography, a seemingly confessional narrative?” (74). These questions, while applied specifically to Villette, can also be applied to her other literary works, such as Brontë’s juvenilia and The Professor. For example, William Crimsworth, in The Professor, often prides himself in his coldness and the distance he maintains from his pupils. Crimsworth claims, “I had found that in entering with aplomb, and mounting the estrade with emphasis, consisted the grand secret of ensuring immediate silence. […] I found pleasure in answering the glance of vanity with the gaze of stoicism” (The Professor 147 - 148). In this brief example, Crimsworth not only coolly interacts with his students, but with his readers as well, his armor of “a breastplate of steely indifference, and … a visor of impassable austerity” (The Professor 115) continues to keep readers from being able to fully engage with the motivations of Crimsworth. Readers are generally unsatisfied with Crimsworth’s narration of his life because of his contradictory obsession with maintaining boundaries of propriety and of breaking those boundaries through his descriptions of the young women under his tutelage. The use of portraiture also serves to mask and withhold information from the reader. Often, one suspects that there is more to the portrait of a young student that Crimsworth reveals to the reader. Therefore, the way that Crimsworth chooses to narrate his autobiography leaves readers feeling detached from Crimsworth’s true character, resulting in the frustration identified by Anne Cheng.
Furthermore, Janet Gezari claims that “acts of withholding or concealment are characteristic [of Brontë’s narrators]” (145). Gezari’s comment engages with the discussion of moments of coldness within various texts authored by Brontë. Concealing critical parts of the text from readers is another way that narrators like Lucy Snowe prove to be an unreliable narrator. Lucy’s desire for isolation and secrecy is revealed in her description of her own private sanctuary on the grounds of Madame Beck’s school. Lucy states that “the seclusion, the very gloom of the walk attracted me. […] by degrees, as people became accustomed to me and my habits, and to such shades of peculiarity as were engrained in my nature… I became a frequenter of this strait and narrow path” (Villette 122-123). Therefore, the ingrained sense of solitude that Lucy finds so appealing continues to create barriers between readers of Villette and its narrator. As a result of barricading herself in Madame Beck’s school, Lucy is also sequestering important information about her character and other people that she encounters at Madame Beck’s school. For example, after the handsome Dr. John has been an active part of the narrative for several chapters Lucy eventually admits to her reader that “this Dr. John … was Graham Bretton … When I heard Graham’s steps on the stairs, I knew what manner of figure would enter” (Villette 247). Infuriatingly, Lucy has purposely kept the true identity of Dr. John from the reader until this moment, continuing to resist fully divulging all of her information to the reader of her autobiography and maintaining her chilly exterior.

However, these instances of coldness and isolation are not reserved for the mature novels of Brontë’s work; they can also be found in her earlier works such as her Tales of Angria. In “The Spell” Brontë introduces readers to the young and powerful Duke of Zamorma who is isolated from his family members and subjects alike. While describing her relationship with her new husband, Zamorna’s second wife, Mary, claims that, “I wish, O, how I wish, that he could
be sensible of this, that he knew how much, how deeply & how fervently I love him. Then, perhaps, he would not be so sad as he sometimes is, so cold, so strange, so silent” (Tales of Glass Town, Angria, and Gondal: Selected Writings 85). Zamorna’s relationship with his second wife continues to falter and he is struck with an unknown illness, which he is either unable or unwilling to recover. At the end of the text, however, Zamorna makes a critical revelation that has remained a secret from his fellow subjects and family members as well as from the reader: Zamorna has a twin brother. Again, readers encounter a main protagonist who is cold and refuses to offer up a clear picture of what plagues him until the last moments of the tale. Therefore, even in Brontë’s juvenilia these cold and detached characters surface.

It is important to illustrate the ways in which Brontë’s characters remain isolated from their texts in order to provide a clear foundation to discuss the possible motivations behind their coldness. According to John Kucich, author of Repression in Victorian Fiction, Brontë’s attempt to mature as a writer allow for an understanding of how some of her narrators purposely create a text with holes or gaps in it. Kucich writes,

But this very desire for aesthetic distance and control, for the ‘cooler region’ of her art, is seemingly betrayed by the rough formal edges most readers have found in the novels. Their narrative unevenness and disjunctive style are often perceived as the strained effect of an unnatural repression shared by writer and character alike. Brontë’s aesthetic ‘immaturity’ seems embedded in the general atmosphere of overweening constraint and tortured conflict in the novels. (36)

Kucich’s descriptions of Brontë’s works as ‘tortured’ is an interesting point that helps to approach some of the potential motivations behind characters like Lucy, but a discussion of Brontë’s aesthetic as a writer alone does not expressly touch upon the secrecy and isolation that most of her characters indulge in, to both the delight and frustration of readers. I would, instead, claim that the interior psychologies of Brontë’s characters, throughout her literary career, are
driven by traumatic events in their past. When readers and scholars place too much emphasis on the personal development of Brontë as a writer, the interior motivations of the character can be overlooked as simply underdeveloped. In order to avoid passing over potentially critical characters, another possible discussion of why some of these characters are particularly cold and unreliable is provided by Carol T. Christ as she claims,

The Victorian conception of women’s place did not allow [Bronte] autonomous imaginative activity. Charlotte Bronte’s complex response to that prohibition – anger, guilt, a self-suppression expressed in a commitment to realism – shapes her attitude toward her own art even as she continues to write. […] Her novels therefore contain ambivalence both toward the imagination and toward the containment she often espouses. (61)

And while the historical aspects of how Brontë was unable to fully participate in the realm of masculine Victorian literature is a key point in understanding Brontë’s struggle to produce her writing and the rigorous and sometimes masochistic manner in which she forced herself to write. Keefe writes that while she worked on *Villette* she was living on “’the very plainest fare – to take no butter – at present I do not take tea – only milk and water with a little sugar and dry bread…” (38). Therefore, Christ’s reading still leaves room for a slightly different discussion that focuses on what causes Brontë’s characters to contain a specific coldness and isolation. Brontë’s characters’ isolation is not clearly accounted for in a purely historical discussion of women’s place in Victorian England because figures like Zamorna and Crimsworth are also cold characters that have some measure of standing in a patriarchal world. Therefore, a strictly historicist approach does not allow for enough insight into the psychological workings of personal and private mourning of each individual character in Brontë’s literary career. A psychoanalytic approach to Brontë’s text is one in which the masterful work of her psychologically complex characters such as Lucy Snowe, Mina Laury, William Crimsworth, and the Duke of Zamorna can be clearly analyzed and appreciated by readers and scholars.
Scholars like Anne Cheng and Robert Keefe touch a little more closely on the psychological aspects of Brontë’s work by analyzing the mourning processes of Brontë’s characters for dead loved ones or lovers that have rejected them. Cheng describes the importance of psychoanalysis in Brontë’s literature by writing that, “The haunting rhetoric speaks to a profound connection between self and mourning, between autobiography and cryptology” (77). Therefore, it is clear that mourning is a critical part in understanding why characters like Lucy, Mina, Crimsworth, and Zamorna are so cold and detached from their fellow characters and readers. Robert Keefe helps support Cheng’s discussion of mourning by revealing the ways in which Brontë’s personal connections with continual traumatic losses of loved ones, from her mother to all of her siblings impacts her literary career. Keefe writes, “I have attempted to show that it was the deprivations she experienced during her childhood which enabled her to become a major novelist” (xi). Keefe’s is an excellent place to begin expanding the discussion of loss, isolation, and mourning in Brontë’s work.

To begin to clarify our discussion of mourning and its position within Brontë’s various texts, a brief discussion of the psychoanalytic ground work underlying the idea of mourning is first necessary. Julia Kristeva, in Black Sun, illustrates mourning as “[t]he disappearance of that essential being [which] continues to deprive me of what is most worthwhile in me; I live it as a wound or deprivation, discovering just the same that my grief is but the deferment of the … desire for ascendency that I nurture with respect to the one who betrayed and abandoned me” (5). Throughout Brontë’s novels, her characters suffer from mourning: they have been betrayed and abandoned, but instead of working through and eventually “[demanding] that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object” (Freud 244-245), and completing the mourning process, they persistently return to the love object and refuse to sever all their psychological
connections to the lost loved one. Freud and Kristeva both discuss the ways in which subjects begin to mourn the lovers they have been abandoned by or family members that have perished tragically. These discussions of mourning begin to reveal some of the motivations behind Brontë’s characters’ coldness and isolation. However, the complex and painful process of mourning does not fully explain why characters like Zamorna can be so withdrawn from their own text. Therefore, my task here is to demonstrate that the masochistic aspect of these characters’ mourning processes is a critical component in order to understand why Lucy Snowe, Mina Laury, William Crimsworth, and the Duke of Zamorna are such cold and withdrawn characters in Brontë’s novels and short stories.

Finally, Deleuze’s initial definition of masochism is critical to include in this introduction because his work begins to answer some of the questions posed earlier in this chapter. According to Deleuze’s work “Coldness and Cruelty”, masochism includes four basic characteristics: “The ‘special significance of fantasy,’ […] the ‘suspense factor’, […] the ‘demonstrative’, […] and the ‘provocative fear’” (74-75), and it is these characteristics which provide ways for the masochist to illicit the dual sensation of pleasure and pain from their various masters. Additionally, not all characteristics need to be incorporated into a situation in order for the masochistic desires of the character to be realized. There are several ways that Brontë’s characters within her early short stories and her later novels portray masochistic tendencies. For example, in Brontë’s short story “Mina Laury,” the title character reveals her masochism through Deleuze’s masochistic characteristics of fantasy and suspense. John Kucich argues that Mina Laury’s fantasies about Zamorna’s character are critical to her desires, stating that “The key to Mina Laury’s passion, however, is her ability to transform Zamorna into an abstraction, to make him an ‘idea’ that cannot be separated from her own ‘nature.’ In fact,
Zamorna’s existence is singularly irrelevant to Mina Laury’s desire” (*Repression in Victorian Fiction* 53). Therefore, part of Mina Laury’s masochistic desire is revealed through her fantasy or reincarnation of Zamorna as a literal part of herself. Another way Mina is able to reveal her masochism is through what Deleuze calls the “suspense factor,” where the masochist derives both pleasure and pain from being frozen in a position of expectation of a love object that never can arrive, or an act of affection that never actually occurs. Brontë writes that “She did not even repine when he forgot her […] it seemed as if she could have lived on the remembrance of what he had once been to her without asking for anything more” (*Tales of Glass Town* 192). As a result of these examples from Brontë’s short story “Mina Laury,” readers can understand a few ways in which Brontë’s characters display some of the masochistic characteristics discussed by Deleuze. Therefore, I argue that it is the intersection between mourning and masochism that becomes the critical motivation behind Brontë’s cold and secretive characters.

The intersections between mourning and masochism can be traced back through Freud’s initial discussion of mourning in his essay *Mourning and Melancholia*. In this article, he describes a game played by a small child where the child throws a toy on a string away from him and then pulls it back. Freud claims at the end of the observation that “[t]his then was the complete game – disappearance and return. As a rule one only witnessed its first act, which was repeated untiringly as a game in itself, there is no doubt that the greater pleasure was attached to the second act” (9). However, what if the greater pleasure is in the disappearance of the love object? I argue that connecting loss and love is a critical point in interweaving the concepts of masochism and mourning, and Brontë’s unique blend of love and loss in her short stories and novels is something that insists on creating a new sphere for itself in the scholarship of mourning. For example, in *Villette* Lucy experiences the traumatic passing of her entire family
and the rejection of a lover, Dr. Graham. Throughout Villette, Lucy is plagued by her inability to recover from the loss of loved ones. Therefore, her masochistic mourning process, which fetishizes that loss, renders her a cold and disconnected character. This claim helps to provide an explanation for her unreliable narration and coldness throughout Villette.

Furthermore, I contend that the intersection of masochism and mourning reveals why many of Brontë’s characters struggle to connect with readers as well as other characters within their respective texts. This process of masochistic mourning creates a position where the lost love object becomes the fetish through which the mourner elicits an intoxicating combination of pleasure and pain, therefore prolonging the mourning process and resisting its completion. Tammy Clewell states that “the other’s departure propels the mourner into a battle between life and death, between desire to live that entails abandoning the other, and a desire to die that entails clinging to and following the other into death” (46). Therefore, I claim that in Brontë’s novels and short stories there are several characters that enter into this ‘battle’ between the desire for death and life and chose to align themselves with death and loss, thus rendering them cold and illusive to readers and scholars.

The following chapters will include ways in which several characters, stemming from Brontë’s juvenilia to her later masterpiece Villette, exhibit masochistic mourning through their distinctively cold actions. In the first chapter I demonstrate how iconic characters in Brontë’s “The Spell” and “Mina Laury” exemplify the early and somewhat immature renderings of characters undergoing the process of masochistic mourning. In her early short story “The Spell” Brontë delves into the mourning process of the Duke over his first wife, Florence, and his firstborn son. As the Duke mourns their deaths he becomes increasingly isolated from his fellow Angrians as well as close members of his family and staff, including his new wife, Mary. As the
Duke continues to privately mourn their deaths, he falls ill and is soon figured as a corpse, barely alive. As a result of his impersonation of death, it is clear that his mourning process turns masochistic. In the first chapter, we also examine Brontë’s second ‘tale’ titled “Mina Laury” where Mina, Zamorna’s illustrious mistress, rejects several suitors in the hopes that Zamorna will one day marry her. Throughout the tale, however, the Duke is mostly absent and leaves Mina alone to fend for herself in a cold society that dismisses her because she is Zamorna’s mistress. Throughout the text Mina dwells upon Zamorna’s absence and his negligence and by mourning the loss of his love she becomes masochistic when she continues to reject the passionate advances of other suitors. Mina, because of her masochistic mourning, retreats from the world and dutifully awaits Zamorna’s eventual arrival. Therefore, “Mina Laury” provides another way that readers can understand the mourning process because Mina is mourning the loss of a love object because of his careless attitude towards her, not because he has died. This moment of mourning the negligent lover demonstrates the continued progression that Brontë creates in her juvenilia of cold and distant characters.

In the second chapter, I move into a discussion of Brontë’s first novel The Professor, which also labors to reveal ways that mourning a lover does not have to always include the death of that lover. William Crimsworth does suffer rejection and abandonment by his family in the first pages of The Professor: however, most of the novel is focused on the ways that he is repeatedly rejected by the headmistress at the girls’ school where he teaches and therefore becomes cold and stoic in the face of his pupils and his fellow colleagues. Instead of removing himself from his post at Mdlle. Reuter’s school after he is rejected, William maintains his classes and continues to articulate immaculate and penetrating descriptions of his young pupils. Through the art of portraiture, Crimsworth’s masochistic mourning is revealed because he continues to
focus his energies on depicting the young women who consistently reject him. It is clear that Crimsworth has been unable to effectively recover from Mdlle. Reuter’s rejection of his advances and as a result, he keeps himself in her presence and in the presence of his young pupils who despise him because he is so cold and callous towards them.

In the third and final chapter, I analyze Brontë’s masterpiece *Villette*, which highlights the intersections of masochism and mourning in the unassuming character of Lucy Snowe. Lucy is a character who does not prefer to reveal too many of her own secrets and vices. She even refuses to reveal her name to her reader until several pages into the novel. Lucy undergoes a series of traumatic events in her life that become the impetus for her masochistic mourning. Lucy’s life is one of isolation and loneliness and this is set up by the loss of her family in the beginning of the novels. The repeated rejections that she faces from lovers serve to capitalize on her private nature and render her cold and almost death-like. Therefore, Brontë expertly combines two aspects of mourning -- mourning the actual death of a loved one and mourning the loss of love or affection from a loved one. Lucy is effectively cut off from any such affection and purposely keeps herself away from forming any meaningful attachments, preferring to walk by herself in a small dark alley way that she discovers at Madame Beck’s school for young girls. Though Lucy attempts to sequester herself, she does attempt to attach to a couple new love objects within *Villette*. Lucy encounters the dashing Dr. Graham which compounds her masochistic mourning process, because her relationship with him solely involves Dr. Graham teasing and provoking Lucy to love him when he has no intention of reciprocating her misplaced affections. It is only the boisterous and brazen English teacher M. Paul Emmanuel who seems to be able to capture Lucy’s affections and this is because of his violent treatment, allowing her to continue to suffer both pain and pleasure at his tyrannical hands. Therefore, Brontë’s last novel is
a clear example of the ways in which masochistically mourning the death of family members and friends as well mourning the loss of lovers renders a character like Lucy cold and isolated from readers and scholars.
CHAPTER ONE: ‘COLDNESS AND CRUELTY IN CHARLOTTE BRONTË’S “THE SPELL” and “MINA LAURY”

I’ve sat down for the purpose of calling up spirits from the vasty deep and holding half an hour converse with them. Hush! there is a knock at the gates of thought and Memory ushers in the visitors. The visitors! – Charlotte Brontë

Brontë’s development of the intersection between mourning and masochism begins with her earliest writings about the fictional realm of Angria. Scholars such as Robert Keefe and Christine Alexander both discuss the impact that Brontë’s formative years had upon her literary career. The deaths of her beloved mother and siblings led Brontë’s towards writing. Keefe argues that Brontë is able to sublimate her anxieties and concerns about death through writing, stating, “I have attempted to show that it was the deprivations she experienced during her childhood which enabled her to become a major novelist” (xi). Furthermore, according to Capps and Carlin, the process of sublimation includes the ability to sublimate unruly desires of passions and transform them “into a higher… goal, and [Freud] also suggested that high cultural achievements — achievements in art and science, for example — are examples of sublimation” (774). Therefore, it could easily be inferred that the process of writing was cathartic for Brontë and her ability to craft complex novels can be viewed as an improvement over the mournful childhood that Brontë had to endure. However, a case can also be made that the process of writing stories, poetry, and letters was how Brontë could continue to connect with and explore the terrible world of death that surrounded her daily. Instead of understanding Brontë’s writing as a way to sublimate and escape her pain, I would like to postulate that Brontë’s earliest writings instead reflect a masochistic desire to commune with death.
Brontë’s earliest work is riddled with stormy characters who suffer from masochistic mourning and Brontë’s writing process itself can be seen as a result of her own masochistic mourning. In order to create these worlds of cruelty and death, Brontë herself suffered a unique pleasure that caused her a certain amount of pain as well. In the record of her *Roe Head Journal*, Brontë claims,

All this day I have been in a dream, half miserable & half ecstatic: miserable because I could not follow it out uninterruptedly; ecstatic because it shewed almost in the vivid light of reality the ongoings of the infernal world. […] Then came on me, rushing impetuously, all the mighty phantasm that we had conjured from nothing to a system strong as some religious creed. I felt as if I could have written gloriously – I longed to write. (*Tales of Glass Town* 162-163)

In this passage, while the desire to write presses upon her, she is not able to follow its impetuous path while Bronte is at Roe Head, therefore creating a sense of both pleasure and pain when she begins to write while teaching at the school. The desire to write and create is also portrayed in this passage as a ‘mighty phantasm’ or a master that she must submit herself to in order to be spiritually and psychically fulfilled. The relationship between Brontë’s early experiences with loss and mourning are indicated in her writing. However, writing became the cruel master of the young Brontë, at once teasing her and pursuing her relentlessly during her youth and adolescence. It is this tyrannical master that demanded her time and energy that became the basis for the tyrants in her novels. All of Brontë’s tyrannical characters relentlessly pursue the main protagonists of her works. Therefore, Brontë’s early experiences with her imagination provide the inspiration for the creation of other relentless masters within her novels.

The relationship created between mourning and masochism in Brontë’s stories and the pursuit of the process of writing itself also renders her character cold and unyielding to the others
present at Roe Head. Brontë mentions often that she was alone or desired to be alone, writing that

The sun had set nearly a quarter of an hour before we returned and it was getting dusk. The ladies went into the school-room to do their exercises & I crept up to the bed-room to be alone for the first time that day. Delicious was the sensation that I experienced as I laid down on the spare-bed & resigned myself to the luxury of twilight & solitude. (Tales of Glass Town 163)

Brontë’s desire to be alone, away from the hustle and bustle of the school, reflects the coldness of her later characters, such as Crimsworth in her first novel The Professor and Lucy in her last novel Villette, because she is masochistically disavowing reality in favor of a fantasy that allows her to escape from the mundane existence of her daily life. Brontë’s pursuit of isolation and peace is quite different from the innocent desire to be left alone with one’s thoughts. Almost as soon as she is able to lie down and rest, her mind opens and the desire to write comes upon her. Brontë continues by saying that “The stream of thought, checked all day, came flowing free & calm along its channel. My ideas were too shattered to form any defined picture … but detached thoughts soothingly flitted round me … producing an effect certainly strange by, to me very pleasing” (Tales of Glass Town 163). Brontë records the advent of these thoughts as both ‘strange’ yet ‘pleasing’ which leads to a discussion of her writing process as masochistic. It is something that confuses her at times and yet drives and fulfills her as well. While this moment of bodily rest is represented as an escape from the machinations of Roe Head and her fellow colleagues, the mental activity that ensues continues to speak of the all consuming desire to write that dogged Brontë’s steps with urgency. Almost drugged by her floating fancies, Brontë describes her acquiescence into her world of dreams and death “like opium & was coiling about me a disturbed but fascinating spell, such as I never felt before. What I imagined grew morbidly vivid” (Tales of Glass Town 163). The heavy weight of her imagination and the pleasing yet
tyrannical master of writing and creativity press her into a daydream where she believed that she
could “see, with my bodily eyes, a lady standing in the hall of a gentleman’s house…” (Tales of
Glass Town 163). Brontë’s masochistic imagination and desire to create and write brings her into
a new realm of reality. What is most interesting is the unbearable presence of death that marks
this particular daydream. Brontë writes that

Lucy first appeared before me as sitting at the door of a lone cottage on a kind of Moorish
waste, sorrowful & sickly… Lucy smiled to herself … & while she did so there was
something about her melancholy brow, her straight nose & faded bloom that reminded
me of one who might, for anything I at that instance knew, be dead & buried under the
newly plotted sod. (Tales of Glass Town 164)

While this vision or visitation fascinates and leaves Brontë riveted as she continues to ‘see’ the
various connections that Lucy makes within the dream or story, it also causes Brontë discomfort
and pain. Brontë records in her Roe Head Journal that “I grew frightened at the vivid glow of the
candle, at the reality of the lady’s erect & symmetrical figure, and her spirited and handsome
face, of her anxious eye watching” (Tales of Glass Town 165). The instinctual fear that this
vision instills in Bronte is another way in which her creative spirit, affect, or desire causes her
both pleasure and pain. Regardless, the desire to once again enter the realm of this creative
master drives Brontë’s moods within the school as well. When she is thwarted and forcibly
separated from the relentless master of her imagination she turns petulant and frustrated. Brontë
writes that she “felt confounded and annoyed” (Tales of Glass Town, 165) when she had to
awaken from her stupor because “the ladies were now come into the room to get their curl-
papers” (Tales of Glass Town 165). The masochistic obsession that takes hold of Brontë becomes
a method for her to escape, but once she is within that realm it is also one that brings to the
surface her anxieties about death and her familiar processes of mourning the deaths of her
mother and oldest sister, because Brontë daydreams about death. Waking fully from her
masochistic and mournful daydream Brontë concludes that, “I have had enough of morbidly vivid realizations. Every advantage has its corresponding disadvantage” (*Tales of Glass Town* 165). With this admission, it is clear that Brontë’s creative imagination works in two ways, as both a source of pride and pleasure and a source of fear and anxiety.

Therefore, Brontë’s obsession with writing, crafting, and creating stories can be considered a masochistic endeavor caused by her process of mourning her lost family members instead of a purely cathartic release and escape from reality. For example, at Roe Head, Brontë often recorded her frustration with the daily movements of the students and their professors. Roe Head, for Brontë, is not a source of learning and excitement. Instead it is a place where Brontë’s thoughts are continuously interrupted and foreclosed upon. Brontë writes in her journal that “I had been toiling for nearly an hour with Miss Lister, Miss Marriot & Ellen Cook, striving to teach them the distinction between an article and a substantive. The parsing lesson was completed, a dead silence had succeeded it in the school-room, & I sat sinking from irritation & weariness into a kind of lethargy” (*Tales of Glass Town* 162). One can easily imagine how moments of imagination and creativity were welcomed into Brontë’s consciousness after hours passing the time in this manner. I would not argue that through her imagination she was able to necessarily escape her psychical fears and anxieties, such as her mourning, but that she used her imagination to further explore the notions of mourning. As a result of Brontë’s exploration into the realm of death through her daydreams and her imagination, she developed her own masochistic mourning that rendered her cold and distant to her fellow tutors and students. Therefore, it can be argued that Brontë incorporated masochistic mourning as part of several of her main characters throughout her career because of her firsthand experience recorded in the journal that she kept at Roe Head.
Often in her *Roe Head Journal* Brontë claims that she is trying “to summon round me the dim shadows, not of coming events, but of incidents long departed, of feelings, of pleasures, who’s exquisite relish I sometimes fear it will never be my lot again to taste” (*Tales of Glass Town* 168). Again, in this passage readers are confronted with Brontë’s desire to indulge herself and spend all her time in the midst of these ‘dim shadows’ and while that desire is apparent there is also a sense that her imagination teases her by remaining illusive when Brontë specifically calls upon its powers. These feelings and pleasures that Brontë fears she will never be able to experience again also speak to the way that mourning colors her creative process. Therefore, in this journal Brontë calls upon these shadows, but instead of providing a light and pleasurable escape from the dull confines of Roe Head, her imagination calls upon memories: it literally resurrects dead moments to torture Brontë’s consciousness. Specters of mourning and masochism haunt entries from Brontë’s *Roe Head Journal*. They circle each other and the author as well as and her process of writing and creating.

While keeping Brontë’s personal experience of mourning, her masochistic relationship with the process of writing, and her imagination in mind, readers can also witness the connections between mourning and masochism through the characters of her early *Tales of Angria*, particularly the Duke of Zamorna in “The Spell.” According to Heather Glen: “These ‘tales’ […] have scarcely been considered as serious works of art. Because their scenes and characters are those of the imaginary world of Angria […] Indeed, they have been pathologized as obsessive, unstructured” (4). Instead of dismissing the *Tales of Angria*, the text should be considered to hold an important place to begin tracing the relationship between mourning and masochism that continue throughout Brontë’s later novels. In the first tale that focuses on the Duke of Zamorna, he falls under a curious illness after the death of his wife and son. Extended
mourning continues to affect the Duke despite his remarriage rendering him cold and distant to his new wife, Mary. The Duke of Zamorna, driven to madness, is the picture of a masochistic subject. The mistress that inflicts both pleasure and pain is not Mary, the current Duchess, but rather the deceased Duchess. The Duke’s memories of her as well as his own extended mourning process allow him to sink into a masochistic madness where he is both cold and unintelligible at times. Readers, however, have typically read the Duke’s illness as part of his disinterest in his new wife and his generally gruff attitude. Therefore, masochistic mourning can provide another way that readers can interact with cold characters like the Duke without dismissing them as cruel.

At the beginning of “The Spell” Brontë begins with the deaths of the Duke’s wife and first born son, stating “Inexorable Death! All the guards & precautions that the royal Zamorna could put about his first-born, his darling, the first hope of his kingdom & the second of his father’s, were unable to withstand that scythe whose keen edge alike destroys the withered, the full-blown and budding flower” (Tales of Glass Town 68). Zamorna is cast as a mournful character before readers are properly introduced to him. Brontë’s placement of the Duke’s loss puts a heavy significance on this early trauma in this short story. This early loss causes the powerful and compelling character of the Duke to become cold and isolated from friends and family. His process of mourning his lost love is a private experience that excludes others. Brontë writes,

At such an hour Zamorna’s figure would be visible, sole inhabitant of his rising city, his arms folded on his breast; his eyes fixed with a mingled expression of thought & vigilance […] the cheek, which now & then, at long intervals, died suddenly away from its ordinary warm, bright flush to a stricken & colourless pallor. Then it might be known there was a worm gnawing at the heart. (Tales of Glass Town 71)
The ‘worm’ that has stricken the powerful and spirited Duke is the spirit of mourning, but also the spirit of masochism in the form of the mysterious malady that plagues him later in the text. Mourning and masochism work together, with masochism building upon the ruined foundations of prolonged mourning in order to subject the Duke to both pleasurable memories of his lost family and the anguish that accompanies the process of remembering and attempting to separate himself from his lost loved objects. Tammy Clewell states, “The work of mourning… entails a kind of hyperremembering, a process of obsessive recollection during which the survivor resuscitates the existence of the lost other in the space of the psyche, replacing an actual absence with an imaginary presence” (44). The process of mourning that the Duke of Zamorna is forced to undergo at the beginning of the text causes him to obsessively remember his lost wife and son. Though he seemingly is able to move on and remarry, his mourning has already penetrated his heart so early within the text that his marriage to Mary is already doomed. The undetectable worm of mourning begins to eat away at the Duke’s spirit until he is so overcome with memories that he desires to join his lost wife and son in death. As a result of this masochistic mourning the Duke merely neglects his new wife: soon his masochistic mourning takes a new and deadly turn as he falls seriously ill and has fits of madness that terrify his new wife. Therefore, Zamorna’s curious behavior that confuses readers and characters can be explained by working through evidence for Zamorna’s masochistic mourning throughout “The Spell.”

Soon after the death of his wife and first born, the Duke of Zamora begins to make funeral arrangements for his wife and son, and while he is in the process he is accused of not being completely committed to his first wife. The Duke endures the accusation with steely silence, which only seems to incite ‘the stranger’ who openly calls him liar by declaring “‘A lie! A lie!’ said the unknown. ‘Your heart is now torn with it! That subdued voice & ashy
countenance give signs of a worm that will not die!” (Tales of Glass Town 75). However, in this case the worm that the stranger is referring to is not the Duke’s grief but his guilt. According to Nathan Leites, the Duke could be “blaming himself for the death of his wife because he is afraid to admit that many of his actions have no influence… on others” (16-17). Zamorna’s guilt is rooted in his own insecurity that he is unable to truly rule his kingdom. The anxiety and fear produced by his obsession with the loss of his wife and son is another way in which the Duke is unable to connect with his fellow subjects. Zamorna’s perpetual desire to remain disconnected and misunderstood by characters and the reader of “The Spell” is another piece of evidence that points to his masochistic mourning. As a result of Zamorna’s mourning process he also desires to be isolated and reserved which causes the reader and other characters in the text to misunderstand Zamorna’s emotions and motivations. This masochistic desire to be disavowed and misinterpreted combines with Zamorna’s extended mourning process to create a cold, reserved, and obsessive character.

Again the imagery of a worm burrowing its way into the heart and soul of the passionate Duke of Zamorna is used to indicate how deeply the loss of his wife and son have affected his outward countenance and his psyche. The Duke rectifies the misunderstanding with the stranger by openly declaring his continued affection for his wife and son, stating “I loved them both with a deeper love than words can express. Their untimely removal has, I confess, inflicted a wound that the lapse of centuries can never entirely heal” (Tales of Glass Town 75). In the Tales of Angria, readers can follow the Duke’s mourning and witness how it transforms his life. The Duke remains distant from the people around him and he declares “Florence! My sky can never again shine as brightly as it has done. There is a continual dimness round the horizon which will not pass away” (Tales of Glass Town 76). These declarations of love and perpetual darkness
foreshadow how the Duke literally goes mad and dies a premature death because of his masochistic mourning.

Therefore, Brontë’s early short story “The Spell” provides evidence for the Duke’s masochistic mourning. His masochistic mourning is witnessed in Zamorna’s continual dismissive attitude toward Mary. In a letter that the new Duchess of Zamorna writes to her ‘Grandmamma’ readers discover the cold and distant nature of the Duke of Zamorna. The Duchess writes “O, how I wish… that he knew how much, how deeply & how fervently I love him. Then perhaps, he would not be so sad as he sometimes is, so cold, so strange, so silent” (Tales of Glass Town 85). This confidence, placed into the hands of the Lady Henry Percy reveals the Duke’s masochistic mourning, because Mary cannot distract him from his earlier loss. It soon becomes clear that Zamorna is torn between his former wife and the current Duchess. As a result, he is sometimes affectionate and warm to Mary and then he can be “unaccountably cool – not unkind, I cannot say that – but it is the kindness of a friend rather than a husband. And then he changes so suddenly” (Tales of Glass Town 87). These moments of coldness do not simply reflect the changeful nature of a passionate man, but instead indicate the psychical turmoil that he has been struggling with since the tragic death of first his wife, Florence, and his firstborn son. The moments of coldness reveal instances of the Duke’s masochistic desire to join his wife and son in the isolation and finality of the crypt. Therefore, as a result of his extended mourning process, one of the first ways in which readers can understand the Duke’s masochistic mourning is through an examination of how he is unable to connect to Mary.

The desire that the Duke feels towards the lost love objects of his wife and son is a direct result of his mourning process. Keefe writes, “Examination of the evidence suggests that one of
the main characteristics of pathological mourning is nothing less than an inability to express overly these urges to recover … the lost object, with all the yearning for …the deserting object that they entail” (xiv). Therefore, because of the Duke of Zamorna’s continued love for his lost family, he is still attempting to recover them instead of detaching from their memories. According to Freud, mourning “The loss of a love-object is an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationships to make itself effective and come into the open” (250-251). The Duke’s continual or suspended mourning leads to the negligent way in which he treats his new wife. Furthermore, the Duke’s extended mourning process leads to his desire to reconnect with lost objects, which can be considered masochistic because the subject experiences pleasure as he attempts to remain close to the object that is already gone, but the reality of Florence’s abandonment of the Duke is still incredibly painful as well. Furthermore, Leites claims that, “When ‘the masochist manages to cause the other to bring it [misery] on him,’ ‘this helps him to deny … inner unhappiness’” (14-15). The Duke’s private process of masochistic mourning continues to result in his isolation from his loved ones. Instead of being able to enjoy building a new relationship with his new wife, Zamorna refrains and withdraws from her in such a way that ‘brings misery on him.’ Therefore, evidence for the intersection of mourning and masochism in Brontë’s short story “The Spell” can be found in the Duke of Zamorna’s relationship, or lack thereof, with his new wife. One may ask why he decided to remarry at all. Freud, however, argues that a critical part of the mourning process is the ability to detach from the lost love object and reattach to a new love object (246). While the Duke of Zamorna’s desire to reattach to a new love object after the loss of his wife and son is a natural part of the mourning process, he seems to have moved on a little too quickly because he has not been able to successfully complete the first part of Freud’s formula for successful mourning. Without a complete disconnection from the
lost love objects, the Duke’s mourning is doomed to remain incomplete, thus haunting his current marriage to the new Duchess of Zamorna.

Further evidence for the Duke of Zamorna’s masochistic mourning can be found in the mysterious malady that assails him soon after he becomes increasingly cold and distant from his wife. Doctors are called in: however, there is nothing that seems to be physically wrong with the Duke except the suggestion that he may be “‘working too hard, man! Upon my word this won’t do! If you stand labour no better than this, we may as well turn you over to the undertaker at once’” (Tales of Glass Town 99). And while it can be assumed that Mr. Montmorency is only teasing the Duke, this comment foreshadows the untimely demise of the Duke at the end of the short story. Indeed, as the Duke of Zamorna’s illness continues to progress he is described as being “stretched in the midst, still & rigid as a corpse, his countenance white, his lips livid & nothing save the motion & sparkle of his eyes indicating that he yet retained the smallest remnant of life” (Tales of Glass Town 111). In this passage, masochistic mourning has no longer simply affected his psyche and mental health, but now his desire to reconnect with the lost love objects of his wife and son has begun to affect his body as well. Brontë’s description of the Duke as corpse-like further connects to this masochistic desire to reconnect with the object that has betrayed and abandoned the Duke. According to Amber J. Musser, “The masochist is not motivated by pain” (134). Therefore, while the Duke’s malady may be painful, remaining attached to the lost love object is a pleasure that compels him to continue to be ill. Therefore, masochistic mourning has completely transformed this energetic and powerful Duke into a corpse.

Though this mysterious illness leaves the Duke’s friends and family convinced that he will not live much longer, his illness continues and progresses so that it comes to the point where
he begins to suffer from several fits of madness. Once, the Duchess of Zamorna discovers him in the saloon one day during one of these fits and has the following exchange,

‘My dear Arthur,’ at last she faltered out, ‘why do you keep me at such a distance? What are you so cool and strange? I wish I knew the reason. It should be the business of my life to labour night & day until I earned some portion of a warmer affection.’

‘I’m not angry with you, Mary’ replied Zamorna, ‘not I. Indeed, quite the contrary. I love you well enough’ (Tales of Glass Town 118).

And while this conversation seems rational and reassuring enough for the Duchess, readers later discover that according to the doctors, the Duke was not in his right mind during this conversation. The Duchess’s further mention of the Duke’s coldness and isolation from her demonstrates that the Duke of Zamorna is continuously suffering from the invisible malady of masochistic mourning. Therefore, the Duke’s madness is yet another manifestation of his masochistic mourning as he states “‘I am madder myself, I think’” (Tales of Glass Town 135). Zamorna demonstrates that he is slipping into a permanent realm of hallucination when he confesses to his own madness in this scene and introduces his twin, Julius.

Finally, the Duke’s madness can be read as his pursuit of his lost love objects, his previous wife Florence and their firstborn child. The ‘worm’ discussed at the beginning of the text has continued to work its way into the Duke’s mind and spirit to the point that he suffers from fits of madness. In this masochistic attempt to continue to hold on to his dead wife and son, the Duke renders himself cold and alien to his friends and family. At the very end of “The Spell” it is finally revealed after much conflict that

I think I have proved the Duke of Zamorna to be partially insane – by a circuitous & ambiguous road certainly – but still by one in which no traveler can be lost. […] what say you to the image of a crowned maniac, dying dethroned, forsaken, desolate, in the shrieking gloom of a mad-house. […] He attempted, however, more than he could perform … he became insane and died in a private mad-house at the early age of twenty-two. (Tales of Glass Town 150)
As a result of the Duke’s madness and eventually his tragic demise in a madhouse I surmise that the impetus of his madness is the traumatic loss of his wife and son in the first few pages of the tale. If readers understand that the Duke was unable to complete the process of mourning his first wife, connections can then be drawn between the Duke’s behavior and his mourning process. According to Freud, the failure of mourning “can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis” (244) takes the place of ‘proper’ or ‘complete’ mourning.

While Zamorna suffers from masochistic mourning, it is important to note Brontë’s experimentation with combining mourning with masochistic tendencies does not end with the final pages of “The Spell.” In the collection of her juvenilia there are other narratives that show the progression of Brontë’s work with masochistic mourning. The narrative of “Mina Laury,” for example, ostensibly begins after the events of “The Spell,” but instead of Zamorna representing the masochistic mourner in this story it is his mistress, the elusive and enigmatic Mina Laury, who demonstrates a mourning process that is resistant to relinquishing the lost love object. Mina does not suffer from the death of her lover, Zamorna, but rather suffers from his neglect and abandonment of her needs and desires. In “Mina Laury” Brontë has shifted her focus from love objects that have been lost due to their traumatic and ill-timed deaths to mourning love objects that have rejected the subject’s love and affection. The negligence that Mina suffers at the callous hands of Zamorna, allow for another reading of masochistic mourning in Brontë’s Tales of Angria and the novels that follow, such as The Professor.

Brontë purposely places Mina in a position of power inside Zamorna’s government. As a result of her masochistic loyalty to Zamorna, Mina’s position within the ranks of his cabinet is made clear as the narrator explains:
She had kept their secrets & executed their wishes as far as in her lay, for it had never been her part of counsel, with humble feminine devotedness, she always looked up for her task to be set, and then not Warner himself could have bent his energies more resolutely to the fulfillment of that task then did Mina Laury. (*Tales of Glass Town* 191)

It is clear that Mina Laury is a critical tool in Zamorna’s political arsenal, but she suffers from neglect as her desire to work for the good of Zamorna’s kingdom grows dusty without continuous use. Mina is used as a tool, and while that is problematic it is a necessary part of her masochism. Brontë writes “Miss Laury belonged to the Duke of Zamorna. She was indisputably his property, as much as the lodge of Rivalux or the stately woods of Hawkscliffe, & in that light she considered herself” (*Tales of Glass Town* 192). Mina’s consideration of herself as an object provides a space for a discussion of masochism to begin. By rendering her body as a tool to be used at the whim of her master, Zamorna, Mina participates in the creation of a fantasy that is critical to the development of a masochist. According to Deleuze, “[w]hat we need to do is to “put on wings “and escape into the world of dreams… what [the masochist] does is to disavow and thus suspend [the world], in order to secure an ideal which is itself suspended in fantasy” (32-33). The fantasy under which Mina Laury functions that she is an irreplaceable object of adoration and affection for Zamorna, allows her to disavow the reality of his cooling affections for her. Therefore, instead of being able to mourn the loss of her lover successfully by gradually working “over the memories and attachments to the lost loved one, clinging to the person and yet slowly giving him or her up, and eventually accepting the realities of the loss” (Jackson 322), Mina suffers from a masochistic mourning process where she is unable to accept the ‘realities of the loss’ and thus remains in a masochistic fantasy of complete devotion to her absent lover, Zamorna.
Mina Laury, through her masochistic mourning, remains detached from other potential suitors that pursue her. Lord Hartford, another member of Zamorna’s inner circle, hopes that Zamorna’s negligence may have provided him an opportunity to woo and marry Mina. Before he openly declares his love, Hartford is overcome by her beauty and forgets himself as

His own hand closed half involuntarily upon hers. Miss Laury looked at him. If the action had left any room for doubt of its significancy, the glance which met hers filled up all deficiencies – a wild fiery glance as if his feelings were wrought up almost to delirium. Shocked for a moment, almost overwhelmed, she yet speedily mastered her emotions, took her hand away, resumed her work (Tales of Glass Town 193)

The swift mastery of her own emotions in this scene speaks to her continued masochistic mourning and thus her attachment to Zamorna, who has abandoned her. Her coolness incites Lord Hartford to the point where he forces his attentions and his affections on her by crying, “‘You shall love me! ... Do I not adore you? Would not I die for you? And must I in return receive only the cold regard of friendship? ... I am not your friend. I am – hear me, madam – your declared lover!’” (Tales of Glass Town 195-196). However, while Mina is shaken, she is unable and unwilling to reciprocate because she is so heavily tied to Zamorna, her master.

Mina’s coldness in the face of such passion from Lord Hartford reveals that she is fixated by “[t]he Freudian notion of psychic object, to which depressive persons would be riveted, partakes of the same concept: the psychic object is a memory event, it belongs to lost time … it is a subjective construct, and as such it falls within the realm of memory” (Kristeva, 60-61). In Mina’s case, her psyche object is Zamorna as he once was passionately devoted to herself; however, her devotion to this object expounds upon her masochistic fantasy that Zamorna has remained faithful and affectionate throughout the months of absence and coldness. In this manner, readers can see how theories of mourning and masochism intersect in the behaviors and designs of Mina Laury in this second short story by Brontë.
Instances of Mina Laury’s masochistic mourning progresses throughout Bronte’s short story as the narrator describes Mina’s devotion to Zamorna in the following terms:

She had ever shown a habitual, rooted, solem devotedness to his interest, which seemed to leave her hardly a thought for anything else in the world beside. She had but one idea – Zamorna, Zamorna! It had grown up with her, become a part of her nature. Absence, coldness, total neglect for long periods together went for nothing. She could no more feel alienation from him than she could from herself. (Tales of Glass Town 192)

Through this description of Mina’s devotion and obsession with Zamorna, to the detriment of her own subjectivity, readers can see ways in which theories of masochism and mourning pull together to render Mina frigid to the advances of any other man. In Black Sun Kristeva states, “[f]etishism appears as a solution to depression and its denial of the signifier; with fetishists, fantasy and acting out replace the denial of psychic pain following upon the loss of biopsychic balance due to object loss” (45). Again, in order to cope with Zamorna’s absence from her life, Mina fetishizes an abstraction of Zamorna and devotes herself whole-heartedly to this ideal, thus revealing her masochistic mourning of her lost lover.

Furthermore, by the middle of the short story Zamorna has finally come to visit Mina after fighting a duel, but their reunion is short lived as Zamorna’s wife Mary has already arrived, in disguise, at the door of Mina’s household. In order to maintain the secrecy surrounding his affair with Mina, Zamorna meets with Mary and promises to “be at the castle before dawn. The carriage shall be ready. I will put you in, myself beside you. Off we go, straight to Verdopolis & there for the next three months I will tire you of my company morning, noon & night” (Tales of Glass Town 220). With this declaration, Mary is reassured and Mina is promised another three months of her lover’s absence. However, through the descriptions of Mina’s utter devotion, it is clear to the reader that her masochistic mourning will continue to allow Mina to remain connected with Zamorna even though he is not physically present. Therefore, Mina’s masochistic
mourning allows her to maintain a connection to her lost lover while sacrificing the embodied reality of a steadfast adoration that someone like Lord Hartford could provide her, thus dooming Mina to a life led in the quiet solitude of masochistic fantasy.

As a result of this brief examination of two of Brontë’s short stories in the collection of *The Tales of Angria*, it is clear that not only does “Charlotte Brontë’s fiction … not run from death; it concentrates obsessively on the act of dying” (Keefe 45). This concentration on death and the act of dying is not a way in which Brontë could understand and thus control death; instead it was a way for her to continue her masochistic relationship with the act of mourning and the loved ones that she lost at such an early age. Brontë not only demonstrates this masochistic mourning through the act of writing itself, which isolates her from the reality that surrounded her both at her home and at Roe Head school, but also demonstrates her masochistic mourning through the story lines she created and crafted as a young woman. *The Tales of Angria* are full of mournful moments of death and sorrow and isolated characters that seem to wallow pleasurably in their own depressed psyches. A critical part of masochism, according to Deleuze, is “[d]isavowal… [which] suspends belief in and neutralizes the given in such a way that a new horizon opens up beyond the given and in place of it” (26). Disavowing the reality of the lost love object is one way in which mourning and masochism can continue to intersect within the life and the work of Brontë. In order for Brontë to survive the traumatic loss of her mother and oldest sister at such a young age, she had to disavow that they were really gone and hold onto their presence and their maternal love throughout her lifetime. Therefore, Brontë’s desire to continue to write about these lost love objects for the rest of her life is another way in which she indulges her masochistic mourning. Instead of letting go of the lost object in her writing, Brontë is continuously losing them over and over again. In this obsession and focus on death, we can
conclude that as an author Brontë obtained a certain amount of masochistic pleasure from reliving and recording the deaths of her loved ones repeatedly.

However, Deleuze mentions the possibility for disavowal to continue to open up new horizons. Therefore, I argue that while Brontë as an author was clearly obsessed with death and enjoyed, to a certain extent, a pleasure that came from repeatedly addressing loss and mourning in her short stories as well as in her novels, it is this disavowal and entrenchment into the world of fiction that allowed her to be such a prolific writer. Anne Cheng states “[w]riting then must be marked by grief, must be thus marked, so that one never forgets that one always has something more to lose” (83). Brontë’s process of writing was always one of remembering and remaining close to her lost loved ones throughout her life. This focus on death in the writing process, instead of attempting to escape from it, is one of the ways which Brontë is able to bring together the concepts of mourning and masochism in her work. While earlier works such as “The Spell” and “Mina Laury” may seem unrefined, the ways in which mourning and masochism intersect in these formable short stories is key to revealing how the connection between these two pathologies can be traced throughout the whole of her literary oeuvre. After the Tales of Angria she began work on her first novel called The Professor, which later was recognized as a potential first draft of Brontë’s masterpiece Villette. Therefore, in order to set up an accurate timeline that explains why Brontë was so interested and entrenched in stories about death and mourning, we needed to start from the very beginning. The development and relationship between mourning and masochism becomes more elaborate as readers continue to work through Brontë’s texts. However, it cannot accurately be argued that Brontë used the space of literature and writing as one of complete sublimation. Her relationship with writing, as we can see from her journal from Roe Head, is masochistic and her relationship with death and its portrayal within her texts can be
said to be equally pleasurable and painful. Brontë wrote stories about death, loss, and mourning to satisfy her own masochism, not to escape from the real horrors of death.
CHAPTER TWO: MASOCHISTIC MOURNING AND PORTRAITUDE IN BRONTË’S

THE PROFESSOR

For Bronte, passion implies the existence of an aroused, hypersensitive self that it simultaneously
withholds -- John Kucich, critical essays on charlotte ront

Brontë’s first novel The Professor is often viewed as a first ‘draft’ of her later work, Villette by critics. In her “Introduction to the Haworth Edition of The Professor,” Mary A. Ward states, “In truth, the method of The Professor represents a mere temporary reaction, - an
experiment – in Charlotte Brontë’s literary development” (103). As a result of this
understanding, readers and scholars alike may dismiss William Crimsworth’s isolation from
readers and characters within the text as evidence of Brontë’s immaturity as a writer. On the
other hand, I would like to focus on how William’s coldness can be understood as a reaction to
the loss of loved ones through death, abandonment, and rejection. Evidence for William
Crimsworth’s complex mourning process involving masochistic characteristics can be found in
the literary portraits the women that he encounters during his time in Belgium as an English tutor
that he paints for his readers. Portraiture itself has interesting connections with both mourning
and masochism, and therefore it provides a natural intersection of these two theories. Even
though The Professor, “from its relation to Villette gains an interest and importance the world
would not otherwise have granted it” (Ward 103), also can stand alone as a piece that represents
Brontë’s continued interest in investigating themes of mourning and masochism in her cold and
withdrawn main protagonists.

In the first few pages of The Professor, William Crimsworth is orphaned and thus is
traumatically abandoned in a world that demands that a man must make something of himself,
preferably a success. Crimsworth, after debating whether to enter the clergy or not, enters into the highly competitive business realm of Victorian England with his head held high. His perseverance reflects Brontë’s wish that “my hero should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs – that he should never get a shilling he had not earned […] he should master at least half the ascent of ‘the Hill of Difficulty’” (The Professor 37). In order to begin his work as a tradesman, Crimsworth turns to his only brother, Edward Crimsworth, “ten years [William’s] senior, married to a rich millowner’s daughter, and now possessor of the mill and business which was [William’s] father’s before he failed” (The Professor 41). However, any hope of a welcome that Crimsworth may have anticipated from his older brother is swiftly dashed when his brother states forcefully that,

‘Hear once and for all what I have to say about our relationship, and all that sort of humbug! I must have no nonsense on that point; it would never suit me. I shall excuse you nothing on the plea of being my brother; if I find you stupid, negligent, dissipated, idle, or possessed of any faults detrimental to the interests of the house, I shall dismiss you.’ (The Professor 51)

From the outset it is clear that Crimsworth, though entrusted into his brother’s employment, is far from recreating a semblance of the family that he tragically lost.

Eventually, Crimsworth leaves his brother’s employment in search of a better opportunity where he may flourish and connect with other characters instead of remaining in a state of stagnation, unfulfilled by his brother’s kinship. The move that Crimsworth makes in The Professor is a critical part of mourning the failure of his previous family. Brontë’s inclusion of two processes of mourning so that readers can compare them at length is what is so interesting about this first novel. According to Freud, mourning can come to a “spontaneous end” when “detachment of the libido is accomplished” (244) through the process of ‘hyper-cathecting’ memories and emotional ties to the lost love objects. The physical movement that Crimsworth
makes away from the lost love object signals to the reader that he has successfully completed his process of mourning his lost relationships. Crimsworth, recording his decision to move out from under his brother, states:

> When I left... and found myself on the road to Brussels, nothing could look vapid to me. My sense of enjoyment possessed an edge whetted to the finest, untouched, keen, exquisite. I was young; I had good health; [...] Liberty I clasped in my arms for the first time, and the influence of her smile and embrace revived my life like the sun and the west wind. (The Professor 87)

It is clear that Crimsworth moves to Brussels without any residual shadow of mourning hanging over his head. As a result of Crimsworth’s clear countenance as he arrives in Brussels, readers cannot claim that his past trauma is the sole source of his behavior at Mdlle. Reuter’s school for young women. Instead of dealing with mourning in the sense of mourning a death of a lost loved one, Crimsworth experiences masochistic mourning when his courtship is rejected by Mdlle. Reuter. Crimsworth undergoes another process of mourning after this rejection, but it is not one that he is able to complete. It is this extension of the Crimsworth’s experience of mourning that allows for masochistic tendencies, such as dwelling on his rejection by presenting readers with critical portraits of his young pupils who despise him.

When Crimsworth initially arrives at M. Pelet’s school he is responsible for tutoring only young men. With relief, Crimsworth describes M. Pelet as “an absolute contrast to my late master, Edward Crimsworth” (The Professor 93), thus creating a clear separation between William’s past employment and his future role as a tutor under M. Pelet’s friendly guidance. While his young pupils do well as a result of his tutelage, Crimsworth is, from the beginning of his time there, drawn towards the mysterious school that lies next door to M. Pelet’s establishment. Mademoiselle Zoraide Reuter, runs a small pensionnat for young girls, and Crimsworth entertains himself in the quiet hours of the morning by fantasizing about how
beautiful and angelic the young women would be at Mdlle. Reuter’s school. While a board firmly covers the window that overlooks the gardens of Mdlle. Reuter’s establishment that does not stop Crimsworth from imagining what must lie beyond. He states, “In the daytime, when I listened attentively, I could hear, even through the boards, the voices of the demoiselles in their hours of recreation” (*The Professor* 96). And while some of the sounds he hears are “brazen” and “not quite silvery” (*The Professor* 96) Crimsworth is still quite infatuated with the young women he has not yet encountered. The depth of Crimsworth’s fantasy regarding the behavior of these young girls is critical, because his angels soon fall from grace with the mysterious and capable Mdlle. Reuter leading the ‘brazen’ pack. The fantasies that Crimsworth crafts at the beginning of the novel serve as our evidence for his affectionate attachment to Mdlle. Reuter and her pensionnat as his new love object to replace his lost family.

Crimsworth’s coldness continues throughout the text but it begins to manifest itself differently once Crimsworth is no longer working for his brother. As Crimsworth moves to Brussels, his repressed desire to replace his lost family with a new love object begins to play more of a role in the movement of plot. John Kucich creates a space where there is room for both coldness or repression and desire in his book *Repression in Victorian Fiction*, where he states that “… passion and repression are similar, not oppositional, in Brontë’s novels” (40). By making this connection, Kucich clarifies our understanding of repression as an expression of desire. This point also helps provide the basis of my claim that Crimsworth becomes a masochist in *The Professor* because his repression is passionate, not a representation of his dispassion. Though Crimsworth seems cold and distant, inwardly he is wrestling with desires that he is struggling to keep within the bounds of his steely mask. It is through portraiture, however, that Crimsworth becomes unmasked. Annette Tromly describes Crimsworth’s character as,
Fastidious, hypersensitive [he] … expends a great deal of energy guarding himself against assault: assault by other people, assault by his own impulses […] Enclosure is his characteristic way of dealing with a world too threatening for his insecure psychic constitution. (107)

Tromly’s point about Crimsworth’s repressive nature becomes the impetus for the argument that Crimsworth is a slave to his own coldness. As we move through Brontë’s first novel, there are several situations with Mdlle Reuter, Crimsworth’s pupils and his fiancée, Frances Henri, where Crimsworth’s desire remains masked by his coldness and is therefore difficult to detect. In this case, the voluptuous tyrant who places her barefoot on Crimsworth’s neck is a creature that inhabits the isolated sanctuary of his mind – his sense of ‘duty’. This sense of duty soon is challenged when he takes up his post as the English tutor at Mdlle Reuter’s school for young girls. Crimsworth’s repressive nature, therefore, is one of the pieces of evidence readers can touch upon in order to see that Crimsworth is really suffering from masochistic mourning. His sense of duty becomes the tyrant that keeps Crimsworth in a constant state of awaiting fulfillment and the loss of his new love object. Mdlle. Reuter continues the cycle that Crimsworth finds himself ensnared.

Though his will and sense of propriety is tried and tested several times at the school, William always manages to keep a sense of space and distance between himself and beautiful women by describing Mdlle Reuter and the pupils of her school in two-dimensional terms. Tromly states that “[h]e perceives his world as a series of pictures…” (109), and this perception extends to the women that he encounters within Mdlle Reuter’s school. In order to help understand Crimsworth’s masochism we can consider Deleuze’s point about the fetish in his essay “Coldness and Cruelty” that “[f]etishism, as defined by the process of disavowal and suspension of belief, belongs essentially to masochism” (32). As Crimsworth depicts these young
women’s movements in such a stylized manner, he both reveals to and represses from readers, his desire for them. Indeed, according to Freeland, “It has often been observed that portraiture has two fundamental aims that can conflict: a revelatory aim, requiring accuracy and faithfulness to the subject, and a creative aim, presupposing artistic expression and freedom” (95-96). It is clear from the tone of Crimsworth’s portraits that he is taking more creative license with his own interpretation than should be allowed in the case of traditional portraiture. The balance is decidedly off, and to the young girls’ detriment. However, portraiture also requires an excessive devotion of time and energy in order to render a likeness of the sitter. Paul Johnson, in “The Joy of Portraiture,” finds that the process of portraiture reveals a sense of masochism as,

The canvas was placed alongside the sitter, who was on a platform raising the face to the eye level of the artist. Before making a stroke the painter backed away as far as the studio would allow, compared the two images, reality and art, and then dashed forward to add the next brushstroke. (46).

Therefore, while the exterior of Crimsworth seems to be clear and straightforward, his desire to paint portraits of the women he encounters reveals his masochistic mourning because as he is rendering these unflattering images, he is reliving and reconnecting to the rejection and the loss that he suffered at the hands of Mdlle. Reuter. By continuously returning to the images of women that he cannot connect with because they reject him, he has created a fetish of his experience of loss.

Indeed, the discourse of art and painting in general has ties to masochism in the seminal text on masochism by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*. Severin, the self-proclaimed ‘super-sensualist’ of the narrative, constantly encounters his beloved Venus as a statue or a painting. When he enters into his masochistic contract with Wanda, he sometimes blurs the artistic rendering of Venus with Wanda’s actual personhood. This conflation of humanity and art serves to dehumanize and disavow the reality of Wanda’s humanity for the sake of Severin’s
masochistic pleasure. The same conflation can be found in William’s portraits of his young pupils who despise him. Sacher-Masoch reveals masochism’s connection to portraiture through a scene early in *Venus in Furs* when Severin, after literally worshipping at the feet of a statue of Venus for several weeks, encounters Wanda in the dark garden near the statue of Venus. Severin is immediately convinced that his marble goddess has come to life. He claims that

> Venus; not the marble beauty of a moment ago, but the goddess of Love in person, with warm blood and a beating heart! She has come to life for my benefit like Pygmalion’s statue. The miracle is not quite complete, for her hair still seems to be made of marble and her white dress gleams like moonlight – or is it Satin? The dark fur drapes her from shoulder to toe. But her lips are becoming redder, and her cheeks are taking on color, suddenly her eyes shine with a wicked green glitter – she is laughing! (Sacher-Masoch 156-157)

In this scene, this scene is a clear example of the painful pleasure that constitutes masochistic desire, because Severin is both enraptured and terrified. What is also important about this scene is the fact that the observer, Severin, is at first struck by the “marble beauty” of his lover. This experience can also be tied to William Crimsworth’s initial expectations of the young women at Mdlle. Reuter’s school. However, Crimsworth’s pupils soon, like Wanda in *Venus in Furs* break through the cold description of them with their laughter and misbehavior. The masochist in both texts, William Crimsworth and Severin, disavows their personal tyrant’s humanity through artistic descriptions. Art brings with it a sense of control and order for Crimsworth and Severin. It is their way to restrict and depict the women who cause them pain and pleasure. Inevitably, the result of these artistic descriptions and restrictions is the creation of a sense of coldness and distance from the human subject. Therefore, Crimsworth is able to express his masochistic desire and pleasure by framing his young pupils as a works of art instead of human beings as an expression of his repressed and rejected sexual desires for these female characters.
A critical part of masochism, according to Deleuze, is disavowal, and rendering living women into art is one way to disavow reality and obtain masochistic pleasure. Disavowal on behalf of the masochist is the capstone of masochistic desire. Deleuze states that Severin must “disavow and thus … suspend [Wanda] in order to secure an ideal which is itself suspended in fantasy” (32-33). Crimsworth attempts to do the same thing to the various women that he encounters throughout the text, by disavowing them Crimsworth is able to suspend reality, thus creating the distance and coldness that he desires above all. Deleuze further defines disavowal by stating that “[d]isavowal should perhaps be understood as the point of departure of an operation that consists neither in negating nor even destroying, but rather in radically contesting the validity of that which is: it suspends belief” (31). This discussion of disavowal provides an interesting lens through which we can refute another critical reading of Brontë’s *The Professor*. Annette Tromly claims, “In *The Professor*, however, teacher-student relationships are far from ideal; they are based, for the most part, on tyranny” (117). However, there could be an argument made that the master-pupil relationship that becomes the center of *The Professor* is based less on sadism. For example, I would resist defining Crimsworth as a sadist because of his peculiar penchant for isolation and self-negation. A Sadist’s work focuses on connecting to their ‘slave’ almost to a point of claustrophobia. Even in the discourse of masochism and sadism, sadism is represented explicitly where masochism distances the reader from explicit sexual scenes. Deleuze describes Sacher-Masoch’s work *Venus in Furs* as “commendable for its unusual decency” (25), whereas, Deleuze describes the work of Sade as, “demonstrative … [and] obscene in themselves” (25). Therefore, I claim that when Crimsworth describes Mdlle. Reuter and her pupils as portraits he is not creating obscene scenes – which is what reading Crimsworth as a
sadist would argue – but disavowing and suspending them from reality, thus creating an enhanced sense of distance and ‘decency’ common in texts about masochism.

In fact, the first woman that Crimsworth offers up to his readers as a two dimensional portrait is the unusual directress of the all girl’s school that is next door to M. Pelet’s pensionat. Crimsworth describes Mdlle. Reuter as,

Mdlle Reuter’s little figure, as graceful as it was plump, appeared. I could now see her dress in full daylight; a neat, simple mousseline-laîne gown fitted her compact round shape to perfection – delicate little collar and mancherres of lace, trim Parisian brodequins showed her neck, wrists, and feet, to complete advantage; but how grave was her face as she came suddenly upon me! Solicitude and business were in her eye – on her forehead; she looked almost stern (The Professor 112).

Mdlle. Reuter’s business-like attitude sparks Crimsworth’s infatuation. Again, what he values above all else is reservation and control, both of which Mdlle. Reuter displays in full view of Crimsworth. However, what seems to puzzle Crimsworth is Mdlle. Reuter’s ability to appear so like the ideal woman, who has resided in his mind’s eye and who is still able to conduct the several rambunctious students within her school. Crimsworth is also aware that Mdlle. Reuter seems to be attempting to break through his steely visage of coldness and austerity. More generally, in their daily exchanges of conversation, Crimsworth notices that, “she was feeling after my real character; she was searching for salient points, and weak points... she was applying now this test...hoping in the end to find some chink ...where she could put in her little firm foot and stand upon my neck – mistress of my nature” (The Professor 118). The allusions in this passage to the potential tyrannical nature of Mdlle. Reuter and the masochistic desires of Crimsworth are interesting as readers consider the development of their relationship throughout the beginning chapters of The Professor.
For instance, Mdlle. Reuter attempts to break through Crimsworth’s exterior armor after a particularly intense class session where Crimsworth becomes disillusioned about the nature of the angelic creatures whom he now has charge over in his classroom. Crimsworth purposely keeps his high stress level from Mdlle. Reuter, but regardless of his efforts, the reality of his experience is not to be kept from her all-knowing presence as the pensionnat’s directress. Crimsworth states that “her eye – … astute, penetrating… – showed she was even with me; it let out a momentary gleam, which said plainly, ‘Be as close as you like, I am not dependent on your candor; what you would conceal I already know’” (The Professor 118). In this brief exchange, and in the way that Crimsworth takes the times to describe her features and face, readers see a moment of masochistic desire. Crimsworth delights in Mdlle. Reuter’s person and capabilities. However, he refrains from taking her into his confidence. Crimsworth denies his basic desire because even though “Brontë’s protagonists may suffer in their isolation, … their suffering often promises a consummation more attractive than the relief of suffering in interpersonal fusion” (Kucich, 52). Therefore, Crimsworth, due to his masochistic desires, would rather remain isolated and cold, because that is what satisfies his particularly repressed desires. And while Crimsworth, in his conversations with Mdlle. Reuter and his ruminations about their encounters afterwards, entertains the thought of building a relationship with the directress – he even considers marriage – Crimsworth is never able to fully open himself to his new potential love object. His extended mourning and coldness keep him reserved and determined in his isolation. In fact, Kucich states that “[i]n the novels, the word ‘romance’ is frequently identified with withdrawal and with private dreaming, rather than with union and otherness” (Repression in Victorian Fiction 56). Therefore, the ‘private dreaming’ of Crimsworth – the distance and the
lack of intimacy – successfully satisfy his masochistic desires without him ever having to enter into a relationship with Mdlle. Reuter.

Another critical way in which Crimsworth expresses his process of masochistic mourning is through his interactions with Mdlle. Reuter and his pupils. Crimsworth takes on the role of educator, which is a critical part of his masochism. Deleuze states that,

In the work of Sacher-Masoch … it is all persuasion and education. We are no longer in the presence of a torturer seizing upon a victim and enjoying her all the more because she is not a consenting partner.... We are dealing instead with a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strangest of schemes. (20)

Throughout Crimsworth’s unusual relationship with Mdlle. Reuter he continues to treat her with a sense of coldness and reserve. He demonstrates to her how to best become his tyrant by educating her to remain closed and cold in their daily banter. Eventually, this education of Mdlle. Reuter as Crimsworth’s tyrant comes to a head when she ultimately rejects him as a suitor. As is typical of Crimsworth’s experience and preference for distance, he learns of her rejection of his courtship by eavesdropping on a conversation between Mdlle. Reuter and M. Pelet, her actual lover. In this scene Mdlle. Reuter completes her work as Crimsworth’s female despot. Much in the same way that Wanda eventually rejects Severin in Sacher-Masoch’s work *Venus in Furs* the ultimate pleasure and pain comes in the final dismissal of the masochist from the sphere of the female despot. Mdlle. Reuter, as educated in coldness and cruelty by Crimsworth himself, states, “How could I prefer an unknown foreigner to you? Crimsworth could not bear comparison with you either physically or mentally; he is not a handsome man at all; some may call him gentlemanlike and intelligent looking, but for my part” (*The Professor* 139-140). While the news of Mdlle. Reuter’s disinterest comes as a shock to Crimsworth and his pride is injured there is also a sense of pleasurable agony that keeps him up for the rest of the evening. Crimsworth
states, “but something feverish and fiery had got into my veins which prevented me from sleeping” (The Professor 140). This feverish quality is the intoxicating combination of pleasure and pain which Crimsworth, as a masochist, feels distinctly upon overhearing this conversation between his two employers. The coldness that readers find becomes synonymous for Crimsworth and it also becomes his masochistic fetish throughout the text. Though he endures a sleepless night, in the morning he is cool and calm, continuing to uphold his façade of coldness. Kucich clarifies Crimsworth’s turn towards the repression of his anger and hurt by stating that individuals who are repressed often “rather than a clear shift from desire… what we have is a deepening of desire and a fuller elaboration of repression as one of its strategies” (Repression in Victorian Fiction 38). By discussing repression as an extension or expression of desire readers can continue to discuss Crimsworth and his desires even when they are repressed.

After the end of the brief affair between Crimsworth and Mdlle. Reuter, Crimsworth turns his attention towards Mdlle. Reuter’s students. Crimsworth’s masochistic desires are disguised by his proclaimed disgust with their appearance and their complete lack of intelligence. Janet Gezari states, “Crimsworth asserts that his role as professor in a girl’s school has enabled him to see women as human rather than angelic” (45), but I would argue that Crimsworth is never able to clearly see these young women unless it is through his very controlled lens of the portrait. Their humanity is distanced from him and their desires are secondary to his own masochistic desires. For example, instead of fostering a close community or a positive and encouraging teacher-student relationship with any of his students, Crimsworth remains separated from them. With his continuous cold demeanor, he successfully demonstrates to his students how to become the female despots that he desires so he is able express his masochism. Crimsworth describes the character of his students en masse as “rough, boisterous, marked by a point-blank
disregard for all forbearance towards each other or their teachers; an eager pursuit by each individual of her own interest and convenience; and a coarse indifference to the interest and convenience of everyone else” (*The Professor* 126). Throughout his encounters with these pupils they are silent, bending to his authority, but they are also loath to do so. It is clear that at any moment their hostility towards Crimsworth could burst forth. Crimsworth encourages their cold hostility towards him because it allows him to experience his masochistic pleasure. Crimsworth describes, with obvious wicked pleasure, his students’ ability to lie, stating that, “Most of them could lie with audacity when it appeared advantageous to do so. … and could with consummate skill and at the moment’s notice turn the cold shoulder the instant civility ceased to be profitable” (*The Professor* 126-127). Through this example it is clear that the coldness that Crimsworth values and allows to become a fetish is an attribute of character that he demonstrates to his students, thus carefully crafting them in the shape of despots and tyrants that Crimsworth depends upon in his masochism.

However, Crimsworth not only educates his students in the masochistic language of coldness and cruelty, but also records their movements and characters in portraits. Again, as he did with Mdlle. Reuter, Crimsworth begins to disavow the reality of the humanity of his students by taking their characters and their bodies and compressing them into a two-dimensional plane. Through the process of portraying these young women through the language of art, Crimsworth continues to create a sense of separation and distance from reality. When Crimsworth first enters the classroom full of young women that he is to teach for the duration of his employment, he is struck by three figures near the front of the room: Eulalie, Hortense, and Caroline. Each young woman is instantly, and for the benefit of the reader, described in artistic terms, thus rendering
her as a frozen image on a canvass instead of a living and breathing human. Crimsworth turns his cold eye first onto the figure of Eulalie:

Eulalie was tall, and very finely shaped: she was fair, and her features were those of a Low-Country Madonna; many a ‘figure de Vierge’ have I seen in Dutch pictures exactly resembling hers; there were no angles in her shape or in her face, all was curve and roundness – neither thought, sentiment, nor passion disturbed by line or flush the equality of her pale, clear skin. (*The Professor* 114).

In Eulalie’s case, she is disavowed by Crimsworth in two ways; firstly, because he represents her as a portrait, and secondly because he compares her to other works of art. Her character is transformed and literally erased with another image overlaid. Annette Tromly furthers this point by stating that Crimsworth disavows Eulalie “[f]irst, by associating her with works of art, he is able to distance himself from her. Second, in relying on the stock associations of a type of painted figure, he is forcing Eulalie into an easy and pre-existent category” (109). Through this process of disavowing Eulalie, as an individual, Crimsworth is able to express his masochistic desire.

However, Crimsworth’s attention does not only rest on Eulalie, but he focuses on several students in the class and promises that these are not the only sketches that he has taken from the class, but they are the only ones he will submit to the readers. The obvious desire that belies these portraits works to reveal Crimsworth’s repressed desires. For example, when he disturbingly details the outer visage of Caroline, he also fantasizes about her future as a fallen woman. Crimsworth describes Caroline as

little, thought evidently full grown; raven-black hair, very dark eyes, absolutely regular features, with a colour-less olive complexion, clear as to the face and sallow about the neck, formed in her that assemblage of points whose union many persons regard as the perfection of beauty. How, with the tintless pallor of her skin and the classic straightness of her lineaments, she managed to look sensual, I don’t know. I think her lips and eyes
contrived the affair between them, and the result left no uncertainty on the beholder’s mind. She was sensual now, and in ten years’ time she would be coarse – promise plain was written on her face of much future folly. (The Professor 115)

The portrait of Caroline is one of Crimsworth’s most sensual, but simply because the repressed sensuality of the masochistic teacher is a little more astringent in this portrayal does not mean that he still achieves a sense of distance as well as desire. Indeed it is this conflation of distance and desire that allow for his particular pleasure in pain to flourish in Mdlle. Reuter’s school. Crimsworth is quite content to provide ‘innocent’ accounts of these young women to the great public and he does not desire to have an illicit or predatory sexual relationship with any of these girls. Tromly adds that, “Crimsworth’s brand of idealism … is as constricted as his repressed desires, his love is enclosed as tightly as his grief and his memories” (109). His fetish with distance and coldness creates a sense of distance that is crucial to his masochistic fulfillment. In fact, due to Crimsworth’s incomplete mourning process his desires do not become fully articulated in his consciousness. Instead, his masochistic tendencies surface in his careful creation of coldness and distance between himself and the various objects of his desire.

While distance is appropriate for most of the students that Crimsworth encounters in his classroom, there is one important exception: his future wife, Frances Henri. Frances, like all the other women who traverse across the path of this repressed masochist, becomes the subject of one of Crimsworth’s infamous portraits that “are often overloaded with descriptive minutiae” (Tromly, 109). For the description of Frances, Crimsworth still places Frances in the context of the classroom when he states,

She was dressed, like all the rest, in a dark stuff gown and a white collar; her features were dissimilar to any there, not so rounded, more defined, yet scarcely regular. The shape of her head too was different, the superior part more developed, the base considerably less […] I can pronounce no encomiums on her beauty, for she was not
What is especially interesting about this description is the fact that Frances resists being inscribed into an accurate portrait. In fact, instead of overflowing with ‘descriptive minutiae’ that Crimsworth is wont to do, in this situation he cannot. Readers may wonder why William cannot seem to accurately describe Frances. Indeed, Crimsworth himself wonders the same, stating, “Now, reader, though I have spent more than a page in describing Mdlle Henri… I have left on your mind’s eye no distinct picture of her … and it is not my intention to communicate to you at once a knowledge I myself gained by little and little” (The Professor 152). The coldness and reserve that Mdlle. Francis Henri displays from the very beginning of her time spent in Crimsworth’s classroom is immediately attractive to Crimsworth because here is a woman who already naturally contains many of the qualities that he fetishizes. In fact, her coldness is closely related to Crimsworth’s experience of Mdlle. Reuter’s reserve at the beginning of the text. Tromly compares both women and how they are represented by Crimsworth in The Professor by stating, “in Crimsworth’s mind, Reuter is an unattractive foil for his heart’s desire, Frances. He sees Reuter as manipulative, Frances as passive” (116). Indeed, their mutual coldness and their ability to become the cruel tyrant that Crimsworth desires is part of what they have in common. The continuity between both of Crimsworth’s lovers allows for readers to continue tracking Crimsworth’s masochistic desires throughout the text.

Even Crimsworth and Henri’s courtship is characterized by the incredible amount of distance between them. Even when Crimsworth proposes to Frances, her reaction is not the one that Crimsworth is expecting. Crimsworth describes the scene after his declaration of love as, I drew her a little nearer to my heart; I took a first kiss from her lips, thereby sealing the compact, now framed between us; afterwards she and I were silent, nor was our silence
brief. Frances’ thoughts, during this interval, I know not, nor did I attempt to guess them; I was not occupied in searching her countenance, nor in otherwise troubling her composure. (*The Professor* 249)

While Frances Henri’s reaction to the entire scene of her betrothal is interesting, what seems to be representative of Crimsworth’s masochism is the fact that her silence and distance from him does not give him a moment’s pause. Instead he is content with her coldness because it satisfies his repressed masochistic fetish for distance in a relationship. Therefore, Frances is naturally an acceptable partner for him because she is able to remain reserved without much educating from Crimsworth himself.

In fact, the last third of the novel is dedicated to the description of Crimsworth and his family’s portrait. Before detailing his home of rest and repose, he briefly discusses his relationship with Frances over the years of their marriage by stating, “Frances was then a good and dear wife to me, because I was to her a good, just, and faithful husband. What she should have been had she married a harsh, envious, careless man” (*The Professor* 278). However, the introduction of their son, Victor, continues to create distance between William and Frances, to the point where William describes himself being “abandoned” (*The Professor* 289) whenever she leaves Crimsworth to attend to their son. At one point Crimsworth follows Frances when she goes to check on Victor, and describes the scene before him in a miniature portrait of mother and son by stating,

> Her face (the night I followed and observed her) changed as she approached this tiny couch; from grave it warmed to earnest […] Frances gazed, she did not smile, and yet the deepest delight filled, flushed her face; feeling, pleasurable, powerful, worked in her whole frame, which still was motionless. I saw, indeed her heart heave, her lips were a little apart, her breathing grew somewhat hurried; the child smiled; then at last the mother smiled too. (*The Professor* 278)

What is most interesting about this scene is the position that Crimsworth takes; he is only the observer of this tender moment, nothing more. Crimsworth does not join the scene, nor does he
comment on it afterward. Instead, he paints another detailed portrait for his gallery. As both the observer of humanity and its artist or recorder, Crimsworth is doubly removed from the tenderness and earnest love of the scene. He is not included, or even considered, by Frances or Victor. In fact, many scholars have interpreted his absence from this scene and his description of being abandoned by Frances for Victor as an indication of Crimsworth’s jealousy. And I would like to take that a step further and claim that the presence of Victor’s and Frances’ abandonment of Crimsworth only further serves to fulfill Crimsworth’s repressed masochistic desires.

Finally, a sense of isolation and coldness still pervades the Crimsworths’ home at the end of the text, and I would argue that the final landscape painting that readers are left with serves to support the claim that Crimsworth has structured his entire world around his repressed masochistic desires. Crimsworth describes his sanctuary as,

My house is a picturesque and not too spacious dwelling, with low and long windows, a trellised and leaf-veiled porch over the front door, just now, on this summer evening, looking like an arch of roses and ivy. The garden is chiefly laid out in lawn, formed of the sod of the hills, with herbage short and soft as moss, full of its own peculiar flowers, tiny and star-like, imbedded in the minute embroidery of their fine foliage. (The Professor 281)

This final portrait is important because of what is not figured anywhere in the painting: Crimsworth and his family. Victor is not playing in the front garden, Frances is not sewing at a window seat, and Crimsworth is not strolling upon the ‘sod of the hills’. Instead, readers are left with a final impression of how removed these characters are from the text, because of Crimsworth’s masochism. The warm depiction of Daisy Lane cannot include human beings for that would not be in keeping with the repressed desires of Crimsworth’s masochism. This final removal of all humanity from Crimsworth’s final landscape painting proclaims just how isolated Crimsworth has become over the years.
While some may have hoped that his marriage to Francis would have fulfilled his prolonged mourning process by replacing the lost family and position from the beginning of William Crimsworth’s story, it is quickly made evident that his reserve has set in long term. Even though his masochistic desires were initially instigated by his mourning process, it has now taken on a life of its own. Crimsworth’s extensive work to disavow the reality of his family and friends through recording them into a portrait – thus creating distance between Crimsworth and the world -- helps to reveal Crimsworth’s masochistic tendencies throughout The Professor. Crimsworth reveals his incomplete mourning process through his masochistic tendencies; his detachment became his masochistic fetish, creating an intersection between the psychoanalytical concepts of masochism and mourning. In The Professor, Crimsworth is not content unless he observes the various daily movements and attitudes of the people surrounding him. Through his cold observation, Crimsworth begins to educate potential lovers and students alike into treating him with a similar detachment, thus fulfilling his masochistic desires. Tromly notes that even “The frames around his past, like the urns that hold memories, are enclosures. Even the gallery itself is a claustrophobic, four-walled cell” (110). Therefore, Crimsworth makes sure that everything surrounding him and his subjects is sealed off from the outside world. And Crimsworth himself made sure to disavow his subjects by portraying them in a manner that arrested their movement and froze their speech, thus forcing them into maintaining their distance from Crimsworth, even if they were married to him – as was the case with Frances Henri. But Tromly also points out that “missing from the canvass is Crimsworth himself. Eulalie, [and the other subjects of his portraits] … [are] not the only figure[s] who [are] dehumanized and regarded with detachment; Crimsworth also maintains a disturbing distance from himself” (110). This final discussion of the distance that Crimsworth seems to take even from himself draws
nicely upon the detachment that he experiences in the beginning of *The Professor*. By not completing the work of mourning, Crimsworth has distanced himself from other characters of the book as well as from himself. This distance is what I would argue allows Crimsworth to be so blind in terms of his awareness of his own repressed masochistic desires. At some points it seems impossible that a character could have such little insight into their own motivations and desires, but Tromly correctly points out that because he is missing from the scenes of his life – his gallery – Crimsworth is the character under the most erasure and disavowal of the whole text.

Some scholars may argue that Crimsworth seems to be demonstrating quite an amount of agency and power over these characters, thus perhaps bringing in the question of sadism instead of masochism. However, especially with the position of the masochist as the educator, Deleuze claims that the masochist has his or her own agency and motivation by stating, “It is essential to the masochist that he should fashion the woman into a despot, that he should persuade her to cooperate and get her to ‘sign.’ He is essentially an educator” (21). Throughout Brontë’s novel, Crimsworth expresses his masochistic desires in a very repressed manner, which could cause some readers of the text to not pick up on his subtle cues. However, by examining the ways in which he carefully observes and renders the women who attend Mdlle. Reuter’s school, as well as Mdlle. Reuter herself, it is clear that there is an undertone of Crimsworth’s desire running through the plot of Brontë’s first novel.
CHAPTER THREE: “TO BE A MERE SHADOWY SPOT ON A FIELD OF LIGHT;”
INTERSECTIONS OF MOURNING AND MASOCHISM IN BRONTË’S VILLETTE

I am already an outcast – You cannot imagine how rebellious and intractable all my feelings are ... don't desert me – don't be horrified at me, you know what I am –

Charlotte Ron to Ellen; Roe Head 1836

Villette is the literary triumph that marks the end of Brontë’s career as a novelist. This coming of age novel is narrated by its central protagonist, Lucy Snowe, as she looks back over her life. The plot follows the timid Lucy from a position of grief and loneliness to an independent life as an English tutor in Belgium. Throughout the extensive record of her life, Lucy encounters several characters that have the potential to impact her life, however, she resists creating lasting connections with any of these friends, employers, pupils, and suitors. For example, Madame Beck, a rigid woman who owns and runs the school where Lucy teaches, is continuously kept at an arm’s length by Brontë’s protagonist. Lucy keeps Madame Beck at bay because Madame Beck embodies “[p]ower of a particular kind strongly limned itself in all her traits, and that power was not my kind of power: neither sympathy, nor congeniality, nor submission, were emotions it awakened. I stood – not soothed, nor won” (Villette 87). It is Lucy’s seemingly unaccountable coldness towards potential friends, however, that continues to puzzle readers and scholars today. Karen Lawrence notes Lucy’s ability to continue to remain isolated and cold towards readers and other characters:

For throughout Lucy’s story (the events of her life) and her narrative (the writing of her story), she displays dual impulses to be overlooked and to signify. She captures these dual impulses in the fascinating figure of herself she provides the reader late in the novel: she calls herself a ‘cypher,’ someone ‘to whom nature had denied the impromptu faculty; who, in public, was by nature a cipher.’ (306)

Lucy acknowledges her ability to remain an unknown entity by calling herself a cipher, and it is the case that she is able to be understood by few characters in Villette. Lucy’s coldness and
isolation is a stumbling block for many frustrated readers and scholars, but it is also a critical revelation of her masochistic mourning process. Lucy is abandoned her at the beginning of the novel by her family through a tragic and fatal event and she is abandoned by her various lovers and friends who promise love, safety, and security. Further evidence of Lucy’s masochistic mourning continues to be revealed through an examination of her behavior towards potential suitors, as well as, encounters with the specter of the “NUN,” and Vashti throughout the course of *Villette*.

As a result of Lucy’s frustrating character, readers naturally begin to search for motivations behind her reserved countenance which keeps her from making lasting connections and friendships. Some could interpret Lucy’s stoic nature as a nod towards her budding independence as a woman in the Victorian era. Instead of being dependent on a father or brother figure, Lucy makes a way for herself in the novel. And while her independence and ambition is commendable, that is not the only reason for Lucy’s repressed nature. Throughout this essay, I claim that the traumatic experience early in Lucy’s life begins her lifelong struggle between the allure of life and love and her fascination with death. This thesis will allow readers who have struggled with the juxtaposition of Lucy’s independent movements with her reserved character to begin to understand that Lucy’s masochistic mourning is behind her reservation and coldness. As a friendless protagonist struggling continually to establish her situation in life, Lucy is fascinated by death. It is through Lucy’s process of mourning for her lost love objects in the beginning of the novel that she becomes entranced by the lost object. Instead of spending her time finding a replacement for her lost family, Lucy pursues the loss until it becomes a fetish -- a way for her to experience and express masochistic tendencies. Obsessed with the lack and the emptiness in her life, Lucy is not overly concerned with seeking out new friends and family members. As a result
of Lucy’s fascination with loss that provides pleasure and satisfaction she is a coldness character. Therefore, the intersection between the Freudian concept of mourning and Deleuze’s work on masochism help readers puzzle out Lucy’s motivation for remaining an isolated character in Charlotte Brontë’s *Villette*.

The impetus of Lucy’s masochistic mourning can be pinpointed in a vague passage at the beginning of the fourth chapter of *Villette*. As Lucy tracks the changes in her life after the time she spent as an adolescent with her god-mother in Bretton, readers are thrown from “a bark slumbering through halcyon weather” (*Villette* 37) to an equally figurative ship wreck. Lucy Snowe narrates her memory of her loss of her entire family, leaving her completely abandoned in the world in the following terms:

> I too well remember a time – a long time- of cold, of danger, of contention. To this hour, when I have the nightmare, it repeats the rush and saltiness of briny waves in my throat […] a heavy tempest lay on us; all hope that we should be saved was taken away. In fine, the ship was lost, the crew perished. (*Villette* 38)

Throughout this memory readers are shielded from what really occurred, and the layer of Lucy’s protective narration cannot be lifted. Therefore, by choosing not to clearly describe what traumatic event tore Lucy from her family she becomes isolated from her readers. As Lucy attempts to work through her loss, she enters into a state of mourning that she remains tangled in for the rest of the novel. In order to further illustrate how mourning is an experience that is notoriously complex and difficult for Lucy to complete, I will examine how different analysts have struggled to define the parameters of and the behaviors involved in the process of mourning. For example, Tammy Clewell discusses that Freud struggled a great deal with the process of mourning, stating, “Freud also admitted his lack of any adequate theory to explain why mourners cling to lost objects and in what sense they remain fixed to them” (58). Clewell’s
revelation is germane to this discussion because she opens up a conversation on mourning that makes allowances for different individual experiences of mourning by pointing out that even Freud did not have an ‘adequate theory’ for mourning. Therefore, Lucy’s mourning process, triggered by the loss of her family in the first few chapters of *Villette*, has room to develop into a consuming masochistic obsession for the rest of the novel.

Soon after Lucy reveals her loss the young protagonist shoulders the immense burden of being a woman without connection and family in Victorian England. Lucy states matter-of-factly that, “As far as I recollect, I complained to no one about these troubles. […] Thus, there remained no possibility of dependence on others; to myself alone could I look (*Villette* 38). However, because Lucy expresses a rather emotionless and practical reaction to the loss of her family we can see this as the first step of her masochistic mourning. As a result of her mourning, this quiet and docile adolescent becomes a woman who spends a great deal of her time within her own imagination, and keeping friends at a distance with her reserve. However, almost immediately after the revelation of Lucy’s new found abandonment she is invited by a mysterious Miss Marchmont to be her companion. Lucy’s ability to move and fulfill a position of employment during her grieving process can be explained by Julia Kristeva who writes that a mourner’s movements after the death are simply, “Blank activity, lacking meaning, may just as well follow a death – bearing course …. She remains constantly restrained by an aching psychic wrapping, anesthetized; as if ‘dead’” (82). Kristeva’s discussion of a mourner’s psyche after a traumatic loss is critical for readers to understand that Lucy’s movement to Miss Marchmont’s employment is not a sign of her moving forward with her life.

Indeed, Lucy’s time spent with Miss Marchmont is brief, but it is a critical point that allows readers to understand that Lucy’s process of mourning is masochistic. Lucy describes
Miss Marchmont as “a woman of fortune, and lived in a handsome residence; but she was a rheumatic cripple, impotent, foot and hand, and had been so for twenty years. She always sat upstairs: her drawing-room adjoined her bedroom” (Villette 38). Immediately after the loss of her family Lucy encapsulates herself in a dying woman’s home. Lucy’s move into Miss Marchmont’s home elaborates the connection between death and Lucy. Instead of throwing herself into the hustle and bustle of life in London, Lucy effectively buries herself in a tomb. She describes her relationship with Miss Marchmont in terms of the master/slave dialectic, stating, “Two hot, close rooms thus became my world; and a crippled old woman my mistress… my all. Her service was my duty – her pain, my suffering – her relief, my hope – her anger, my punishment – her regard, my reward” (Villette 40). Lucy, while devoting herself to this crippled woman, is able to remain close to her lost loved ones. Lucy’s masochistic pursuit of death is a direct response to her extended mourning process. According to Deleuze, a clear characteristic of masochism is that, “The masochist waits for pleasure as something that is bound to be late, and expects pain as the condition that will finally ensure the advent of pleasure (71). In Lucy’s case, her pleasure comes from existing on the verge between life and death. Therefore, Lucy is able to allow death to remain as something that is always deferred so as to maintain her masochistic mourning. Instead of remembering her loved ones and then continuing on with her life as a young woman in good health, Lucy entombs herself because she has fetishized the loss of her family. Deleuze discusses the fetish’s role in masochism as “a disavowal, secondly it is a defensive neutralization; in the third place it is a protective and idealizing neutralization; it remains suspended or neutralized in the ideal, the better to shield itself against the painful awareness of reality” (32). Therefore, Lucy’s fetish of death is what allows her to disavow life and enabling her to live a life of coldness and separation from the characters in Villette. The
process of disavowal, in Lucy’s masochistic mourning, keeps her in a liminal space that is neither truly living nor dead. It is in this state that Lucy’s mourning intersects with masochism and creates a unique experience of the grieving process.

As a result of her time spent with Miss Marchmont Lucy’s thoughts are soon consumed with death and the desires of her deathly ill mistress. Lucy claims, “All within me became narrowed to my lot. Tame and still by habit, disciplined by destiny, I demanded no walks in the fresh air [...] I clung to her” (*Villette* 40). Even while Lucy begins to physically suffer from a life spent inside the two rooms that make up Miss Marchmont’s existence, she does not wish to go outside or experience life. Instead, Lucy clings to death and her lost loved ones by devoting herself to this ghostly mistress.

Eventually, Miss Marchmont, who was on the brink of death before Lucy came to her, passes away and Lucy is once again left to fend for herself. Even while suffering from a masochistic mourning process Lucy is capable of moving and searching for a new position to occupy in society. As a result of her time spent in the confines of Miss Marchmont’s ‘world of death,’ however, Lucy’s connection to death is strengthened to the point where her masochistic mourning is able to continue while she moves from England to Villette. Therefore, Lucy refuses to abandon her lost family as she travels through the new adventures that await her on the Continent. As Lucy clings to death and loss, nurturing it tenderly, she perpetuates her process of masochistic mourning which renders her incapable of connecting to the plethora of new characters that she will meet upon her arrival in Villette. For example, upon arriving in Villette, Lucy stumbles across Madame Beck’s pensionnat, a school for girls. There she is invited in on the understanding that she will be a governess for Madame Beck’s children. Lucy, ever the observer, comments that Madame Beck “had no heart to be touched; it reminded her where she
was impotent and dead” (*Villette* 83). Madame Beck, however, offers Lucy a position to teach English to a class of young pupils which demonstrates a fair amount of faith in Lucy’s abilities to teach the young women under Madame Beck’s care.

However, the relationship between Lucy and Madame Beck can never be considered a close friendship by any means. In fact, Keefe states,

> Separated from one another by the armor of their egos, the characters of the book would touch each other if they dared, but their pride and their fear hold them back. The adults of the novel have lost nearly all sense of touch; or rather they retain it only in the form of a fear of abrasive friction. […] Having built up defensive spaces around their bodies, they allow no one to cross the line. (152)

The distance that both Madame Beck and Lucy maintain throughout the novel, even though they work in close proximity to each other for an extended period of time, is frustrating for readers, who want Lucy to find companionship in France. This distance, however, seems to be comfortable for Lucy; being around a cold mistress is a preferable companion for the masochistic protagonist of *Villette*. As a result of Lucy’s early trauma she pursues positions and people who closely represent death and coldness as much as possible. Furthermore, the pain that Lucy suffers, because she will never be able to truly connect with these ‘armored egos,’ is pleasurable for Lucy, because she is infatuated with death. It is this infatuation that allows Lucy’s process of mourning to take a masochistic turn.

Furthermore, Lucy’s interior life at Madame Beck’s pensionnat continues in its pattern of masochistic mourning as she continues to resist the advances of her students and colleagues. Lucy is overly critical of her fellow tutors and rejects their company. She claims, “I lived in a house full of robust life; I might have had companions, and I chose solitude. Each of the teachers in turn made me overtures of special intimacy” (*Villette* 145). Throughout Lucy’s time spent at
the pensionnat readers are increasingly frustrated with her coldness and reservation. In fact, Lucy spends most of her time alone in an alley behind the pensionnat where it is rumored that “the bones of a girl whom a monkish conclave of the drear middle ages had here buried alive, for some sin against her vow” (*Villette* 121). Once again, Lucy seeks out the comfort and the company of the dead, even if it is only a ghost story. She finds comfort and solace in this small alley where it is rumored that this young nun was gruesomely buried alive. As a result of her love and obsession of death and her inability to connect with another love object Lucy continues to confine herself with the company of the dead. This self burial is painful and pleasurable for Lucy, because she finds comfort in her time spent in this alley. Lucy claims, “ that old garden had its charms. On summer mornings I used to rise early, to enjoy them alone; on summer evenings, to linger solitary, to keep tryst with the rising moon, or taste one kiss of the evening breeze” (*Villette* 121). The romantic undertones of this passage allow one to make the connection between death and Lucy’s masochistic love of loss, etc. The eroticization of this alley way, where a young woman died furthers my argument that as a result of Lucy’s continued devotion to her lost love objects she is unable to end the process of mourning. Instead of hating the dead for abandoning her, and allowing for a ‘melancholic’ process of mourning, the pleasure she finds in death, even though it causes her pain and suffering, reveals the masochistic nature of her mourning. Lucy seeks out these places of coldness and cruelty and allows herself to be buried alive like the innocent nun.

It is Lucy’s time spent in her small alley that also triggers memories of her family. This space, so close to death, allows her to communicate with her family, even if it is only in remembering vaguely how she was once happy with them. Lucy suddenly exclaims one night,
Oh, my childhood! I had feelings: passive as I lived, little as I spoke, cold as I looked, when I thought of past days, I could feel. About the present, it was better to be stoical; about the future – such future as mine – to be dead. And in catalepsy and a dead trance, I held the quick of my nature. (Villette 124)

With a sudden flash of clarity about the days spent with her family and the resulting reservation and coldness that has ensued after their death, Lucy turns ever closer to death. She acknowledges that her future specifically was to not only to die, but to remain near to death for the rest of her life. In a quick summary of her nature Lucy even uses the term a ‘dead trance’ which reveals her continued desire to love death; so much so that it becomes a part of her own character. It is only within the space of her grave, the alleyway, that Lucy can come closer to the fond memories of her family. This action demonstrates Lucy’s masochistic pursuit of death that will eventually lead to her death someday. Lucy’s memory work also provides evidence that she has not been able to end her mourning process. This extended mourning process continues to take a masochistic turn as Lucy buries herself alive in the space where she can best reconnect with her lost family. According Nathan Leites, “[One] can always succeed in provoking a … defeat and retain in that way my … omnipotence’ […] a masochistic character … enjoys the power he has to force the … object to punish him” (16). In this alley way, Lucy has provoked her lost loved ones, the tyrannical masters of her life, to continue to torture her with memories of happier times. Lucy is enticing her memories to ‘punish’ her by placing herself in this sequestered alleyway, away from the activity of the living and thus continue her process of masochistic mourning.

Within the space of this alleyway is also where Lucy continuously puts the specter of hope of a future without death, to a figurative death. While listening to the sounds of the city surrounding her, Lucy begins to daydream about the life outside the walls of her open grave. Lucy admits that, “I did long … for something to fetch me out of my present existence, and lead
me upwards and onwards. This longing… it was necessary to knock on the head; which I did, figuratively, after the manner of Jael to Sisera, driving a nail through their temples” (Villette 125). The swift and effective disposal of Lucy’s desire for a life outside death and the confines of her cold reserve can be read as another revelation of her masochistic mourning. Robert Keefe furthers this point by claiming, “for each of the orphaned protagonists the welling up of the need to love, to thrive and grow, had been accompanied by a seductive urge to die. After all, in the guilt-ridden mind of the survivor, [Lucy’s] death would be simple justice” (167-168). Therefore, Lucy both teases herself with these daydreams of ‘moving on’ and completing her mourning process and then swiftly destroys those thoughts, because she is stricken by a sense of guilt, love, and attachment to her lost love object. As a result of this continued attachment to her personal loss, Lucy effectively renders the careful intersection of the pleasure and pain of anticipation, characteristic of masochism, in her disavowal of a future without death.

Another way that Lucy’s masochistic mourning is revealed in Villette is through her connection and interaction with the sculpture of Vashti while on a break from Madame Beck’s school. Lucy records her first initial impression of her striking encounter with the sculpture, stating that, “She could shine yet with pale grandeur and steady might; but that star verged already on its judgment-day. Seen near, it was a chaos – hollow, half-consumed: an orb perished or perishing” (Villette 298). The aspects that engage and enrapture Lucy are characteristics that closely resemble death and a corpse. Lucy is riveted by Vashti’s ability to stand at the very brink between life and death, something that she has been attempting to accomplish through her masochistic mourning. Through Lucy’s unique and extended mourning process, she has fetishized death and loss to the point where she has been unable to make lasting connections with her employer, pupils, and suitor, Dr. Graham. Vashti represents a woman of power who is able to
balance between life and death beautifully. Lucy continues to describe her experience standing before Vashti as,

What I saw was the shadow of a royal Vashti; a queen, fair as the day once, turned pale now like twilight, and wasted like wax in flame. […] By-and-by I recognized my mistake. Behold! I found upon her something neither of woman nor of man; in each of her eyes sat a devil. These evil forces bore her though the tragedy; kept up her feeble strength – for she was but a frail creature; and as the action rose and the stir deepened, how wildly they shook her with their passions of the pit! […] They tuned her voice to the note of torment. They writhed her regal face to a demoniac mask. Hate and Murder and Madness incarnate she stood. It was a marvelous sight: a mighty revelation. (Villette 298-299)

Lost within the demonic spell of Vashti Lucy is able to acknowledge the masochistic mourning that she has been living with through the entirety of Villette. Vashti’s struggle with demons, the torment that twists her and yet maintains her strength and presence within the realm of the living, speaks to Lucy’s desire for death, cold, and isolation. It is a passion that consumes her and drives her daily interactions with other people, and yet, if she was to give in completely, if she was to die or commit suicide, then she would no longer be able to pursue that pleasurable pain that she finds in her masochistic mourning of her lost lovers and loved ones.

Therefore, like Vashti, Lucy maintains a balance between the living and the dead in order to continue to experience the pleasurable pain afforded her by her masochistic mourning. This endurance is also written upon the face of Vashti for Lucy to discover in her encounter with the sculpture. Lucy states that,

Suffering had struck that stage empress; […] she stood locked in struggle, rigid in resistance. She stood, not dressed, by draped in pale antique folds, long and regular …. A background and entourage and flooring of deepest crimson threw her out, white like alabaster – like silver: rather, be it said, like Death. (Villette 299)
In this scene Vashti stands embattled, but also bold, as she resembles death with her paleness – with her *coldness*. Even the colors chosen by the artist reflect the intersections of passion and coolness and reserve. The pale Vashti is draped in blood red, which can easily be read to symbolize passion, pleasure, and the painful eroticism of masochism. Therefore, within the context of Vashti as a work of art Lucy’s masochistic mourning is clearly reflected back to her; creating quite a ‘mighty revelation’ for Lucy and readers alike.

Sooner than Lucy would have believed, however, love, in the form of the young doctor whom she had spent time with in Bretton before the traumatic loss of her family, comes knocking on her little alley. Dr. John arrives at Madame Beck’s pensionnat to attend Madame Beck’s children. Lucy never reveals to the reader or to Dr. John that he is Graham from the happy times she spent in Bretton with her god-mother. Though Lucy is greatly attracted to the doctor Lucy refuses to reveal her true identity, which serves her masochistic purpose to be misrecognized by Dr. John, and be rendered invisible. Lucy claims that,

> To say anything on the subject, to hint at my discovery, had not suited my habits of thought, or assimilated with my system of feeling. On the contrary, I had preferred to keep the matter to myself. I liked entering his presence covered with a cloud he had not seen through, which he stood before me under a ray of special illumination (*Villette* 249)

In this scene, Lucy refers to her masochistic tendencies of desiring to be misrecognized because it was a part of her “system of feeling,” which, I argue refers to her process of mourning which encourages her to be invisible and confined. In this scene, Lucy enjoys having a power over the unsuspecting doctor. Indeed, in this instance Lucy becomes what Deleuze discusses as a “masochistic educator” (19). In these first scenes of contact between these old friends Lucy is educating Dr. John on how to treat her in the future, because, as a result of Lucy’s reluctance and deception, Dr. John in turn deceives and teases Lucy, much to her delight and her pain.
Deleuze discusses the importance of this masochistic educator in terms of understanding the power dynamics between a masochist and their ‘pupil’ claiming that “instead we are dealing with a victim in search of a torturer and who needs to educate, persuade and conclude an alliance with the torturer in order to realize the strongest of schemes” (20). The masochistic characteristics that Lucy demonstrates in the original deception of Dr. John ensure that their fledgling relationship is doomed from the beginning. Only in “Volume Two” of Villette is Lucy’s true identity revealed to Dr. John, and then only by a series of unfortunate events. When Lucy finally admits “For reader, this Dr. John… was Graham Bretton … When I heard Graham’s steps on the stairs, I knew what manner of figure would enter” (Villette 247) the readers are annoyed with Lucy, because she has, yet again, kept important information from them. However, Lucy, in the same instance, places herself in a position of power and authority over her readers; teasing them with half-truths and keeping them from a complete picture of her history and experience as recorded in her autobiography. The reader’s incomplete rendering of Lucy’s motives and character throughout the text provide another level through which she is educating others on how to misunderstand and misrepresent her character in Villette.

Furthermore, as Lucy and Dr. John’s relationship becomes a little more than an acquaintanceship, they begin to exchange letters. Lucy covets and hordes these letters desperately and yet she makes herself wait to open Dr. John’s letters, reveling in the pleasurable anticipation that marks a masochist. When she does finally open the letter, it is in a desolate and haunted place. Lucy describes the attic where she takes refuge thus: “I shut the garret door; I placed my light on a doddered and mouldy chest of drawers; I put on my shawl, for the air was ice-cold; I took my letter, trembling with sweet impatience; I broke its seal” (Villette 283). Before Lucy can even break the seal there is an aura of death and coldness – a sign of her
mourning process. Her coldness and her devotion to the dead literally haunt her in the form of
the apparition of the dead Nun with whom Lucy shares her dear alleyway. As soon as Lucy
breaks the seal of “a letter simply good-natured – nothing more; thought that good-nature then
seemed to me god-like” (*Villette* 283) she encounters the ghost of the Nun. Lucy exclaims, “Say
what you will, reader – tell me I was nervous or mad; affirm that I was unsettled by the
excitement of the letters; declare that I dreamed this: but as I live! I saw […] A NUN” (*Villette*
284). The appearance of the Nun at this critical juncture in Lucy’s budding relationship with Dr.
John serves as a manifestation of Lucy’s attachment to the dead and her lost love ones. Her
masochistic mourning process refuses to let her out of its clutches. Subsequently, the appearance
of this phantom drives Lucy to abandon Dr. John’s letter and flee from the attic.

After Lucy flees from the reminder of her attachment to death her masochistic tendencies
are exhibited in a curious interaction with Dr. John directly following the appearance of the Nun.
Instead of comforting Lucy as she relates her ghost story to him, Dr. John finds and steals his
own letter from Lucy. She reports that “[h]is quick eye had seen the letter on the floor where I
sought it; his hand, as quick, had snatched it up […] if my trouble had wrought with a whit less
stress… I doubt whether he ever would have restored it” (*Villette* 287). Dr. John is a character
who demonstrates that he does not have an abundance of compassion. Instead of rescuing Lucy
from the Nun, the haunting of her past, he continues to torture and tease her. Anne Cheng claims
that:

[Lucy’s] misguided investment in the letter… exposes her to Dr. John’s give-and-
retrieval manipulation: upon finding his own letter, he withholds it from Lucy […] he
purloins his own letter. […] This sexually charged exchange realizes the inherent
masochistic… mechanisms of gratification. (81-820)
Cheng’s observation of the masochistic interaction between Dr. John and Lucy works to expose Lucy’s masochistic mourning. As a result of being chased by the Nun, symbolic of her mourning and her solidified attachment to her lost family, Lucy is thrown into a power struggle where she experiences both pleasure and pain while Dr. John withholds his affection from Lucy.

Unfortunately, shortly after this exchange Dr. John ends his potential relationship with Lucy and chooses another lover, Ginerva Franshawe. Lucy feels this loss acutely and attempts to work through her abandonment by returning once more to the alleyway of the Nun. In the alley she buries her precious letters from Dr. John as if burying a loved one. Lucy claims after she buried his letters that, “In all this I had a dreary something – not pleasure – but a sad, lonely satisfaction” (*Villette* 342). Once again, Lucy has returned to a place of death and the alley now houses both the Nun and her buried love for Dr. John. The comfort and satisfaction that she feels as she is mourning her failed love affair indicates the continuation of her masochistic mourning process. And, to keep her company, the Nun reappears in this alleyway again as Lucy is bidding Dr. John’s letters good-bye. Lucy claims that she “stood about three yards from a tall, sable-robed, snowy veiled woman” (*Villette* 344). If the appearance of this veiled and icy specter is a manifestation of Lucy’s deep desire to be connected with death, I argue that Lucy’s coldness and isolation from the world around her is mostly a result of her inability to overcome her attachments to death and the loss of her loved ones. Dr. John is simply one more character that is added to the list of people that Lucy masochistically mourns.

After the loss of Dr. John’s love, Lucy continues quietly with her life at the pensionnat and she starts taking classes with the boisterous literature professor, M. Paul Emmanuel. M. Paul has flitted across Lucy’s periphery throughout the duration of the novel, but it is only in the third volume of *Villette* that Lucy begins to pay close attention to him. During lessons he is
particularly unpleasant towards Lucy, and this is something that attracts her to him. Lucy states “that uncomprehended sneer of his made my heart ache, but by-and-by it only warmed the blood in my veins, and sent added action to my pulses” (*Villette* 408). By entering into another master/slave relationship, this time as master/pupil, Lucy finds herself increasingly attracted to this man, who suddenly, because of his position as her tutor, is treating her cruelly. Lucy comments that, “The combat was very sharp for a time” (*Villette* 408), but soon Lucy and Paul are able to work together and fall in love. Therefore, Lucy falls for M. Paul because she has entered into a relationship where she is teased and tortured allowing her to maintain her masochistic tendencies. Lucy describes this pleasure of anticipation:

> I … wondered to hear the step of but one “ouvrier” … that this man wore shoes… he advanced; he opened the door; my back was toward it; I felt a little thrill – a curious sensation, too quick and transient to be analyzed. I turned… I stood… and my eyes printed upon my brain the picture of M. Paul. (*Villette* 579)

In this passage it is not his arrival that makes her feel ‘a little thrill’ but it is the potential promise of his arrival. Therefore, it can be concluded that the intense pleasure of the masochist that depends on waiting and anticipation is reflected in Lucy’s relationship with M. Paul. It is this continued masochistic turn that discloses Lucy’s continual process of masochistic mourning. So much so that, as they fall in love, readers would perhaps be waiting for the ghost of the Nun to make yet another disturbing appearance, and indeed she does. Lucy arrives back to her room one midsummer’s eve to find the Nun “stretched on [her] bed” (*Villette* 544). Instead of fleeing, however, Lucy “shook her loose – the mystery! And down she fell – down all around me – down in shreds and fragments – and I trode upon her” (*Villette* 545). In this scene Lucy discovers that the Nun was only a trick and readers sigh in relief as they believe that Lucy may have a chance at being truly happy with M. Paul.
Even with the struggle for power that Lucy and M. Paul engage in for most of their courtship M. Paul does seem to truly have feelings for Lucy. Keefe claims that “Their love, like all other Brontëan relationships, is for a time a struggle for power” (175). When it becomes apparent that he will have to leave her for three years he presents her with a little apartment and school room of her own. Lucy cries, “M. Paul disclosed a parlour, or salon – very tiny but I thought, very pretty. Its delicate walls were tinged like a blush; [...] the lattice of this room was open; the outer air breathing through gave freshness, the sweet violets lent fragrance” (Villette 563). Contrasting this new home for Lucy with the closed chambers of Miss Marchmont, readers have cause to hope that Lucy may finally be able to live without the constant weight of her masochistic mourning. M. Paul protects and provides for Lucy and she truly does seem to care for him, when she claims, “Once – unknown and unloved, I held him harsh and strange [...] Now, penetrated with his influence, and living by his affection [...] I preferred him before all humanity (Villette 569). While falling for M. Paul it is possible that she is finally able to abandon her lost love objects, her family, and invest her energy into her new love object, M. Paul. However, while humanity seemed no obstacle for keeping them apart, “the wicked things, not human, which envy human bliss” (Villette 284) that have been represented by the Nun that Lucy both fears and loves claims one last victim, M. Paul.

Neither readers, nor Lucy, ever see or hear from M. Paul after he departs on his voyage. The last chapter of Villette records Lucy’s anticipation for his return. She states that “M. Emanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life” (Villette 570). While this claim may seem odd to most readers, readers who understand Lucy’s struggle with masochistic mourning know that the anticipation and the waiting is part of the pleasure for her. Waiting for M. Paul Emanuel to return for three years is an example of the pleasure that
comes from waiting that Deleuze discusses in *Coldness and Cruelty*. Lucy goes on to describe her love for M. Paul by stating that, “I thought I loved him when he went away; I love him now in another degree; he is more my own” (*Villette* 572). This passage is particularly telling, because it is understood by the end of the novel that M. Paul has perished at sea and is never going to return. But what if Lucy already knows this information? She begs the reader to “picture union and a happy succeeding life” (*Villette* 573), but readers are not provided closure. I argue that Lucy understands that M. Paul is dead by the end of this novel, and loves him even more, precisely because she has been so infatuated with death and loss throughout the entire novel. Instead of the ending being confusing or ambivalent it is circular. The trauma at the beginning of the novel and the loss of the loved ones that she cannot let go of mirrors this last loss of M. Paul. Lucy, because of her masochistic mourning, may even be able to better love him as a dead man, than alive. The phrase “he is more my own” (*Villette* 572) rings again in the readers ear. Lucy struggles throughout *Villette* with her masochistic mourning, between her desire for life as well as her desire for death, and now Lucy does not have to choose.

The constant tension between death and life, love, and hate make this novel one of Bronte’s finest. From the beginning of *Villette* it is easy to see that “Brontë’s imagination is fascinated with death, approaches it with affection and fear” (Keefe 45). This fascination with death is what creates such an interesting juxtaposition within the character of Lucy, because she continues to love the ones that she has lost. Lucy’s life is doomed to continually focus upon death and abandonment. Yet, throughout the text there is this overwhelming desire for connection and love -- the desired love object is just perpetually delayed. It is this delay that causes the interesting dynamic between pleasure and pain in Lucy. I argue that she is kept in suspense because M. Paul will continuously be on his way home to her, and because his arrival
will never actually manifest itself, Lucy is placed again in the position of mourning something that she deeply loves. This masochistic quality leads us to question Freud’s original observation of the child who throws his toy away from him, and asking whether or not the greater pleasure, in the case of Lucy, is in the disappearance of the lost love object, not in the return.

In Brontë’s *Villette* Lucy refuses to do two things – she does not wish to complete a ‘normal’ process of mourning and ‘move on’ to another love object and instead of criticizing and hating the dead, she loves them as dearly as ever. Lucy demonstrates her masochistic mourning by remembering her lost family fondly and by spending time with characters that are dying, or heartless. Lucy pursues, in many cases, situations and acquaintances that keep her waiting, constantly anticipating their eventual love and return. As a result of her masochistic mourning Lucy’s pleasure comes from this anticipation throughout the text. Even at the end of *Villette* Lucy is still waiting for the return of her fiancé. Though she suffers as she waits John Kucich finds “Brontë’s heroines may suffer in their isolation, but their suffering – like all romantic suffering – promises a certain consummation more attractive than the relief of suffering” (74). The all consuming nature of Lucy’s suffering is a state in which she finds pleasure and throughout the course of the novel she does not place herself in situations that would ease her pain and suffering.

Furthermore, readers of Brontë’s *Villette* are confronted with a protagonist who is passionate, yet almost completely isolated from her fellow characters. Flashes of this passion are released in disputes with her pupils and with M. Paul, but for the most part Lucy does not break her icy composure throughout the book. Scholars have weighed in on the frustrating facets of Lucy’s narration and character, claiming that
Acts of withholding or concealment are characteristic of *Villette*, and the most satisfying recent discussions of the novel have noted and regularly connected them to the heroine’s morbid pathology. “The novel’s real oddity” Mary Jacobs writes, “lies in perversely withholding its true subject, Lucy Snowe, by an act of repression which mimics hers.” (Gezari 145).

In this passage, Gezari tackles the unreliable nature of Lucy as a narrator. In many ways Lucy teases and tortures readers with glimpses of Lucy’s true character, and then quickly whisks her away again and the readers remain confused, and frustrated. Therefore, in the many ways in which Lucy suffers a loss and then mourns it masochistically by creating a fetish out of the loss, the readers are lead into the same position by the narrator. Readers mourn the unknowable character of Lucy and by mourning that loss we pursue the rest of the extensive novel in the hopes that we will be able to connect with her. Cheng finds that “we too are caught up in that elaborate fiction, staring into the empty grave of this elegiac litany, missing the dead body, feeling its essential solitude and rebelling against Lucy’s banishment of us” (89). Cheng’s powerful conclusion mirrors the desires that many readers feel at the conclusion of Brontë’s *Villette*. I argue, however that there is a level of pleasure in the frustration that readers feel at the conclusion, thus the palimpsest quality of masochistic mourning that circles upon itself at the end, also reveals itself in the reader-response to this text.
CONCLUSION: A READER’S MASOCHISTIC MOURNING IN RESPONSE TO BRONTÉ’S TALES AND NOVELS

Suffering and rapture flow together somewhat discreetly.

Kristeva, Black Sun

The progression from Brontë’s juvenilia to her final novel is important to consider as one traces masochistic mourning throughout her works. The creation of initial characters that suffer from masochistic mourning becomes bolder and more mature in Villette. The continuous development of characters that experience masochistic mourning in Brontë’s works reveals why readers have consistently been both frustrated and infatuated with Brontë’s chilly cast of characters. This thesis has focused on presenting a different way of reading Brontë’s œuvre. Reader, through the lens of masochistic mourning, can engage these characters’ psyches directly and understand why they are so withdrawn. One way that these characters become isolated is by experiencing the traumatic death of a loved one. Another way that mourning is instigated in other characters such as Mina Laury is through their experience of being rejected or neglected by their lovers. Through either avenue, however, the process of mourning is one that cannot be completed and thus grows into an extended process of mourning that I have termed masochistic mourning.

Masochistic mourning is an intersection of the Deleuzian theory of masochism and the Freudian theory of mourning, where the subject of the mourning process fetishizes death and loss to the point where they cannot connect to potential new love objects. The main character in many of Brontë’s narratives subsequently proceeds to repeat the loss and pursue it through the course of their daily interactions with others. Therefore, the cold façade that characterizes so many of Brontë’s narrators can be attributed to the fact that they have chosen to masochistically pursue their lost loved one. Discussions of the mourning process are clarified by Freud and Kristeva.
who craft theories that help individuals struggling with the loss of a loved one. Jackson comments upon Freud’s work by stating, “‘Mourning is regularly the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction’ [...] We rely on [mourning] being overcome after a certain lapse of time and we look upon any interference with it as useless or even harmful” (321). That ‘certain lapse of time’, however, is not one that cannot easily be measured or predicted. Even the individual who is mourning cannot force him or herself complete the process. In regards to the characters in Brontë’s work it appears that their mourning processes are extended and thus transform into something more insidious such as masochistic mourning.

The extension of the mourning process for characters such as Lucy and Crimsworth, leads to a masochistic turn in their private grieving processes. The masochistic mourning that plagues many of Brontë’s main protagonists is characterized by their disavowal of the reality that surrounds them. Deleuze claims, “Why believe in the idea of a perfect world? ... What we need to do is to “put on wings” and escape into the world of dreams... what he does is so disavow and thus suspend [the world], in order to secure an ideal which is itself suspended in fantasy” (32-33). This disavowal is the critical part of masochistic mourning that leads to Brontë’s characters becoming cold and withdrawn from their respective literary environments and readership. For example, Lucy disavows the reality that Dr. John does not really love her and continues to write to him even though it is clear, in his tepid letters to her, that he does not love her. Therefore, the clearest way for readers to best comprehend characters like Lucy, who refuse to acknowledge the reality of a situation, is to understand that the psychoanalytic concepts of mourning and masochism intersect. This intersection begins the extended mourning process that haunts Lucy and other characters in Brontë’s work. Subsequently, masochistic mourning causes these characters to remain cold and disconnected from the daily realities of their public lives.
In the second chapter, this thesis focuses on Brontë’s Roe Head Journal and how her experiences with the demands of her imagination expressed themselves in her first short stories, “The Spell” and “Mina Laury.” What is interesting about these two short ‘tales’ is that they demonstrate a marked development of masochistic mourning. In Brontë's first tale, “The Spell”, she allows the death of the Duke’s beloved wife and first born son to become the impetus for his coldness and isolation. Zamorna is haunted by their loss and, instead of pursuing the new life that is offered when he remarries, he continues to devolve into a strange illness that he cannot overcome. This illness, I argue, represents the masochistic turn that his mourning process takes. Instead of effectively recovering from his previous loss, Zamorna fetishizes the loss of his first wife and son to the point where, in his illness, he is moving towards death. Therefore, instead of dismissing Zamorna as a negligent husband to his new wife Mary, his masochistic mourning provides an interesting lens for readers to examine his chilly behavior towards her with more compassion and accuracy.

Furthermore, Brontë’s second tale, “Mina Laury”, also proves interesting when examined under the scope of masochistic mourning, because this tale reveals how characters can experience masochistic mourning at the hands of a careless lover. Mina Laury, Zamorna’s mistress, remains locked in a house that Zamorna supplies for her use, and awaits his every command. While the narrator presents the reader with information about Mina’s powerful position within Zamorna’s council, when Zamorna visits her that image of power and nobility is erased. Zamorna merely uses Mina as a tool for his political gain as well as his own personal pleasure, and she eagerly concedes to his every request. Mina’s masochistic mourning is exemplified when she denies the advances of Hartford, because she is devoted to Zamorna. During Mina’s encounter with Hartford she protects herself with her steely coldness, an affect of
her masochistic mourning for the rogue, Zamorna. Her masochistic mourning causes Mina to continue to fetishize Zamorna, rendering her cold and distant from other possible lovers.

In the third chapter, this thesis follows the progression of masochistic mourning into Brontë’s first novel, *The Professor*. This novel focuses on a self-made man, Crimsworth, and tracks his movements from England to Belgium, where he becomes an English tutor for young men and women. Similar to Brontë’s “Mina Laury”, Crimsworth becomes infatuated, with a lover who does not reciprocate his affections. Spurned by the illustrious Mdlle. Reuter, Crimsworth expresses his masochistic mourning by obsessively objectifying the young women in his English lectures. He paints ‘word portraits’ of them, which reveal the time and energy that he spends focusing on the bodies and characters of the young women who despise, and reject him, because he treats them callously. Portraiture, in this novel becomes the avenue through which Crimsworth attempts to record his autobiography. Too often, however, he glosses over important issues like the abandonment he feels at the end of the novel as his wife pays more attention to her son than her husband. By misleading readers, and omitting important information in his own history, Crimsworth displays the coldness and distance that is a result of his inability to overcome the masochistic mourning process that began when Mdlle. Reuter rejected his romantic gestures.

Finally, Brontë’s *Villette* is her masterpiece for many reasons, not the least of which is her brilliant incorporation of both types of traumatic events that have caused her previous characters an incredible amount of grief and suffering. Lucy is the most developed character to experience masochistic mourning in Brontë’s literary career, because she encounters and endures the traumatic death of her family and rejection at the hands of a careless lover, Dr. John. As a result of experiencing both branches of traumatic losses, *Villette* is a text that exquisitely haunts
both its narrator and its reader. Lucy entombs herself in a small alley way behind Madame Beck’s school for young girls, and is haunted by the nun that was brutally buried alive in that same perverse sanctuary. Lucy fetishizes death, and thus is rendered cold throughout the text. Lucy is also attracted to deathly figures, like the statue of Vashti, revealing her masochistic desire for death. Even when Lucy falls in love it is at the hands of M. Paul, who rages around her like a tyrannical storm until he is removed from the text by a mysterious storm that leaves Lucy abandoned at the end of the novel.

During Brontë’s life she suffered from loss, and in turn she sought the solace of her imaginary world of Angria, the developed landscape of Belgium and the familiar English heath, in her literary works. These various landscapes are peopled with characters that are decisively distant and reserved. The coldness that is maintained by Brontë’s characters is a stumbling block for many readers and scholars. Masochistic mourning is a state that these characters cannot seem to recover from and while the prospect of their continuous suffering and stagnation may concern readers there is also a ‘secondary gain’ that readers themselves experience by working through these complicated texts and withdrawn characters. Therefore, not only does Brontë masterfully blend the concepts of mourning and masochism in her characters, and the realm of her imagination, she has also drawn readers into a process of masochistic mourning, as well. The mere fact that readers continue to puzzle over characters like Lucy, speaks to a masochistic obsession with these cold characters. Readers enjoy being deceived and teased, which continues to delay and defer the ultimate satisfaction of completely mastering a literary text.

Readers of Brontë’s work engage with masochistic mourning in several different ways. In the first sense, the frustration that some readers feel as they encounter cold and resistant characters instigates a process of mourning the loss of a connection to that character. The natural
coldness and reservation that is inherent in many of Brontë’s main protagonists can become unsettling for readers who wish to wholly engage with the narrator and the text at large. Any kind of omission, or a more deliberate deception practiced by the narrator, is counted as a betrayal of trust that the reader naturally places in the hands of the narrator. For Brontë, by understanding the basic expectations within the parameters of the relationship between a literary text and its reader, is able to illicit masochistic mourning by betraying these traditional expectations with characters that withhold information and resist being fully unmasked. For example, misreading the Duke of Zamorna’s grief for indifference is one way in which readers are sometimes unable to discern the motivations of reserved characters in Brontë’s work.

As a result of the betrayal that readers experience at the hands of these cold characters, readers of Brontë’s work enter in the first stage of masochistic mourning. The love object that is lost is the ideal of the novel as perfectly representing the people and events that are being immortalized in a work of fiction. By mourning Brontë’s text as the lost love object, readers embark on “a new practice of mourning, one that steadfastly resists consolation, scorns recovery and transcendence” (Clewell 54). The process of mourning that resists completion becomes the state in which masochistic tendencies can erupt. This thesis has focused on developing the intersections between masochism and mourning in Brontë’s characters. For readers, the lost love object becomes the fetish and the focus of their masochistic attention and affection as they pursue Brontë’s cold and calculating characters. Readers desire that these reserved characters should one day reveal their true nature to the reader instead of continuing to remain closed. Scholars and readers who reread Brontë’s novels in the hopes of obtaining new insight or recovering the ‘true’ meaning of a passage that they have previous found problematic is how readers can fetishize Brontë’s novels. The heady resistance that these masochistic readers
perpetually encounter continues to provoke pleasure and frustration, thus engaging the process of masochistic mourning. Brontë’s readers are placed in “A state of waiting; the masochist experiences waiting in its pure form” (Deleuze, 71), and it is this position of constantly waiting for the ‘truth’ to be revealed by masochistic mourners such as Crimsworth and Mina that allows the reader to experience masochistic mourning.

Therefore, scholars and readers of Brontë’s work are manipulated into mirroring the masochistic mourning that many of her own characters suffer from. This deft turn in the power dynamics between reader and the writer reveals yet another way that masochistic mourning can add to the conversation on Brontë’s work. Brontë, by creating characters that withdraw from readers, crafts readers who obsessively reread and pursue her novels, leading to her continued popularity and critical attention throughout the decades. Through disappointing narrators that prove to be unreliable and unexplained gaps within the texts, readers are forced into the machinations of the texts themselves. This forceful inclusion of the reader is demonstrated in the parting lines in *Villette*. At the end of Lucy’s autobiography, readers are impatiently waiting for the return of M. Paul. They are, however, disappointed when Brontë suddenly provides the following instructions about how to imagine the end of *Villette*: “Let it be theirs to conceive the delight of joy born again fresh out of great terror, the rapture of rescue from peril, the wondrous reprieve from dread, the fruition of return. Let them picture union and a happy succeeding life” (573). I would argue that this final invitation, however encouraging, does not allay the nagging sense that M. Paul has truly died in a storm and will never return to Lucy, no matter how readers may choose to end the novel. Therefore, Brontë continues to tease and torture her readers by keeping them suspended in an elaborate web of coldness, mourning and masochism.
The reader’s masochistic mourning of Brontë’s literary works extends the affect of this theoretical framework. Instead of solely focusing on how Brontë’s characters fail to interact with their fellow characters, readers are forced to examine their own expectations when approaching a text. Brontë, through the use of masochistic mourning, places the reader in a delicate position between pleasure and pain as she both invites and encourages the reader to explore the shadowy world that she has created her works and still keeps the reader at bay with characters who refuse to interact with readers. The coldness that readers will always encounter while enjoying a piece by Brontë can be attributed to the chilling characteristics of the intersections between mourning and masochism which render the subject an inhabitant of a underworld that refuses to provide clarity and closure in the labyrinthine contours of its veiled landscape.
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