

behavior of older boys and men. Typically, he had a low opinion of women and marriage. His own wife and children are neglected in his writings. As friends and companions men were important, and for love there were boys. In a poem he says of himself: "Sa'di's fame has spread everywhere for his love of boys (*shahid bazi*). In this there is no blame among us, but rather praise."

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SADOMASOCHISM (S/M)

This term is conventionally defined as the giving or receiving of pain for erotic gratification. However, nonphysical elements, such as verbal abuse and humiliation, often play a large role. Bondage (restraint) is also common. A more comprehensive definition situates physical and nonphysical aspects in a larger framework of dominance and submission that engages the *fantasy* life of the participants. S/M differs from mere cruelty in that it is—expressly or implicitly—consensual: the partners define limits that must not be transgressed. The activities found in S/M are not radically different from the "horseplay" that sometimes occurs in ordinary lovemaking: teasing, biting, pinching, and wrestling. But in the S/M scene there is, superimposed on these ordinary behaviors, a range of specific S/M activities in a continuum ranging from harmless play to the most elaborate ritual "torture."

Clinical Theories. The first element of the compound *sadomasochism* derives from the Marquis D. A. F. de Sade (1740-1814), whose works depict the inflicting of pain for the erotic enjoyment of the active partner. The term masochism stems from writings of the German Leopold Ritter von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895), which concentrate on the

element of humiliation experienced by the passive partner, notably the novel *Venus im Pelz* (Venus in Furs), in which Wanda and Gregor are the active and passive participants in flagellation. From clinical evidence nineteenth-century psychiatrists—above all Richard von Krafft-Ebing, author of *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886)—created an analysis of sadism and masochism as pathology. Modern S/M practitioners hold that what they do has very little in common with the compulsive patterns analyzed by psychiatrists. Instead, they employ their techniques as symbolic interpersonal play that deals in intensities that approach the actual pain threshold and may surpass it, but generally avoid crossing the level of tolerance.

In modern street parlance the two complementary aspects are described as "top" and "bottom" or "S" and "M." In keeping with the dichotomy cherished by abnormal psychology, sadism and masochism are often regarded as diametrically opposed capacities, yet this dichotomy is belied in practice by the fact that individuals can exchange roles. Many S's actually began their involvement as M's, for this is often the best way for a novice to learn.

Homosexual Aspects of S/M. Culturally, the practice of S/M is a commentary on the dominance—submission pattern inculcated by the *gender* roles of advanced industrial society. Hence it is not surprising that women willing to take the role of dominatrix should be in demand, for reversal of the "normal" roles of dominance and submission offers not only a temporary relief from expectations imposed by patriarchal social traditions, but constitutes a kind of symbolic restitution. In like fashion, gay and lesbian S/M practices incorporate culturally defined ideas of active and passive. Here, however, there is a paradox, for S/M adepts will often insist that the M, who in theory is completely subservient, actually controls the pace, direction, and intensity of the experience by communicating his or her needs and limits. In such a dynamic, the S is

often "on trial" to demonstrate true competence and sensitivity. From this criss-cross effect many participants derive stimulation and, they believe, insights into human relationships in general.

In most gay and lesbian S/M circles today, the wearing of leather garments, together with chains and other accoutrements, is common. Such apparel is often the focus of fetishistic attachments. It also emphasizes the element of theatre and performance, so that the S&M scene—and more broadly one's presentation of self as a "leather person" in social contexts—becomes a matter of enactment.

Entering the S/M subculture is not a matter of a simple one-time conversion. Some individuals flirt with the idea for years before taking the plunge. Once the novice has decided to enter the subculture, he may progress through several stages of increasing depth of involvement as experience grows and inhibitions about particular acts wane. This stagelike progression has led sociologists to speak of S/M "careers"—the individual trajectories of those who sustain their commitment. Some observers have noted increasing "tolerance levels" on the part of adepts who find that previous levels of involvement no longer deliver the intensity they once did, requiring progression to deeper levels.

In addition to flagellation, bondage, verbal abuse, role playing, genitorure, use of hot wax, and abrasion, S/M scenes may include "watersports," urinating on the M or causing him to swallow urine. Depending on the relationship, this may be regarded either as a gift, a humiliation, or a degradation. Much less common is the similar use of faeces ("scat"). Handballing or fisting, in which the hand or even the lower arm is inserted in the anal passage, formerly enjoyed some popularity, but with the spread of safer sex techniques it has become less common. Handballing is not necessarily an S/M activity any more than fellatio or masturbation; it depends entirely on the atti-

tudes and intentions of those engaging in it. Although S/M practices have the reputation of being "far out," many of them are less risky in terms of disease transmission than the penetrative practices that are the central feature of the mainstream male gay world. In S/M scenes, sexual toys of various kinds—whips, straps, handcuffs, tit clamps, etc.—are freely used. Those who are seriously involved may have their nipples or genitals pierced and adorned with small rings; although quite popular, this practice is not universal. In ordinary S&M practice, however, there is almost invariably an avoidance of any activity that would lead to permanent marking or bodily harm.

As with any other subculture, S/M people tend to socialize with others who share their tastes. Most big cities in North America and northern Europe have at least one "leather bar," usually for gay men only. Prominent among the icons displayed in such establishments are trophies and photographs relating to motorcycle clubs, to which many serious S/M enthusiasts belong. There are also artists who have created imagery that is clearly S/M in its appeal; among the best known of these are Cavello, Etienne, Rex, Sean, and Tom of Finland (though some of the latter's work is not relevant).

Sociological studies have shown that in North America most S/M participants are of northern European ancestry, rather than from Mediterranean or African stock. Contrary to the stereotype that associates them with conservative or even quasi-Nazi views, surveys in the United States have shown that a majority are politically liberal. On the whole, they are well educated and hold upscale professional jobs. Few S/M people share the obsessive preoccupation with youth that is found in other sectors of the gay world; with a very few exceptions, boy lovers are not found among them. In fact, older individuals are notably visible at S/M gatherings, which are relatively free of ageism. The premium placed on technical exper-

tise seems to cancel out ageism with its attendant privileging of youth.

While some S/M practitioners seek new partners constantly, others may wish to form a more-or-less permanent relationship. In this case the M becomes the "slave" of his S, who will symbolize the ownership in various ways, such as the shaving of body hair, or the slave's wearing of a prominent dog collar, or being required to perform various services for the master and the master's friends. The appeal of the slave relationship is ostensibly the freedom from the crushing burden of responsibilities and decisions that modern urban life imposes. In some instances, however, the slave role is much less demanding and may even be carried out in an almost humorous fashion. There is a large range of activity between these two extremes of total slave-master bonding and playfulness, whereby the two participants limit the enactment to specific occasions, in the bedroom or elsewhere, when they perform their tasks with the utmost seriousness.

Seemingly objective presentations of the nature of S/M almost invariably slight the less tangible elements that are of supreme importance to those who are seriously committed. In the view of some who are experienced in the scene the real appeal of S/M is that it promotes a state of consciousness that transcends ego. Such "egoless" states are inherently blissful. Moreover, participants have the sense that they are involved in a form of magic or alchemy. In a state of perfect trust, their "vibrations" become perfectly attuned to one another, and blows that would normally be unwelcome are transmuted into a choreography of pleasure.

Literary Manifestations. The pioneering novels of the Marquis de Sade and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch have been noted above. William Carney's *The Real Thing* (New York: Putnam, 1968) presents a historically accurate picture of the now-vanished scene in the United States in the late 1950s and 1960s. It is cast in the

form of a series of letters from an experienced S to his nephew, a novice whom he is instructing in the traditions of the subculture he wishes to enter. Although Carney's view of S/M is ultimately negative, it offers theorizing that is still of interest. Terry Andrews' *The Story of Harold* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1974), of unusual literary quality, is revealing because S/M is integrated with other themes. The novels of "A. N. Roque-laire" (a pseudonym of Anne Rice) are ostensibly heterosexual, but include considerable relevant psychological speculation. Story collections by Phil Andros (*Stud*, Boston: Alyson, 1982; repr. of 1966 issue; and *Below the Belt*, San Francisco: Perineum) and Jack Fritscher (*Corporal in Charge of Taking Care of Captain O'Malley*, San Francisco: Gay Sunshine, 1984; and *Stand by Your Man*, San Francisco: Leyland Publications, 1984) offer material of varied interest.

Parallels. Analogies for the physical side of the S/M relationship have been found in some tribal societies, where warriors must undergo trials of pain before being admitted to the military elite. (Fraternity hazings are a faded modern version of these customs.) In ancient Thessaly the all-women rites of Aphrodite Anosia included erotic flagellation. The Romans delighted in gladiatorial shows and in watching condemned criminals devoured by lions in the arena. Yet these were not voluntary submissions to pain, and they seem—despite assertions to the contrary—to have no direct connection with eros.

The beautiful frescoes of the Villa of the Mysteries at Pompeii, which have never been completely interpreted, show women's flagellation in the context of a religious and erotic initiation. Paintings of the martyrdom of the Christian saints—Catherine tormented by her wheel, Agatha suffering the assault on her breasts—are more explicit in their depiction of pain. In one instance, that of the handsome St. Sebastian pierced by arrows, a Christian image has acquired (since at

least the end of the nineteenth century) a secondary status as the focus of contemplation by gay men. Of course it was not the aim of Christian hagiography and art to stimulate S/M thoughts. It may be, however, that these legends of fortitude under suffering were one of the elements that helped, however unintentionally, to prepare for the modern S/M sensibility.

The adage "spare the rod and spoil the child" attests to the use of flogging by parents and schoolmasters. In the English public school this practice became a veritable cult, with masters and pupils alike developing erotic feelings in conducting it. Through this imprinting some members of the upper classes developed a life-long flagellomania; hence the expression "English vice" for erotically stimulating caning.

There may even be phylogenetic sources for the connection between corporal pain and sexual performance, as with cats where the male cat bites the neck of the female during intercourse. Some students of the question hold that the human experience of erotic release of pain is governed by a distinctive physiological process, characterized by the release of certain endorphins; this physiological dynamic is, however, still imperfectly understood.

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SAFE SEX

Safe sex refers to activities with no risk, or very small risk, of undesirable consequences. Safe sex need not be conservative or monogamous sex, and it certainly does not mean less sex. Sex can indeed be "safe," not just "safer."

Disease. Partners who are free of **sexually transmitted diseases** can engage in any sexual activities they wish. Since there are diseases which can be transmitted sexually although the carrier is symptom-free and is even unaware he or she has been exposed—hepatitis and AIDS are by far the most serious—such a disease-free state can be known only through medical examination. In the case of AIDS, since it takes months before tests can detect antibodies to the HIV virus, testing indicates the subject's infectious state as of several months previously. For a result valid at the time of the test, the test must follow a period of no potential exposure. As a practical matter, activities which can transmit disease can only be safe within a relationship monogamous so far as those activities are concerned.

There are, however, many ways of having enjoyable sex, even kinky and adventurous sex, with little if any risk of disease and without need for examinations and tests. **Masturbation** in pairs and groups is totally without risk. Among consenting partners, dirty talk, exhibitionism, and photography are safe. No one has gotten a disease from an odor, from **fantasy**, role-playing, erotic clothing, or bondage. One can safely be promiscuous with such activities, if desired, and those who are HIV-positive can fully participate.

Kissing and licking of unbroken skin cannot transmit AIDS. Intercourse with a barrier, such as a strong condom (extra-strength condoms are available and recommended for anal sex), is safe as long