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Are You My Venus in Fur? Masochism in German Literature and Film through a Deleuzian Lens

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Oral Presentation O6.1

**ARE YOU MY VENUS IN FUR?
MASOCHISM IN GERMAN LITERATURE AND FILM
THROUGH A DELEUZIAN LENS**

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In my project, I provide a contextual definition of masochism by analyzing Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Fur* (1870) using a theoretical framework proposed by Gilles Deleuze. I then apply this working definition to the portrayals of masochism in Frank Wedekind's plays *The Awakening of Spring* (1891), *Earth Spirit* (1895), and *Pandora's Box* (1902) in order to compare these with the contemporary films *The Piano Teacher* (2001) and *Nymphomaniac* (2013). While Deleuzian theory provides a lens for looking at masochism in terms of power, partnership, and sexuality, I also investigate gender performance and the heteronormative gender roles involved in masochism by considering the work of Judith Butler and queer theory. Close analysis of the way masochism functions in each work reveals key connections and similarities between the early plays and the more modern films. In each instance, the intentions behind the inclusion of the characters taking part in masochistic acts become evident, which serves to establish the connection between the literature and the films. Parallels between characters featured over a century apart are distinctly resonant despite the significant passage of time.

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