



Eros against Law: Levinas and Erotic Interiority in *Don Juan of Kolomea*

Reuben Carias

To cite this article: Reuben Carias (2022): Eros against Law: Levinas and Erotic Interiority in *Don Juan of Kolomea*, *Law & Literature*, DOI: [10.1080/1535685X.2022.2085416](https://doi.org/10.1080/1535685X.2022.2085416)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1535685X.2022.2085416>



© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 29 Jun 2022.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 90



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Eros against Law: Levinas and Erotic Interiority in *Don Juan of Kolomea*

Reuben Carias 

Abstract, Critiquing Levinas's serenely ethical conception of Eros, this essay challenges the Levinasian notion that the Erotic maintains an ethical framework, resulting in the inevitable return to the ethical through fecundity. Assuming the Legalistic Masochian turn within Levinas, as established by Kantor's works, this article offers a literary analysis of Masoch's *Don Juan of Kolomea*. Incorporating this emotive literary text as an interlocutor with whom Levinas's conception of Eros can both be critiqued and corporealized, compelling new insights can be gleaned which invite discussion and commentary on both Levinas's powerful if naively placid conception of Eros and more broadly upon the incumbent desire within modern discourse to conceive of only that Eros which is ethical. Within the pages of Masoch, Levinas's Eros is conceived as that which refutes the ethical compulsion of the Other as Law. It is an Eros beyond ethics, against Law and tragically beyond the beleaguered beloved.

Keywords, Eros, Levinas, Masoch, subjectivity, Law

“Because of an excess of love I turned away from her, and she yearned for revenge because of her passionate, rejected love.”¹

“But nature has given us a sorrow that's more horrifying than life - love.”²

Eros occupies a fascinating space within Levinas's texts. Given that the ethical doctrine of Levinas is presented in the most extreme, absolute and poetic prose, one could easily mistake that which is patently ethical for that which details the madness and agony of Eros. Levinas's ethics, though metaphysical in its foundation, culminates in a potent phenomenological theory which inverts the ethical into the ontological. Alterity, the allure of the Other, beguiles and contorts the

Law & Literature, pp. 1–22. ISSN 1535-685X, ELECTRONIC ISSN 1541-2601.

© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1535685X.2022.2085416>

ethical subject into a state of unrivalled subjugation. To be, is by definition, to be “for the other”³. The self is lost to their ethical “insomnia”⁴, they embody and revel in the torment of utter devotion, uncompromising “asymmetry,” and maniacal servitude. It is a theory befitting martyrs and romantics alike. A call to alterity which consumes absolutely and does not relent, which persists “beyond death”⁵. Is such a theory not more comfortable adorning the pages of Werther’s troubled diary entries than the often coldly rationalistic ledgers of ethical formulations? For if to *be*, is to be overwhelmed by the guilt which compels ethical actions, what then is it to be *in* love, what is *Eros*? It is this question of what *Eros* is when juxtaposed with the ethical/legal which will be addressed herein.

While Levinas does explicitly detail a theory of *Eros* in conjunction with his ethical work, the tension which underlies the two is not addressed satisfactorily within his forays into the erotic in *Time and the Other*, and *Totality and Infinity*. The theories presented explicate the distance which stands between the ethical and the erotic often in varying and intriguing ways. This itself is indicative of the manner in which Levinas’s views on the matter evolved over time. This evolution culminates in love’s descent from the transcendent expression of possibility manifested in *Eros*, to the more ethical, Abrahamic variant which he espoused in his later works *Entre Nous* and *Otherwise than Being*. It was in these texts that the focus is drawn away from the conflict between ethics and *Eros*, to the more palatable expression of “love without *Eros*”⁶, which is how he came to ultimately express his ethics. Even in this most placid expression of the ethical, the erotic is distinguished, belying the ever-present tension which persists throughout Levinas’s work in the sordid spectre of *Eros*. For if it is ethics which goes “beyond” being, it is *Eros*, which goes “beyond” ethics⁷.

The problematic enigma which *Eros* presents to Levinas is most candidly exhibited not in the philosophical texts which espouse it and will frame this essay, but in the fascinatingly fleeting foray into literature he made in private. Unpublished, Levinas’s text, aptly titled *Eros*, or at least the textbook within which it is contained is, speaks candidly to the friction which Levinas only alludes to elsewhere. Most potently portrayed in the indelicate scene where the ever-evolving protagonist feels the raw surge of erotic desire overcome them in a shelter they share with a young woman, though they do not act on it, in this visceral moment ethics, reason, language is lost momentarily. All that persists is *Eros* and consequently “everything is permitted.”⁸ This unsettling passage articulates not only the clash between ethics and *eros* within the heart of Levinas, as Hand observes, it also speaks of that between literature and philosophy itself⁹. Constrained by the pedantic laws of ethical and phenomenological philosophy, *Eros* is only ever presented in the most diluted and savory of iterations. Against millennia of ethical hegemony, *Eros* in modern discourse is often by necessity bastardized, presented as an ethical variant. Or else it risks being condemned, rejected and vilified for daring to be something else, something which cannot be

reduced to the hedonic sums of ethical reasoning nor logical orders of language. Eros as “beyond” ethics, outside of the asphyxiating constraints of normativity, invariably stands vigilant in its opposition to Law, that imposing assemblage of language and reason. Law, its affiliates and precursors are of exteriority, the meta-physical and rational offspring of sociality. Eros, conversely, rests in the dark, feral recesses of the mind. It is the unconsidered, unreasonable, inconvenient grasp of interiority and must therefore be considered in such appropriately abstract terms. Accordingly, to do so successfully one must abandon one’s allegiances to the philosophical and embrace the liberty found in literature, where love, eros and subjectivity all blur into the messy expressions of existence; ought and is lost to that which is experienced and felt. In Literature, love is allowed the grace to be many things, its individuality afforded the scope for unencumbered articulation outside of the fields and purviews of cold morality and prejudicial judgment. Love may even be “bad,” or “wrong”¹⁰. Yet, Levinas himself so seldom embraces the freedom afforded by fiction within his texts. He stays loyal to the bleak moralistic existentialism of Dostoevsky and as a result, such departures from the steadfastly theoretical are often “uninspiring and unradical”¹¹. To liberate eros from ethics, we must similarly liberate Levinas from the confines of philosophy and afford the visceral and emotive language which decorates his pages an appropriate stage upon which they are not merely reasoned, they are *felt* and performed.

Pursuant to this ambition of liberating Eros from ethics and Levinas from dense philosophical doctrine, this essay adopts Kantor’s Masochean turn, assuming Levinas as an appropriate companion for the famed Romantic writer. As will be discussed below, the masochistic tendencies which abound within Levinas’s ethical doctrine, invite, if not demand, that his works be brought into a playful dialogue with the emotive literary works of Masoch. However, the present intent is distinct from Kantor’s initial Masochean turn, as herein it is Eros through the lens of *Don Juan of Kolomea*, not the broader legalism of Levinas found within *Venus in Furs*, it owes a profound and clear debt and is comfortably nestled within the Masochean turn within Levinas. As will be made evident, this affords us as theorists and readers of Levinas to approach and reflect upon his works in a profoundly sensorial and emotive fashion. Ethos and Eros alike attributed the means to express the pained reality, which is to be the Levinasian ethical subject, and similarly, the burden of being overcome by Eros. As it is through the Masochean turn, the battered pages of *Kolomea’s* melodrama, that we are invited to challenge certain aspects of Levinas’s conception of Eros. In particular, the necessary and inescapable return to the ethical from the erotic, which is compelled by the cradle of fecundity. What emerges, is both a necessary critique of Levinas’s Eros, and more broadly of modern conceptions of the erotic which are crudely predicated upon its being born of ethical foundations. Hence, it is necessary to return to the chauvinistic brutality of Masoch’s work to earnestly

consider a love beyond ethical regard. A love untainted by modern ethical discourse, a malevolent yet sincere affection which seeks not the return to sociality, nor ultimately the placation of their beloved. A love which demands fealty, a love of Eros.

1. EROTIC ETHICS AND THE MASOCHEAN TURN

As is well stated, Levinas's ethical formulation derives from his presentation of the metaphysical relation between that of the Subject and the Other, driven by the subject's insatiable desire for alterity which resides within the Other¹². This desire is purely metaphysical, it offers no alleviation. It is a "desire without satisfaction," born of the "remoteness," and "exteriority of the other"¹³. It is as much a desire as it is a movement toward alterity, the welcoming of alterity into one's horizon and embracing, openly, the ramifications which await. The locus of this desire, the Absolute Other, is revealed in proximity with human alterity. Within the other, the absolutely Other is promised. This relation to wondrous alterity compels the subject to forgo their egoistic living, that of a mere conatus persisting for the pleasure of survival, and to confront and frantically atone for the bellicose brutality of one's very existence. Every object they selfishly enjoy deprives another, each space they occupy is forcefully usurping that which could be for the Other¹⁴. To be a simplistic conatus is to be an unforgivable fiend upon the earth. This is the ethical impetus of the Levinasian subject, as ethical subjugation is offered tirelessly in the naive hope that one may atone for their malfeasance.

The metaphysical relation though, is not purely the torment extolled upon the subject through their endless ethical plight. The subject in their servitude is liberated from their narrow egoistic existence. The relation with the Other opens the subject to the presence of the world beyond their Darwinian lusts. In the presence of the Other, language is aborning, and the subject is spoken into existence as something "other than being." It is only through language that the "impossibility of approaching the other"¹⁵, may dare be contemplated as it is exclusively within the inter-human framework of language that the mystery of alterity and duality may be expressed¹⁶. The world is now presented to the subject, "offered in the language of the Other"¹⁷, "thematized" by the Other. Awake to alterity, only that of the Other may be perceived: a landscape contoured by the wonders of alterity and revealed in the debt to be paid. Through the bonds of language, the metaphysical relation is expressed ethically in the interhuman. Sociality is the ethical manifest. Human alterity, as a consequence of the metaphysical other to which they allude, is offered only within the confines of the ethical. Within the Levinasian doctrine, sociality is the ethical relation. And the human the ethical being.

This reading of sociality as ethical subjugation is undermined by the abstract, metaphysical nature of the relation. It is in Kantor's reading of Levinas, in which this relation is born in the pages of Sacher-Masoch. Kantor's Masochean turn within Levinas, outlined in his essay, "*Levinas's Law*," considers the "fortuitous" affinities that masochism shares with Levinasian discourse as the means through which to truly comprehend the primacy of pain within the relation¹⁸. The pleasure of the pain found in both the literary protagonist and metaphysical subjects as they are liberated from the confines of egoism, stands as a cornerstone of both the Masochean and Levinasian doctrines. This is only further entrenched by Kantor's legalistic reading of Levinas, no doubt inspired by the legalism of Masoch's own tortured romantic fealty. It is a fascinating turn within Levinasian discourse as it posits that the relationship with the Other, the ethical deity, is best expressed through the Other as Law. This proposition builds upon the relationship with the Other when emancipated from the abstractly metaphysical. Within this reading, the subject's metaphysical relation with alterity, is not simply folded into their ontology, it persists in a sensible fashion. The Other's presence is discerned to the subject as a weight upon their chest, the weight of guilt and debt which drives and dictates their being. Accordingly, the subject "feels," the Other constantly, as the "horror of limitation"; the Other is alterity and the subjugation imposed therein. The Other is *Law*.

Kantor's Masochean turn affords the reader a new, emotive appreciation for ethical subjectivity as it is presented through the visceral volatility of the Masochistic relationship. The absolute Other is not sullied by their descent into literature, within the confused, lovestruck words of Masoch's protagonists, the relation with absolute alterity, beyond comprehension, is laid bare:

"Her head was magnificent in spite of the stony, lifeless eyes, but this was the only part of her that I was able to see, for the sublime creature had wrapped her marble body in a great fur [although] it [was] no longer cold" (Sacher-Masoch 1991,143). Is this not how Levinas depicts the other? We think that perhaps there is no more beautiful description of the Law.¹⁹

Through this Masochean reading, the Other is revealed. They are Law. They compel subjugation absolutely, and it is offered willingly. But they are also Other, as they exist beyond comprehension, one may hope to approach them through the immodest propositions of language, though they will never be attained.

Accordingly, sociality as the inescapable consequence of the metaphysical, is not merely the expression of the ethical, it is "Law." The Other as Law is felt in all sociality as the extrapolation of the metaphysical relation. Wondrous and

asphyxiating, alterity, as ethics, as law is laced with Masochistic traces of eroticism. Pleasure and pain are spoken into the most monotonous of dialogues as they allude to the absolute Other. Every relation bears the traces of *the* relation to Alterity. As though in every face, the enamored subject is reminded of the incomparable beauty found in their beloved's. Truly, reading Levinas with Sacher-Masoch, presents the ethical in such an uncomfortably intuitive light, echoing the agonizing evangelicalism of the Masochistic lover. However, for present purposes this framework invites an intriguingly sincere discourse with the Erotic. Revealing the tepid eroticism which lingers in the ethics of Levinas, through the Masochian tendencies dormant therein, Kantor's Masochian turn imbues the purely Erotic, as opposed to the erotically ethical which he elucidates, with the seductive allure of ambiguity. Given the Masochistic and erotic undertones which culminate in the ethical/social as the legal, the Other as Law; we must now consider what then is the character of Eros outside of, beyond and potentially against this foundational relation with exteriority.

2. "NOT-YET" EROS

Against the primacy of the Other as Law, the ethical impetus harbored within sociality, Eros arises cloaked in ambiguity, interrupting ethical subjectivity's pilgrimage to the Other. This unclear position is presented as a consequence of Eros's unique duality. Eros emerges as both a relation with the Other and a relation which goes beyond the Other; ethical and other than ethical. In the beloved Other, the "transcendent exteriority," which founds and instills the metaphysical relation with alterity remains. However, the relation is not consistent with a purely ethical relation to alterity. The erotic relation does not present a new iteration of ethical subjugation. The relation with alterity evolves from this primary position of penitence in Eros, turning into that of an insatiable "need"²⁰ oriented toward and by the Other. This "need" does not denote a primal lust to revel in the sexual enjoyment of the beloved's body, but of the satisfaction, which is constantly, hopelessly sought in Eros. The call of the ethical is momentarily usurped by the more incumbent insatiety of the Erotic.

The need which founds Eros does not find placation, the Other is positioned beyond the reach of satisfaction. This positionality of the Erotic parties, the lover and the beloved, is expressed beautifully in Levinas's conception of the "caress." The caress is the abstraction of the noble act of the lover endeavoring to embrace their beloved; to hold them and in so doing bring them into purviews of their reality, making them their own, a facet within the totality of their being. However, in the caress, it is not the Other which is seized, though the subject searches frantically for them, as they are in truth not *there* to be held, they escape this sweet suffocation. All the lover may clasp is "*nothing*." With the

embrace of the caress, the Other “ceaselessly escapes,” slipping away constantly beyond the desperate grasps of the lover²¹. Levinas attributes the failings of the caress to the misidentification of its target. As “the caress aims at neither a person nor a thing,” in truth it is a naive effort to embrace “a future.” Within this abstract dream of possibility, the Other dissipates before them, lost, as even they in their majesty, cannot be depicted yet within the mists of possibility. Eros cannot be satisfied because it cannot be. It lingers diplomatically atop the boundaries of being and “not-yet-being,” within this unfathomable “no man’s land,” outside of signification²². Eros persists as a seductive “futural” specter²³, beyond concept, beyond form, beyond “the possible”²⁴.

Contravening the absolute terms of the ethical relation, the smothering burden imposed upon the subject through sociality, Eros emerges as a welcome reprieve which refutes the burden of signification. Yet, the Other as Law has not disappeared within Eros, it is merely “concealed in the erotic”²⁵. The irrepressible intimacy of the relation kindly averts the subject’s gaze from the history of atrocities which haunts and condemns each bated breath they expire, toward the solace beckoning in the irrational mysticism of the future. This overt juxtaposition with the ethical though is not for Levinas, a cause for concern as the erotic is underpinned by the moralistic reciprocity which maintains the relationship. Within the mutuality of “pleasure and dual egoism”²⁶, within Eros, whereby both parties simultaneously enjoy the roles of slave and master, Levinas presents the subject’s love as contingent upon the love of the Other. Eros thus conveniently operates in a delicate contractual synchrony between the lover and the beloved: “I love fully only if the Other loves me, not because I need the recognition of the Other, but because my voluptuousness delights in his voluptuousness.”²⁷ By asserting that Eros is by necessity achieved in reciprocity, Levinas hopes to marry the oft competing dualities of love - the fantastical compulsion of the romantic, with the moralistic tendencies of a “good,” love sealed in the accomplishment of fecundity. No matter how great the distance beyond the beloved the lover is dragged by Eros, it is always to be remedied by the knowledge that the beloved is thrust by a similar, if indiscernible, movement and that our paths should unite in the shared love which we will inevitably hold for our offspring, the Levinasian embodiment of the shared future. The child, the irrefutable uniting product of our stray loves.

The apparent unicity of the lovers, however, stands brazenly at odds with the inexpressible interiority of Eros Levinas coyly alludes to. Plainly, the desire of Levinas to present Eros as simultaneously beyond and with the beloved, is a troubling notion which exposes inconsistencies within the Erotic. Even the most cursory of glances upon the above passage can portray the erotic subject as a narcissistic lover who entertains reciprocity on egoistic terms. The love of the beloved sought only to the extent that it serves to further their own erotic

jouissance, hardly portrays the sincerest of relations: “*Love me so that I may better love myself!*” This initial discrepancy, furthered within the succeeding sections of this essay, serves to further challenge the idealistic locus of Levinas’s Eros upon reciprocity. Within this and similar such explorations of the interiority of Eros, one can start to explicate Eros as no longer contingent upon the beloved, no longer an ambiguous companion to the ethical and normative constraints of sociality. Instead, it emerges as a solipsistic vessel for fantastical possibility which may persist beyond regard for the received affection of the beloved. This is the inverted tragedy of Eros, that for all the lover’s endeavors, their beloved is beyond them. Returning to Masoch’s texts to flesh out the experience of the Levinasian subject, we reveal a dire situation. The lover is always, inescapably alone, toying with the fantasies which abound within their unrelenting interiority.

3. EROTIC INTERIORITY IN *KOLOMEA*

“A woman that I love scares me. I tremble when she suddenly walks through the room and her clothing rustles. A movement that surprises me scares me.”²⁸

Separating Eros from the ethical, the lover from their beloved, the juxtaposition which details the truly torturous nature of Eros is presented. An Eros which subjugates the lover into a labyrinth of sought self-flagellation. Outside of rationality, reason and the structure which dictates sociality, Eros takes hold. Dragging the dotting subject into the fantastical, dark depths of interiority. This descent is not charted within the confines of the disinterestedly philosophical parlance. As with Kantor’s emotive portrayal of the Other as Law, this discussion is to be supplemented by reference to the unrivalled emotionality of Masoch’s texts. Reading Levinas through Masoch, in this instance facilitates our resolve to greater intuit the reality of the subject’s plight and in so doing understand the toxicity which adorns the Erotic fantasy. As noted, within literature, the subject is similarly removed from the “Law,” of rationality imposed upon them by the suffocating rigidity of their theoretical discourse, and may breathe, copulate and expire in earnest irrationality. Unlike Kantor’s reading of Levinas with Masoch, which does so explicitly through his most famed text, “*Venus in Furs*,” this essay will instead reference Masoch’s lesser known, “*Don Juan of Kolomea*.”

Similarly emotive and chauvinistic in its commitment to espousing the singular narrative of its protagonist, *Kolomea* serves as a more apt accompaniment for present purposes than the intense brevity of discourse contained within *Venus*. First published in 1866, four years prior to *Venus*, *Kolomea* exhibits all the

emotive dramatism one would expect of a Masochean text, relishing in the well-versed themes of Erotic subjugation and Masochistic pleasure, yet it extends beyond its successor. Unlike *Venus*, the relationship of its protagonists, *Demetrius* and *Nikolaya*, is not afforded the reprieve of demise. Instead, Eros/Masoch decrees that the once enamored lovers must persist, bound by the sociality of marriage and their own affections, condemned to endure the bitterness which slowly materializes against and through their torturous fallacy of Erotic intersubjectivity. Entirely from the sincerely narcissistic perspective of *Demetrius*, we follow his descent into the helpless depths of Eros, which, bastardized by its incapacity to accommodate the normative strains of sociality, its inability to attain and understand the beloved, plummets into a debased exercise in extramarital vanity. Unable to appease his beloved, he repeatedly searches for the wonders of Erotic alterity in every being which alludes to the majesty of the love he cannot satisfy in his beloved. His commitment to Eros serves only to corrupt and reduce him to an egoistic servant of his own irrevocable interiority. Consequently, *Kolomea's* tale extends beyond the foundationally Masochean and Levinasian, detailed in Kantor's adoption of the Other as Law, and can be read as detailing the fatal ramifications of Erotic interiority. Within this cursory accompaniment, we may elucidate the isolating and adversarial qualities of Eros as it flagrantly clashes against the normative confines of sociality, distancing the lover from the bonds of the Other as Law until, inevitably, Eros clashes violently against exteriority, ethics and most poignantly the beloved themselves.

The first, most tentative step Eros takes towards utter interiority is in the isolation of the Erotic parties from sociality. Against the convulsing mass of exteriority, the lovers "withdraw" into seemingly serene solitude. In search of a quiet alcove in which the lovers may freely exchange tokens of affection, the erotic relation distances itself from the general noise of the masses expressing a unique, intimate society, "a society of two"²⁹. Withdrawing from society, the Erotic asserts primacy over the ethical. Eros presents the lover with an ethereal world populated only by their beloved. Within this erotic space the echoes of the beloved's voice and the warmth of their touch hang in the air and whistle in the wind. In a similar vein to Merleau-Ponty's conceptions of Eros³⁰, the world presented to the lover is mediated by the beloved, denoting once more the potent asymmetry of the ever-present metaphysical relation to alterity. However, unlike the universalizability of the social relation, the intimate refutes any notions of extrapolation, it is not to be replicated. Unlike Law, there is no universality in Eros.

Mesmerized by the individualistic character of Eros, the lovers exist as though they were truly "alone in the world"³¹. This retirement of the Erotic subjects toward intimate isolation is reflected broadly in *Kolomea*, by the protagonists cohabiting in their marital home. Articulated so innocuously, the intimate

society of the lovers expresses their “dual solitude”³², for they have removed themselves from the noisy exertion of the Other as Law: the prying eyes and shrill whispers of the public and family alike who resolve to interfere and impede Eros’ flourishing. Consequently, the movement toward erotic isolation, stands as the defiant “negation” of the social relation³³. The intimate society marks a withdrawal from exteriority and more broadly the value system imposed therein. The ethical is refuted by the society of two so that in its stead the Erotic may thrive unincumbered. Here, the lunacy of Eros, erotic asymmetry, anti-ethical subjugation, is free to dramatically manifest. Alone with their beloved, the lover faces alterity in a new, similarly absolute light. The absence of exteriority, denoting the intimate proximity of the beloved.

The intimate society which exhibits the formal unity of lovers is, however, fraught with challenges which undermine this formulation and allude to its illusory nature. For this intimate society to earnestly express the erotic sincerity of the lovers which it binds, the lovers must have the capacity to articulate their erotic intersubjectivity. There must be a voice to each lover to ensure that the reciprocity of the relation is safeguarded by the mutual, dual erotic desires of the society’s participants. Within the ethical, the capacity to speak, is a foundational aspect of the societal relation. It is through language the Other is approached, to speak to the Other is “to understand” them, to comprehend the wonders of their alterity and to intuitively take this into account. Language awakens in the subject what they and the Other “have in common,” whilst also affording the scope for alterity and duality to arise. As a result, speech marks the constant refutation of a simplistic, egoistic existence³⁴. It arises as the “condition,” of existing in ethical subjectivity, “beyond,” the reductive being of conatus. Furthermore, the capacity to speak is “inseparable from expression”³⁵, it affords the subject the means by which to assert themselves, in ethical subjugation, upon the world - the character of the subject is accordingly born in language. And it is the condition of this character that it exists within a world abounding in language, in which language exists as the manifestation of the ethical “reason”³⁶. The connection the subject holds to the Other, their expression of Self, and the world within which they act rests solely upon the foundation of language. Plainly, as is oft quoted and unavoidably repeated, language and speech are central to Levinasian intersubjectivity, however, Eros is not Ethics, and we must confront that which is “*more horrifying than life – love*”³⁷. Beyond ethical life, the importance of language which has been made evident, is swiftly abandoned.

Intriguingly, within the intimate society of Eros, Levinas asserts that there is no language. Existing, persisting, beyond the “Face,” the erotic relation cannot be ground within the realm of language. The Erotic Other, expressed from Levinas’s own “honest” heteronormative position³⁸ as that of “the feminine,” is presented “without signification and thus without language, the source of all

signification”³⁹. Though this may initially seem alarming, given the tremendous weight, placed upon the importance of language, by existing outside of the confines of signification, Eros is permitted the freedom to carouse beyond ethics. It is not bound by the ethical order of the Other as Law which is heard in every utterance of language and found in the world it offers; it may brazenly *be Other than ethical*. Free from the cast-iron shackles of linguistic, ethical subjectivity, Eros is uninhibited as it *must* be. Eros revels in inarticulate, absurd abstraction. It *must* be beyond language - for how could one allow themselves to fall into the maddening abyss of Eros if one possessed the wherewithal to intuit this violent inversion. Even within the confines of romantic poetry, it persists as a performative metaphor. That which verse after verse, poet after poet, will still slip beyond, escaping comprehension. Appropriately, it is not best defined as sentiment, nor a desire but as an ontological state, an experience. And this, for the moment at least, is not necessarily a critique of Eros, it is simply the only means of appreciating its magnificent capacity to enthrall, enchant and corrupt any poor soul lucky enough to feel the overflowing surge of Eros within them.

Within *Kolomea*, this conception of Eros as beyond Language is expressed by Masoch through a salacious note left for Demetrius, educating him on the many failings of love which states:

*“if you wrote your love down on paper, you weren’t in love.”*⁴⁰

In convenient brevity, this details the unique position of Eros, patently distancing the world of language from the “sensible experience of Eros”⁴¹. An Eros not contained to paper, is bestowed with reverence requisite to maintain its irrational form. Any foray into language necessitates the incorporation of ethical considerations and the rigidity of reason which speaks them into being and in so doing is a departure from Eros. One cannot understate the emphasis upon this and the distance which it alludes to from the ethical to the Erotic. As, for Eros to be this wondrous, formless deity, this “Venus” which when gazed upon collapses us all into pitiful servitude, it *must* be without hindrance, without limits, “without reason”⁴². Here, outside of signification, love is as in literature, free to exist without reproach, allowing us to entertain the unsavory reality of that love which fails to be “good,” of the “bad” loves which take hold just as sincerely only to reveal themselves in the cold rationality of hindsight. Here it can “invade” and “wound us”⁴³, irreparably, and the lover will do nothing except express gratitude for their gaping afflictions.

No matter how “impoverished”⁴⁴ the love is, it will only ever present itself to the dear lover as pure, chaste and beyond reproach. A virginal vessel of wonder, untainted by the smothering exchanges of sociality, refusing normative signification. So beautiful, so majestic, and so terrifying. The explicated marvels of Eros

as beyond language, serve to both reveal its unrivalled potency and, in so doing, undermine the serene premise of the intimate society Levinas purports it to establish. For beyond language, beyond the beloved who longs faithfully to share in the intimate society, the intimate society unfurls dramatically. There can be no such notions of equality, mutuality or reciprocity within Eros, as Prabhu similarly asserts, because “the nature of the encounter there lies outside and beyond the protocols that can be assessed as mutual or equal”⁴⁵. Accordingly, within the intimate society, there can be no “exchange” of affection capable of amounting to reciprocity. The ideal of reciprocity which Levinas formerly asserted maintains the nobility of Eros, thus falls away, allowing for the temperamental solitude of Eros to be laid bare. Eros reveals itself as not the formalism of romantic unicity which Levinas had aspired to, but the singular interior narrative of the lover.

Without the means to express themselves, the beloved’s love is not articulated or spoken into being by them, it must instead be revealed within the interiority of the lover’s Erotic perspective. Lacking the capacity to communicate with their beloved, as that would plunge them into the placid waves of the ethical, the lover instead claims the beloved’s affection as the appropriate vindication for their own love. It is an intuited means to justify their own irrational beliefs in Eros. A self-seduction becraying a self-fulfilling prophecy. This faith plays out as though the lover were a pious servant, seeing in all the mediums of the earth the divinity of their deity. Whether it be present or not is beyond concern. This solipsistic conception of Eros is a troubling, recurrent theme within *Kolomea*, and frequently found in similar texts of the Romantic age such as Prevost’s *Manon Lescaut* and Goethe’s *The Sorrows of Young Werther*. Given that the singular narrative presented to the reader is that of the protagonist, the lover in these instances, we would expect to be seduced ourselves by the love they receive and chase them into the chasmous depths of which they all embrace. Yet invariably this is not the case. We as readers are confronted with the flagrant failings of Eros to account for its beloved. The “beyond” of Eros, refuting language and ethics and reason, enthusiastically facilitates the perversion that is romantic solipsism. The beloved, she who is without rival and to whom the lover owes their whole world, is seldom noted as speaking of their own love. It is considered implicit. Consider this extract whence Demetrius, still faithfully smitten, discusses the affection she holds for him:

*“Nikolaya - loved me. With all her heart, believe me! I believed it at least”*⁴⁶

Neither Nikolaya’s words, nor her actions are referenced when Demetrius desires to affirm the affection with which he is held. Instead, the solipsistic fallacy of Eros is made most apparent within this short piece of dialogue. Patently, without

the means for expression, the beloved is mute within the intimate society. All the lover discerns is that which their Eros seeks out, the echoes of their own affection, their own voluptuousness reverberating back at them with a sincerity not found in the beloved's arms. Painfully, throughout the text, Demetrius makes this fatal misrecognition of his own Eros for that of his beloved's. Retelling the tale of his fallen love, to his drinking partner of an evening, repeatedly he smothers his interlocutor with details of his unparalleled love as evidence of the affection he too received:

*"A Goddess of a woman!"*⁴⁷

"I'm yours, your thing, your creature, do with me what you will, I'm yours, go ahead and laugh!" I really didn't think that she could wish for anything more."⁴⁸

*"I tell you I'm your slave, my soul belongs to you, I fall at your feet, I kiss your footprints"*⁴⁹

These excerpts, intended as expressions of the wonders of the subject's divine love, read more as barrages of emotional assault laid upon his voiceless beloved. Throughout Demetrius' narrative, Nikolaya's voice is absent, drowned out by his evangelical preaching's made in reverence to her. All that is, is the wonder of his love for her, the majesty of his Eros. Yet, as Eros exists beyond language, he cannot articulate the visceral experience of love, he is only capable of expressing the "height," with which he holds his beloved over himself. Non-conformist, Eros is incapable of articulation beyond Demetrius' lust for subjugation. And this alone is the purview of his narrow perspective. Once more, Eros exhibits the Masochean and Levinasian pattern of solipsistic pursuit, as the love sought, is nothing more than the re-imagining of the lover's own frantic affections. A sentiment Levinas concedes, "If to love is to love the Beloved bears me, to love is also to love oneself in love, and thus to return to oneself"⁵⁰. However, as has now been made clear, there is no necessary departure from the Self within Eros. Love exhibits only the extension and return of the lover's own love. The lover and their love lie together, alone. Within Eros, there is no scope for knowledge or interpersonal understanding, only the fanatical commitment to the Erotic ideal. The hollow belief in romantic reciprocation only serves to ensure that the epistemic fallacy of Eros is not revealed to its host. The lover, as with naive Demetrius, is cursed to blissfully believe they share in the "society of love"⁵¹, when, this is no "society of two," only a wretched society of solitude, of the lover bound to their futural deity, Eros. A fatal "self-seduction."⁵²

It is here, in these emotive excerpts, that the fallacy of Eros becomes undeniably apparent. As detailed thus by our reading of Levinas within *Kolomea*, the lover is unknowingly torn, oscillating constantly between the nobility of their

intent and the unconscionable narcissism with which it manifests. Eros as interiority, charts the corruption and descent of the lover until the act completely turns against itself. This is the destined “tragedy,” the lover is charged with invariably fulfilling⁵³. Like Oedipus, they work towards their own inescapable misfortune, “like an animal fleeing in a straight line across the snow before the sound of the hunters, thus leaving the very traces that will to its death”⁵⁴. Comparably, we have watched on in dread, as the Levinasian lover plunges into the depths of interiority, incorrigibly pursuing their beloved, hoping and praying that in this unsignifiable space beyond ethics and Law, beyond even language, that they may find the appropriate means to worship and love their *Venus*. And yet, in so doing, all the lover does is tumble ever more maladroitly into the depths of their own Erotic subjectivity, enthralled by their own love, seduced by their own passion. The lover searches ardently for Eros though he lacks the wherewithal to discern the true source of that which they clumsily collapse in subjugation before. Put plainly by Kantz, the fallacy of love is that “love cannot help but extend beyond itself”⁵⁵, the lover will always be reticent in ignorance before the beloved that incited this tragic course. Voiceless they are not heard. Sublime, they are not seen, understood or ever held in the tender embrace of intersubjectivity. Within interiority, the beloved only persists as an idea of that which may yet come into being, a diaphanous vessel of possibility. Though the Eros of the lover is given sincerely that is of little consolation to their partner as this relation is not played out within the surreptitious falsity of the intimate society. It presents purely within the lonely abyss of the lover’s intrasubjectivity. Hence, the lover is cursed to always be alone in their forays with Eros. Living as an adored King, a romantic hero, a champion of love, in the playground of their interiority; whilst in truth they are puerile, splashing about nude in the dirt, muddying and insulting the exasperated other whom they zealously profess to love. Contra the Other as beloved and the Other as Law. Without the means to communicate, nor co-ordinate their potent erotic impulses, the lovers are calamitously doomed. Destined only to become forsaken adversaries as each competing Eros, for the abstract idea of the future may never be shared, demands complete piety. Neither deity may be denied and so the lovers must endure in desolate servitude. Even if this incurs the demise of their farcical society. This brutal confrontation of fealty to Eros against the beloved is exhibited in uncomfoting simplicity by Demetrius’ following reflections upon his failing relationship with Nikolaya and their competing loves. Exhausted by her inability to reciprocate his unique Eros, aware of his incapacity to serve hers, he defeat- edly observes:

*“Because of an excess of love I turned away from her, and she yearned for revenge because of her passionate, rejected love.”*⁵⁶

Regrettably, erotic interiority can be seen to pave a solemn path. The ineffable sublimity of Eros unsympathetically, ritualistically corrupting its unwavering congregants until they must surrender the Other, the beloved, so that their own rapacious Eros may persevere. Explicated throughout this discussion of the lover's uncompromising intrasubjectivity, the primacy of Eros issues an affront to the ethical doctrine of Levinas in its indulgent idolatry. So as not to undermine the potency of Eros, the subject's necessary return to the domain of ethical signification is presented by Levinas as the fruition of the erotic. Eros is portrayed, rather arcanelly, as culminating in fecundity, with the birth of the child, the product of love, impelling the lover to resume the burden of ethical existence and open themselves up once more to the unpleasant cacophonous chorus of exteriority as Law. Therefore, before we rush to conclude cynically upon the state of Levinasian Eros, we must diligently consider whether fecundity necessitates, as Levinas contends, in bridging the lover's return to ethical servitude. Perhaps even to the successful resumption of the "intimate society," which seems so distant, or if conversely, and catastrophically, if the lover is condemned to drift alone, lost to the indomitable force of Eros.

4. FECUNDITY: THE CHILD AS LAW

*"Well, Sir, what makes marriage so unhappy," he asked and laid his hands on my shoulders as if he wanted to press me against his heart. "Just think, sir, it's children."*⁵⁷

Levinas resolves to remedy the erotic dilemma through the child. Within his theory of Eros, that which profanation discovers beyond the face, is not the nudity of the beloved other, it is the child⁵⁸. Put plainly, the futural aspect of Eros is fecundity, the "future is the child"⁵⁹. The relation the lover holds with the child is distinct from that of their relations in sociality or love. The relation with the child is predicated upon fecundity, and through this relation the subject "establishes a relationship with the absolute future"⁶⁰, that which was so enchanting in Eros. Though, unlike the erotic relationship which was demarcated by the lover's solo voyage into interiority, the paternal relation beckons a return to the ethical domain through the child. The paternal relation is one which is held with a "stranger who while being Other [...] is me, a relation of the I with a self which yet is not me."⁶¹ Or, as Levinas declares, the lover does not have a child; they are their child⁶². The child manifests as the materialization of the lover's relation with the erotic intentionality, that which lay beyond the beloved, the possible, the "not-yet," allowing the lover to return to themselves. No longer indulging in the narcissistic realms of solipsism, the lover may now enjoy the erotic

intentionality in unity with their beloved. The relationship between the lovers, through fecundity, is bestowed with the grace of Eros, as it maintains the futural “dimension,” through the child⁶³. The child is a mass of futurity, extending and opening a relation for the erotic subject with the “not yet,” in the now. Kaplan surmises this new relation for the lovers arriving through the child, as one which “endlessly draws them together, a relationship that has a future”⁶⁴. The child, for Levinas at least, is the panacea to the ills of erotic interiority, re-structuring and re-uniting the disparate lovers through a shared focality found in fecundity. The incommunicable adversarial character of Eros is undone, “resolved”⁶⁵, by the material corpus of the child which endeavors to align the lovers' paths in serene unicity once more.

For Levinas then, the child serves as a tangible body of Law. Through the paternal embrace of the child, the lover is seen to be shed of their immature notions of indulgent interiority. The child as Law, binds them to their beloved, and through the child to the social relation beyond whence the child must exist. Fecundity, as Levinas presents it, is salvation from the dire straits of Eros, forcing the erotic fantasy to collapse against itself as in its action, the voluptuous, signification awaits. The child exhibits all the proud traits of the erotic, an apparition of the self beyond the self, a self which can access a future the subject can only dream of. The love of the self which impelled Eros, is that which conspiratorially enacts its downfall, tearing the subject from the interiority. Rudely thrusting them back into the noisy grips of sociality, the unending tinnitus of the Other as Law. This reading of Eros limits its potency to that of a lover's misguided discursion. The foray into the erotic, limited by the inevitable return to the ethical which awaits in the accomplishment of voluptuousness. This does afford Levinas the scope to write as poetically as he does on the sordid, damp cavities of interiority. These flamboyantly permissive excursions into Eros are limited, constrained, destined to always be conveniently resolved by the lover's potency in fecundity. Would that it were so simple. To claim with confidence, that the depths of Eros may be resolved inevitably and peacefully by fecundity, does ensure that Levinas's ethical doctrine maintains its primacy in the face of a feral assault, it nevertheless fails to recognize the potency and irrepressible call of Eros upon the lover. Eros may indeed meet its own fated end in its product, the successful accomplishment of a shared future, a social love. This, however, is something which cannot and must not be taken for granted. One must not underestimate the mercurial charm which abounds within the lover's intrasubjectivity. It would be a compelling point of serendipitous fortune were fecundity to similarly instigate the return to the ethical for our astray lover Demetrius. Heartrendingly, his fatal fall into Eros brazenly challenges the inevitability of fecundity's ethical summons as he lingers, desolate on the periphery. Conclusively turning to *Kolomea* for one final glance upon the gut-wrench

convulsions of literary romance, we find our blindly naive protagonist alone with Eros, against not only his beloved, but also their child.

Demetrius' relation with Eros prior to the birth of his child had succeeded in distancing him from both his beloved and the legalistic confines of sociality. Existing beyond such concerns, he revels in the mysticism of his erotic interiority. The lovers together, allowing their diverging paths of Eros to maintain their distinct yet mutual besottment. Before the child arrives, both are secure in the sincerity of their own affections for the other and of that which they are in receipt of, found in the smitten eyes of the lover who reflects back at them their own intense sentiments. Though they embody an adversarial stance, defiantly contesting that their deity is the only true future, that their own Eros must succeed, the conflicting Eros' do not draw blood. They maintain a state of passivity, bound by the promise of fecundity, the shared future these two idols may forge, uniting the lovers. Indeed, even within the oft melodramatic narrative of Demetrius, initially the arrival of the child weds the lovers in unicity. Demetrius, accepts the invite to form the intimate society in earnest, to return once more from the cavernous spaces of his mind to sociality, presented to him by Nikolaya:

*"I rode into Kolomea for the doctor, and when I returned, she was holding the child out toward me."*⁶⁶

The formalism of the departure from Eros is explicit in the offering of the child. Demetrius must embrace the paternal call, hold his child, and see his wife as more than just the beloved icon of his heart, she is now a mother also. He too is a father, cradling an extension of himself which will unite and reintegrate the lovers back into the ethical world beyond the bedroom. The child is Law, the irrepressible absolute call of alterity. The demand that the subject return from their sordid reprieve to answer the ethical call of subjugation. And, initially at least, the child succeeds as Law, uniting the lovers in mind and action as they freely offer themselves to the demands found in fecundity:

*"That gave us things to think about, to worry about, and every difficult hour just bound us more closely to one another. But it didn't stay that way."*⁶⁷

The Levinasian dream of the ethical return through fecundity appears initially to have asserted its firm grasp upon our darling lovers. However, Eros' hold has not been relinquished over Demetrius and inevitably for him this return to the ethical was only ever a momentary relapse. The role of the father, the weight of sociality, the constant imposition of normativity, burdens and altruistic anguish, the Levinasian ontology, does not offer the salacious enticement of Eros. Demetrius

finds himself unable to be placated by fecundity, it simply does not offer the incommunicable majesty felt within the self-centered escape of Erotic pursuit. Once more, he resolves repeatedly, foolishly, to find his deity within the gaze of his wife:

*“I take my wife in my arms, kiss her, her hand strokes the worries away from my forehead. I rub up against her like a cat, she laughs - and the pledge of love next to her starts screaming - that’s the end of that story. You can start again at the foreword if you want. That’s the end of that, I’m telling you.”*⁶⁸

*“All well and good. You kiss your little wife until she has red spots on her cheeks, neck, breasts. You let your hands run down her full hips - and the pledge of love screams.”*⁶⁹

Ah yes, the “pledge of love,” that which was promised to break forth and transcend the erotic hallucination, that which should, according to Levinas’ sanitized writing, be held by Demetrius as the father, in incomparable reverence is simply another imposition, a threat to his designs. This elucidates a rather contentious argument against the ethical formulation of fecundity as the child, the corporealization of the social future, need not necessarily manifest the shared ambitions of Eros. The child is undeniably a product of the romantic union, yet as we have considered, this union is itself not predicated upon shared wants and desires, it is a muted self-seduction. Beyond signification, the lovers share only in their narcissistic lust to appease their respective numen. The child born of voluptuousness is born out of signification. In its birth, through its cries, the parents may indeed hear and recognize the ethical summons of alterity in this familiar stranger, this however cannot be taken for granted. The child is not as portrayed by Levinas and subsequent commentators⁷⁰, the necessary fulfilment of the erotic intentionality. The child does indeed fulfil an erotic intentionality, exhibiting the future through an extension of the self. Whether or not this may eternally placate the futural lust of Eros is an entirely different matter. As shown through Demetrius’ reception of his child, fecundity may yet fail to instill ethical permanence within a subject who has lost themselves to their eroticism. His erotic intentionality does not find satiation or a new course once he is given himself to cradle. Conversely, his erotic intentionality re-emerges as a violent antagonist to the ethical alternative which has befallen his beloved. He still lusts feverishly for the spectral alterity of Eros; he refuses to forfeit his goddess. Recognizing in the child his union brought into being a challenge to his machinations, he prays that he may be relieved of this adversary, so that he may freely pursue Eros once more as he desires:

*“The devil take the pledge of love! God forgive me my sin.”*⁷¹

Few such unsavory words spoken by a father could convey such a horrifying refutation of the ethical purportedly imposed in fecundity. This unpleasant confession articulates his unwavering commitment to Eros which has clearly reasserted its primacy over his injudicious being. Outside of the social relation, Demetrius pursues Eros by only the most profane means. Chasing in the voluptuosity of his beloved, the erotic alterity which dictated his being cruelly before the “pledge of love” interceded. These crude acts, intended to further the potency of Eros and reunite the lovers once more in the discovery of themselves through each other’s bodies, only serve to distance the already estranged parties. She, bound by maternal love has returned to signification, her being dictated by the ethical call found in every whimper of their child. At odds with the ethical reasoning of sociality, Demetrius’ actions are perceived as devoid of love. They are merely the crude lusting’s of a gentleman calling upon a brothel. To her mind she is abandoned and neglected, utilized through her body as a tool so that Demetrius may entertain whatever foreign, intrasubjective joys he feasts upon therein:

‘What’s the matter?’ – ‘You only come to me at night,’ she begins shouting. ‘People at least court their mistresses, and I – I want love!’

‘Love? Don’t I love you?’ – ‘No!’

‘She saddles her horse and gallops off.

‘I look for her the whole night, the whole day.

‘When I come home, her bed is in the children’s room, and I sleep alone.’⁷²

In resolving to love his beloved, Demetrius abandons her. He is excommunicated from the union of the ‘intimate society’. Cast out of the lover’s embrace and the familial bonds. She sleeps with the children, open to the sociality and Law they embody. He sleeps alone, distraught at how, to his belligerent mind, his lover has abandoned him for their children. The ethical and the erotic, adversaries to the end within this tale of Masoch. Tragically Demetrius not only loses his beloved and, to a certain degree, the affections of his family, in Eros he loses himself. Beyond signification and language, beyond reason, he collapses into his love, finding solace within the toxicity of his intrasubjectivity. Beyond the structures of Law which uphold alterity, his ultimate casualty is himself. The noble being that was Demetrius, that first fell sweetly in love with a young Nikolaya is no more. The love that tormented and confused his being, which left him slack-jawed and stupid before his beloved has become bastardized through its lengthy abiding within his interiority. The necessary ethical standards to attain Levinasian personhood, too, are foregone, irrelevant when the subject refuses to depart from their narcissistic affairs. Law and ethics spectate idly. The man

Demetrius is lost through the course of the novel's exploration of Eros. What endures, is "substance," a non-entity with a singular impulse, hungering for that vessel which may once more tease and induce the love of alterity he desperately craves. The Demetrius who is first introduced dissipates, lost to a lust for love. In his sweet stead, the misguided servant of Eros, "Don Juan of Kolomea," surfaces. Forever serving as a cautionary tale of the potent tragedy of an Eros which refuses to be reconciled with the ethical, which ignores the pull of fecundity. Demetrius' plight is patently lamentable in its refutation of Levinasian principles, forever searching for a love he cannot accomplish within. Forever insatiable. Forever alone with Eros.

5. CONCLUSION

Reading Levinas with Masoch's *Kolomea* lays bare the tragic tale of the ruinous love which Eros may inspire. The lover, lost to Eros, exists as a "castrated soul"⁷³, devoid of satisfaction, unable to attain satiety nor recognize their descent beyond reason into earnest erotic lunacy. Eros is a potent and imperious adversary to the ethical and legal structures of sociality. Indeed, few authors allow for a theory which portrays Eros so vividly as Levinas does. However, exploring the return to the ethical which fecundity is supposed to impose upon the subject, we have seen that this is perhaps too convenient a route for all of Eros' mystical paths. Challenging the ethical demise of Eros, it is liberated from the confines of reason or language, flourishing as an anti-legal, anti-ethical, anti-reasonable experience. In these refutations, Eros' majesty is manifest. It ensnares and beguiles over not only Demetrius, but at certain points in our lives, all of us, because it teases of an alterity found within. The "*no man's land*" of erotic interiority. Here, we are all Demetrius, all Severin, all Werther or the Chevalier Des Grieux, just another iteration of the well-meaning, ethical being which is corrupted in the ecstasy of Eros.

Similarly, our discussions of Levinas within Masoch have not shied away from the "sweet deception"⁷⁴, which is at play during the erotic discourse. Against and contra Law, where desire can fly without limitation, it does, as explicated in the actions of Demetrius, have the capacity to manifest in a harmful counterintuitive manner. Turning away from sociality, Eros inevitably pulls itself from its beloved, moving "beyond" the beloved. Here though, there is nothing to be found. A fantasy which will never materialize, a dream which one will always wake from. A love which refuses to ground itself in the shared future, the call of the social embodied by fecundity, is therefore an act of contrition against the self, an exercise in self-flagellation as the lover denies the social being of the beloved and in so doing moves "away from oneself." In the depths of Eros, where Levinas meets Scheler, love is an act of "denial"⁷⁵. An indulgent descent into interiority,

masking the impetuous refusal to recognize the ethical call, to hear the beloved who has been smothered by layer upon layer of romantic pretense. The lover is lost, and this is both the wonder and fallacy of Eros. In the denial of being and reason, the lover is placed upon a pedestal of infinite height. And yet, Love is not only denial, it is violence too. A violence against the Other, and most palpably against the Self. It is the Self who is sacrificed in homage to the lover's deity, Eros.

*"You feel the shudder of losing yourself completely. You feel something like hatred toward the power of the other. You think yourself dead. You want to rise up against the tyranny of the other's life and find your way back to your self."*⁷⁶

Alas you cannot.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

ORCID

Reuben Carias  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6023-092X>

1. L. Sacher-Masoch, *Love: The Legacy of Cain* (*Studies in Austrian, Culture, and Thought*), UK ed. (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2003), 58.
2. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 43.
3. E. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1999), 114.
4. K. Oliver, "The Plight of Ethics," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26, no. 2 Special issue with the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy (2012): 119.
5. E. Levinas, *Humanism of the Other*, Reprint ed. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 7.
6. E. Levinas, *Entre Nous* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 91.
7. E. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Revised ed. (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 264.
8. D. Cohen-Levinas and J.-L. Nancy, "Eros, Once Again: Danielle Cohen-Levinas in Conversation with Jean-Luc Nancy," in *Levinas and Literature: New Directions*, ed. Michael Fagenblat and Arthur Cools (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 40.
9. S. Hand, "Levinas, Literature, and Philosophy," in *The Oxford Handbook of Levinas*, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 532.
10. W. Fuchs, "Love and Lust after Levinas and Lingis," *Philosophy Today* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 50.
11. Hand, "Levinas, Literature, and Philosophy," 530.
12. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 34.
13. *Ibid.*
14. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* 27; *Entre Nous* 8.
15. Levinas, *Entre Nous* 6.
16. *Ibid.*, 22.
17. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 92.
18. Kantor, "Levinas's Law," 371.
19. *Ibid.*, 372.
20. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 254-55.

21. Ibid., 257.
22. Ibid., 259
23. C. Katz, "For Love Is as Strong as Death," *Philosophy Today* 45 (2001): 128.
24. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 261.
25. Katz, "For Love Is as Strong as Death," 127.
26. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 266.
27. Ibid., 265.
28. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 43.
29. Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 18.
30. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2013), 397.
31. Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 17.
32. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 264.
33. Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 17.
34. Ibid., 5.
35. Ibid., 6.
36. Ibid., 22.
37. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 43.
38. S. Sandford, "Writing as a Man: Levinas and the phenomenology of Eros," *Radical Philosophy* 87, (Jan/Feb, 1998): 12.
39. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 257.
40. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 42.
41. Cohen-Levinas and Nancy, "Eros, Once Again," 40.
42. E. Levinas, *Time and the Other*, Revised ed. (Duquesne University Press, 1987), 88-9.
43. Ibid.
44. Fuchs, "Love and Lust after Levinas and Lingis," 50.
45. A. Prabhu, "Eros in Infinity and Totality," *Levinas Studies* 7, (2012): 143.
46. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 35.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 31.
49. Ibid.
50. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 266.
51. Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 18.
52. Boothroyd, "Levinas and Nietzsche: In between Love and Contempt," 355.
53. Levinas, *Entre Nous*, 3.
54. Ibid.
55. Katz, "For Love Is as Strong as Death," 128.
56. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 58.
57. Ibid., 26.
58. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 267.
59. C. Katz, "Levinas between Agape and Eros," *Symposium* 11, no. 2 (Fall 2007, 10th Anniversary Issue: Feminist Perspective on Eros): 338.
60. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 268.
61. Ibid., 277.
62. Ibid., 277.
63. L. Kaplan, "Eros and the Future: Levinas's Philosophy of Family," *Philosophy in the Contemporary World* 6, no. 2 (1999): 11.
64. Ibid., 12.
65. J. Mensch, "Eros and Justice: The Erotic Origin of Society," *Levinas Studies* 9 (2014): 102.
66. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 42.
67. Ibid.
68. Ibid., 45.
69. Ibid.
70. Mensch, "Eros and Justice: The Erotic Origin of Society," 103.
71. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 48.
72. Ibid., 54.
73. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 115.
74. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 36.
75. M. Scheler, *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing: Selected Writings (Heritage of Sociology Series)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 150.
76. Sacher-Masoch, *Legacy of Cain*, 44.

Reuben Carias is a doctoral researcher in Love and Law at the University of Westminster, London.