

A Psychoanalytic Study of Destructive Aspects of Love and Desire in Somerset Maugham's *Human Bondage*: A Lacanian Psychoanalytic Reading

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Abstract:

The present study is a comprehensive psychoanalytic approach to Destructive aspects of Love and Desire in Somerset Maugham's *Human Bondage*. W. Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) is one of the twentieth century's most productive, multitalented, and famous writers. His works depict the life of people who struggle despite all the destructive relationships they have to gain something. Philip, as the main character in the novel, is a typical representation of one who suffers from human bondages and struggles for freedom and finding truth. *Human Bondage* is one of the most famous and intimate novels that tells us about the main character's way of life, which is filled with difficult trials. Philip has not been in a safe holding environment in the absence of his mother, and he was born with a clubfoot. As object relation theory mentions, all incomplete relationships throughout childhood reveal themselves in one's adulthood, especially in destructive relations and friendships. According to Lacanian Psychoanalysis, False Self is such a mask for the child whenever he/she feels him/herself in danger. He rejects being in and tries to find a replacement for the absence of his mother.

Back to *Human Bondage*, Philip, due to the loss of his mother, gives a sense of insecurity that would transform itself into something else, finally leading to unpredictable results. So, he always chooses to be the child of his partner instead of

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having a mutual relationship with her. The subject of the relationship for Philip is destructive and devastating, so much so that it brings about some bondage. His love for Mildred is a relationship of bondage within which he loses his true self and falls into the state of a "desiring subject" who is irresistibly dependent on another. We understand one of Lacan's most well-known maxims that "Man's desire is the desire of the other". To enrich the analysis further, Lacan states that there is never one true love between the people who claim to love each other, and desire can never be satisfied. The nature of desire is that one asks for something, but when he gets closer to attaining it, he feels it is not exactly what he wanted, and so he shifts to something new in the hope of satisfying his desire. It is argued in the present study that Philip desires his mistress to such an extent that he fails to develop his own independent identity and contributes to his self-deterioration. This is a hazardous situation for him since he finds out that he plays no role in satisfying his desire. Therefore, in the process of satisfying his desire, Philip has to negotiate with others whose desires are different from those of Philip. The very contrast is the leading cause of the bondage explored in the present study.

Keywords: Lacan, Love, Desire, Subject, Struggle, Nature,

1. Introduction

William Somerset Maugham (1874-1965) is a British playwright, novelist, essayist and short story writer. He is one of the most outstanding novelists in English literature who views life objectively and dispassionately. Somerset Maugham, in his works, draws attention to the complicated relationships between couples and the similarity in parental relationships and even employee affiliations, which are so apparent in the novel and cannot be rejected. As the research, Somerset Maugham is well aware of the clutter of 20th-century life. Modern society requires so much of a man that he cannot fully involve his feelings in every situation. Maugham affirms the value of the self and his existence in a given society. Psychoanalytic criticism is chosen to analyze and interpret Maugham's selected novel. In fact, the novel *Human Bondage* is a literary form which mirrors a genuine reflection of real life. It is a record of the narrator's personal experiences as a child, as a youth and as a grown-up man. Samuel Rogal argues in Somerset Maugham Encyclopedia that "Maugham's fiction reflects his supreme ability to capture the more interesting aspects of human nature and his agnosticism rob the majority of his fictional

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characters of their individuality" (p. 97). As a matter of fact, Philip becomes the victim due to the natural bondage of his parent's death at an early age. The central character in *Human Bondage* is a sensitive orphan who lost his parents when he was young. The loneliness and misery in his childhood cast a shadow on his heart that makes him sensitive and keeps him isolated from the group. Apparently, the relationship has a destructive effect on the subject, leading to his constant suffering. One cannot satisfy his desire. It deals with the nature of destructive aspects of Love and Desire and how they determine the social existence of the main character of the novel. Philip develops different relationships with other people and experiences love and hatred at different levels.

One significant fact about Maugham's *Human Bondage* is the nature of love, which is ultimately a worldly affair and is mainly related to bodily needs devoid of any spiritual or supernatural element. Philip loves Mildred passionately and thinks that he can possess her as the object of his desire. This relationship is a bondage to him, and he falls to Mildred's desires. *Human Bondage* is viewed as a semi-biography of the author himself because, in this book, he has pictured a character called Philip, who has the same life experiences as he did. This paper attempts to study the emptiness of life, which results from the theme of several bondages among the characters in the novel. *Human Bondage* was composed during the First World War when many countries were plunged into a full-scale crisis. These humans began to seek ways to get away from the bondages of old beliefs. The characters in the fiction and drama of W. Somerset Maugham accurately reflect English society from the end of the Victorian age through the early years of World War II. Maugham based his characters on real people whom he observed and analyzed, and his characters transcend the themes and settings of his fictional worlds. Lacanian criticism in literature is not upon the unconscious of the character or the author but upon the text itself and the relationship between text and reader. The question of the subject and what makes up one's identity is central to modern philosophy. Many philosophers in the twentieth century tried to find the true meaning behind the concept of the "Self", the source of one's emotions. Thus, Lacan's theories on human subjectivity, love, and desire are explained first to provide a better understanding of the mechanism by which Philip loses his own identity when encountering others.

2. Methodology and Critical Approach

Firstly, putting in a short outline, this study starts the task by selecting *Human Bondage* as one of Somerset Maugham's best-known novels. The outline is a work investigation, and it aims at the Lacanian point of view. Jacques Lacan was born on April 13th, 1901 in Paris. He began studying medicine in the early twentieth and entered at Saint-Ann Hospital in Paris. Lacan, for his work in refining and expanding Freud's theory of stages, located the unconscious in the libido, or pleasure principle, while Lacan believed we feel the unconscious as an absence. He described the mirror stage of development as the moment when a child can identify himself as a separate subject. His critical theories were not limited only to psychoanalytic practice but contributed significantly to literature and psychoanalytic criticism of the *Subject* and its relationship to *Others* and the role of unconscious desire in shaping human behaviour.

There are two relatively straightforward ways in which we can understand one of Lacan's most well-known maxims, that "Man's desire is the desire of the other" (Seminar XI, P. 235). Firstly, that desire is essentially a desire for recognition from these "others"; secondly, that desire is for the thing that we suppose the other desires; it means the things that the other lacks. In developing his idea of the symbolic order, Lacan was influenced by the structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Lacan developed his central notion of the symbolic order and the subject as the subject of the signifier. It seems that one's subjectivity is a function of the system of signification where his being is defined in relation to others. This facilitated Lacan's break with traditional psychoanalysis and paved the way for his central idea that the unconscious is structured like language. What psychoanalysis does is make an explanation for the unconscious through the signifier. Then, Lacan began to research the active role of the unconscious and applied the metaphor and metonymy of language to the unconscious. According to Lacan, the unconscious is like the signified, while the conscious is similar to the signifier, which is the split that uncovers the existence of the unconscious. From the viewpoint of psychoanalysis, metaphor refers to the male that another signifier represses the repressed signifier, while metonymy refers to using one signifier to represent the absent one.

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Lacan's theory of the development of the subject continues significantly in the symbolic order where the subjects fall into the realm of language. It is in this interaction with others that one's sense of being is lost, and the individual always suffers from this loss of identity. The subject is lost in his relationship with the other. It is impossible to gain any sense of selfhood outside of a relationship with the other. This desire, which arises from the need for more of the Other, is primarily problematic. The subject who depends on another for recognition and satisfaction of his desire turns to be in constant need of the presence of the Other. In fact, the person turns to a desiring subject, and his desire becomes the desire of the Other. Love for Lacan is a deceptive and wrongful emotion. He states that "love is the result of the wrong identification of the subject with his object of desire and cannot be treated as true feelings because the subject does not love his object of desire but an image that creates of this object". (Lacan 1961-2 Seminar of XV November 1961).

This love affair for Lacan is not a progressive act of union that satisfies the needs of the lovers. It is not a positive feeling of a person towards another. On the contrary, it has destructive effects on the subject and leads to his constant suffering because one cannot satisfy his desire. Thus, love is more of a relationship or lack of something in the other than what she has. Lacan says that when one loves an Other, he gives nothing of himself and finally comes to accept the emptiness in the Other (Lacan 212). In Seminar X, Lacan writes, "What we give in love is essentially what we do not have and, when what we do not have returns to us, there is undoubtedly a regression and at the same time a revelation of the way in which we have failed the person in representing his lack" (p. 95). Love is an illusory fantasy of fusion with the beloved, which makes up for the absence of any sexual relationship (Lacan 44). Desire, a function central to all human experience, is the desire for nothing nameable. Being comes into existence as an exact function of this lack. As an imaginary phenomenon that belongs to the field of the past, Love is clearly opposed to Desire, which is inscribed in the symbolic order of the field of the Other. Love is a metaphor, whereas Desire is metonymy. It can even be said that love kills desire since love is based on a fantasy of oneness with the beloved, and this abolishes the difference that gives rise to desire. On the other hand, there are elements in Lacan's work which destabilize the neat opposition between love and desire. Lacan's discourse on love

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is often complicated by the same substitution of "desire" for "love" that highlights the texts of Plato's symposium. The presence of one implies the presence of the other. This phenomenon, which Freud calls "ambivalence", is considered by Lacan as one of the great discoveries of psychoanalysis. Love is an imaginary phenomenon that belongs to the field of the ego. Love is autoerotic and has a fundamentally [narcissistic]] structure. It means that love is more of a relationship that lacks something in the other, not what she has. Slavi Zizek argues in *The Sublime Object of Ideology* that the meaninglessness of desire and its unattainability is the problem of the fulfilment of desire.

3. Critical Analysis

The primary objective of the present study is to analyze Somerset Maugham's novel, *Human Bondage*. This research aims to apply Lacanian psychoanalytic reading and clarify the relationship of different characters. One of the most complex areas of Lacan's work concerns the relationship between *Love* and *Desire*. On one hand, the two terms are opposed. On the contrary, it has destructive effects on the subject and leads to his constant suffering because one cannot satisfy his desire. Love is more of a relationship that lacks something in the other, not what she has. Lacan says that when one loves another, he gives nothing of himself and finally comes to accept the emptiness of the other. In simple words, the man (the subject) who says that he passionately loves a woman (his object of desire). In fact, she loves the image she has created of the woman, not the woman as she is. "Lacan argues that love is an illusion of oneness with the beloved, and this illusion is carried over in the process of analysis, hindering its success" (Seminar XX, P. 44).

According to the quotation, in the process of loving the other, the subject loses his sense of being. It relies on the Other for his existence because he feels he is dependent for his existence on the Other and desires her presence continuously. The concept of love first was argued in Lacan's 8th seminar. It explains how love on its one level is located in the Imaginary Order as a form of required attention from the Other. As a result, what is reflected when love is present in the symbolic order is the feeling of absence and sadness that the lover experiences from being in love but not as a demand for love. The subject wants to be Others' desire. The present study is a psychoanalytic reading of Philip's love and desire towards Mildred. It undertakes to show that, based on Lacan's theory of

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desire and human subjectivity, Philips's love of Mildred is a relationship of bondage within which he loses his true self and falls into the state of a desiring subject who is irresistibly dependent on an Other. It is argued in this study that Philip loves Mildred and desires her to such an extent that he fails to develop his own independent identity, which contributes to his self-deterioration. The character of Mildred is etched as one of "hysteria", a sensitive and hungry girl who wanted love but did not get conditional maternal care in infancy as she approached the oedipal phase, where she began to experience a desire for a father. Philip desires her and power over her.

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Love is an apparently complex issue in *Human Bondage*. Maugham depicts a confused relationship between those in love, where women are mostly portrayed as evil characters who satisfy the sexual desires of men and deceive them to reach their objectives. To do the essential Lacanian psychoanalytic study, I going to apply the analysis of the characters. In this novel, Mildred is like an evil character who wants to deceive Philip, the leader character of the novel. Love is deceptive; 'As a specular mirage, love is essentially deception' (SeminarX1, P. 268). It is deceptive because it involves giving what one does not have (i.e. the phallus). Love is directed not at what the love object has but at what he lacks, at the nothing beyond him.

Moreover, men are shown to be less in control of their passions and constantly changeable to follow their target desires, as Lacan states, the Real phase of need. All of the needs can be satisfied by an object. Thus, at the fundamental level, all subject needs are still fulfilled. This phase is characterized by completeness, fullness and the absence of a sense of loss. The Real is associated with the concept of trauma to figure out the yearning demand of the main character, Philip, in building up bonds of communication with [their] world, either confrontation with the traumatic intrusion. This outlines the intentional decline of the central character as he surpasses the fragmenting symbolic order and attempts to find content in the realm of the Real – the destructive of a passion

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that is against all reason. Trauma is a psychic event arising from the confrontation between a subject and an external stimulus and the inability of the subject to understand and master the related excitation; Philip experiences a destroying psychic fragmentation by the time they encounter the unconscious. The Real phase that Philip experiences is when he falls in love with Mildred at first sight. Thus, to Love for nothing and to avoid the subject, look for emptiness.

The fantasy provides a way to keep the subject who loves someone who actually wants to be loved by someone who is loved. Freud will call 'narcissism' a state in which the ego as a whole involves pleasure seeking. It is not yet what we might call a 'gendered subject'; it surges with sexual drives, but libidinal energy recognizes no distinction between masculine and feminine. The mechanism by which this happens is what Freud famously termed the Oedipus Complex. Philip has become a gendered subject, surmounting his Oedipus Complex. However, in doing so, he has, so to speak, driven his forbidden desire underground, repressed it into the plea we call the unconscious. The unconscious is the discourse of the Other. What psychoanalysis teaches us is that our desire is always inextricably bound up with the desires of others. As Fink writes, 'we can say that the unconscious is full of such foreign desires' (1995, P. 9).

Based on the quotation above, it has to be assumed that Infatuation and *Love* are two vastly different types of affection that most people get confused between. It is likely to occur more so among Philip and Mildred when they are young and inexperienced as opposed to when they are grown and matured. Infatuation can easily be mistaken for love in many cases. Lacan defines desire as the remainder that arises from the subtraction of *need* from *demand*. Desire, therefore, is always the manifestation of something that is lacking in the subject and the Other in the symbolic order. The psychoanalytic subject can only come into being through others and in relation to the Others. For Lacan, Philip is trapped in the alienated webs of capitalized Other who, unconsciously, points him to what and how to desire.

At this crossroads, Philip appropriates his(M)other and his beloved Mildred in order to place them as the objects of his desire, that is, as his signified phallus. In the field of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, especially a novel where the subject is trapped in his neurosis due to the imposing intricacies of his Oedipus Complex. The phallus stands for

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the signifier of what the omnipotent mother is missing, and the Philip can be identified as the object that the mother is lacking. Psychoanalysis therapy aims to release repressed emotions and experiences; Philip is trapped in his neurosis due to the imposing intricacies of his Oedipus Complex in the interpretation of Dreams. The central character, Philip Carey, a clubfooted medical student, is a spirit of romance among the characters in the novel, and Mildred Rogers, a low-class waitress. Philip shows his false self and expresses his love to Mildred many times, but he actually hates her. He thinks that if he is not in a relationship, it would mean that no one likes him because of his clubfoot. Philip has not been in a Safe holding environment in the absence of his mother, and he was born with a clubfoot. As object relation theory mentions, all incomplete relationships throughout childhood reveal themselves in one's adulthood, especially in destructive relations and friendships. According to Lacanian Psychoanalysis, False Self is such a mask for the child whenever he/she feels him/herself in danger. He rejects being in and tries to find a replacement for the absence of his mother. Back to *Human Bondage*, Philip, due to the loss of his mother, gives a sense of insecurity that would transform itself into something else, finally leading to unpredictable results. So, he always chooses to be the child of his partner instead of having a mutual relationship with her. We understand one of Lacan's most well-known maxims that "Man's desire is the desire of the other". (SeminarX1, P. 235)

As the quotation above means, the affair between Philip and Mildred is a harrowing account of the degrading bondage of one human being to another. Lacan states that there is never one true love between the people who claim to love each other, and desire can never be satisfied. The nature of desire is that one asks for something, but when he gets closer to attaining it, he feels it is not exactly what he wanted, and so he shifts to something new in the hope of satisfying his desire. Desire, on the other hand, refers to something beyond basic human needs that cannot be satisfied. For Lacan, "Desire is a much broader and more abstract concept than either libido or "wish" in Freud; in Seminar XI, he describes it, following Spinoza, the essence of man" (1979[1973]:275).

Desire to lack, indeed, desire and lack are inextricably tied to
gather. Lacan defines desire as the remainder that arises from

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the subtraction of need from demand. "Thus desire is neither the appetite for satisfaction, nor the demand for love, but differences that result from the subtraction of the first from the second, the phenomenon of their splitting" (Spaltung). (1977 d [958]:287).

According to the quotation above, although Philip is sexually attracted to Mildred, it is his enslaving passion, his desire to possess her utterly. Philips's story echoes Lacanian's theory that love is a bondage and true love never occurs between two human beings with different perspectives and desires. In Lacan's theory of *Love and Desire*, the pleasure of having one's object of desire is forever postponed in the chain of human relations. Philip's continuous agreement with Mildred's whimsical and unpredictable desire makes him a slave to his love. Because he had not attracted Mildred sexually, nothing whatever he did after that did not affect her, object cause of his desire. In Lacan's terminology, the penis as being the desirable object and the wielder of power. Since Miss Mildred lacks a penis, she must masquerade as a male: Mildred becomes the object of desires for Philip. The absence of the *Phallus* and *Desire* and *Unconscious* are found through the recognition of a fundamental lack. Desire, therefore, is always the manifestation of something that is lacking in the subject and the Other- the symbolic order. The remainder is the object *Pett a*. Mildred substitutes for Philips phallus in so far as she stands as the lost object that can only be attained when she is dead. In this sense, Mildred becomes Philips's "impossible" object of desire since she is dead.

Moreover, mourning is the other theme that is incarnated at the end of the novel when Philip is able to mourn the loss of his phallic signifier- Mildred. The second manner Philip addresses Mildred as the object of his desire is not only in terms of cruel aggression towards the object, but as the "destruction and loss of object" (Desire" 23). Therefore, the only way a subject can accept and process his object of desire is through loss and mourning. The recall object of desire is consequently "structurally" dead, so the subject can only desire when the object is absent, fundamentally "dead". A close analysis of Philip's psyche and his relationship with other people, as well as his love affairs, show that he is a masochistic who derives sexual gratification from being subjected to physical pain or humiliation, a man who cannot experience sexual pleasure without first

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experiencing extreme pain and contributes to hurting his self. The subject of the relationship for Philip is destructive, so much so that it brings about some bondage. Philip's love for Mildred is a relationship of limit or constraint. He loses his true self and falls into the state of a "desiring subject" who is irresistibly dependent on the Other. In fact, Philip knows that Mildred has many effects but insists on loving her and contributing to his destruction. As he loves her more and more, she grows more indifferent to her and treats him as a butler who is in the service of her desires. Mildred knows that Philip can never overcome his strong passion and exploits that for her benefit. By doing so, Philip becomes more intertwined in his love and contributes to his destruction. In simple words, Mildred is Philip's source of misery, and all the things he learns through the course of the novel are interpreted in this level of relationship. Philip grows with an even greater level of maturity in this relationship. As Robert Calder (1973) argues in *Somerset Maugham and the Quest for Freedom*, "It is usually part of a young man's apprenticeship that he becomes seized by a woman who is vulgar, insensitive and unintelligent.

In most cases, the hero finally frees himself and, although emotionally frightened, becomes more mature because of his experience" (p. 90). His club foot brings a restriction to Philip beyond physicality. Even from the beginning of his life at school, he gets humiliated and oppressed because of his club foot (Maugham 1956: 43-4). Lacan describes the position of the subject with regard to the desiring Other by using a term borrowed from Freud, helplessness, and it is precisely this paradoxical relation of both dependence and being left without recourse (2013: 502). Jacques Lacan, in his Seminar XX: Encore, states that "People have been talking about nothing else but love for a long time. Need I emphasize the fact that it is at the very heart of philosophical discourse" (Lacan, 1998: 39).

As shown in the quotation above, what is essential in this seminar is that masculinity and femininity are defined not in relation to the phallus but through the type of jouissance that is available in each position. Seminar XX presents a wide-ranging reflection on the nature of love, jouissance and the limits of knowledge. Sexual difference is significant here because, from a psychoanalytic perspective, following this statement, Lacan claims that the subject should be curious about the reality behind love so that he

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will see the relationship between Philip and Mildred has always been this way. Philip's desire to hurt himself becomes more evident when we see that he does not like to show that there are things about Mildred that hurt him. They always quarrel over things because they are different from each other. Mildred never feels guilty for her actions, which always hurts Philip.

On the other hand, Philip tries to suppress his feelings. Even though his heart is hurt, he pretends that there is nothing wrong with his feelings. He hides his real feelings in front of Mildred: By effort, he makes himself affable and entertaining; he never lets himself be angry,

"he never asked for anything, he never complained, he never scolded. When she made engagements and broke them, he met her next day with a smiling face; when she excused herself, he said it did not matter. He never let her see that she painted him. He understood that his passionate grief had wearied her, and he took care to hide every sentiment which could be in the least degree troublesome". (Bondage, p. 615)

According to the above quotation, Philip intentionally engages in situations where his sense of pride, humanity and self-esteem is challenged. When he can avoid Mildred and her bad temperament, he deliberately makes things worse to tease her, which finally led her anger and his final humiliation: "There was a devil within him which forced him to make matters worse. He wanted to hurt her as much as she was hurting him" (Bondage, p. 573). As a quotation above, when subjects cannot find the substitution object of *Love*, conflict arises. The process of chaining (taking the objects to replace the abstract condition of *Love*) can reduce the conflicts, although it is never fulfilled totally. For instance, the subject will not be allowed to see the meaningless life. Therefore, the subject must construct the meaning of objects to create the desire for the objects. The function of meaning to the objects is not simply to avoid ambiguity, but it also functions to keep the big Other existing; the object is not part of the signifying chain; it is a 'hole' in that chain. It is a hole in the field of representation, but it does not simply ruin representation. Like so many of Lacan's concepts, the paradox of *Desire* is that it functions retrospectively. The Lacanian subject is, therefore, constituted through two

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movements: the first corresponds to the process of alienation through language, and the second to the separation of desire. Lacan always refers to "the subject as arriving or having just arrived; as always too early or too late". There is never a point in time that the subject can be said to emerge as a stable and complete entity finally. "It emerges only fleetingly through a continuous process of subjectification – alienation and separation – rather than at a specific moment in time". Lacanian concept of alienation differs greatly from the ways that the term is employed in the Hegelian and Marxist traditions (as Jacques-Alain Miller points out; SeminarX1, P. 215). For Lacan, alienation is not an accident that befalls the subject and which can be transcended but an essential constitutive feature of the subject. The subject is fundamentally SPLIT, alienated from himself, and there is no escape from this division, no possibility of 'wholeness' or synthesis. Alienation is an inevitable consequence of the process by which the ego is constituted by identification with the counterpart: 'the initial synthesis of the ego is essentially an alter ego, it is alienated' (SeminarIII 39). Lacan states that the subject assumes its position within the symbolic order and is thus able to act. The subject is not simply determined by structure. To become a subject, one must take a position in relation to the desire of the Other. It is this element of choice that allows for the possibility of change beyond the inescapable determination of the symbolic. Lacan referred to this as the 'future anterior'– the future past. The subject makes a choice that will determine its future, but paradoxically, this is grounded on the indeterminateness of the unconscious and desire.

The subject is, in a sense, suspended between a 'subject-to-be' and the field of the Other, in a continuous hesitation in choice of opinions but never substantively present. Philip asks his friend Griffiths to have dinner with them so that Mildred may like his talk and be friendlier with him. Then, Mildred falls in love with Griffiths, and Philip can do nothing. Interestingly, instead of fighting Griffiths away as his rival in love, Philip masochistically gives them money to go on a holiday and enjoy their time. Such treatment then makes the masochist feel better than the other, as he can demonstrate how nice, generous, and pleasant he is in spite of the horrible behaviour of the other. He is a victim of the partner and can hate the partner for being so cruel when he is so good in return. The pain the other induces simultaneously accomplishes two things: Firstly, it

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allows the masochist to feel bad because his partner's treatment confirms that he really is as despicable as he believes deep down. Secondly, the pain brings pleasure because the masochist gets to demonstrate his goodness. The desire to hurt oneself to make the beloved happy is seen in many parts of the novel: "The desire to wound had been too strong for him. He had wanted to revenge himself for the pain and the humiliation he had endured. It was pride: it was folly too" (Bondage, p. 147). Lacan is cautious to distinguish between a "need" and "desire". A need such as hunger or thirst can be satisfied. *Desire*, on the other hand, refers to something beyond basic human needs that cannot be satisfied. *Desire* is at the very core of our being, and as such, it is essentially a relation to Lack; indeed, desire and lack are inextricably tied together. Lacan defines *Desire* as the remainder that arises from the subtraction of *need* from *demand*: *Desire* and the *Unconscious* are founded through the recognition of a fundamental lack: "the absence of the phallus".

In the final stages of their relationship, Philip feels more pity and sympathy than passionate love for Mildred and helps her out of humanity, not love. Nevertheless, throughout their long relationship, Philip is a desiring person whose desire is defined and determined by Mildred and her whimsical demands for materialistic mastery over Philip and his life. In his *Ethics*, Spinoza defines the concept of bondage as man's inability to have complete control over his actions and thoughts, and he suggests that even though a human being knows good and evil, certain faculties of "human nature might lead to false knowledge or imperfection in his/her actions." (Lacan et al. 54)

According to the quotation above, we can see that Philip himself enjoys being humiliated to show that he is superior to others. "phallus" is a signifier of sexual difference. In simple words, Mildred becomes an obsessive idea for Philip. His hunger for Mildred and his strong desire to have her are informed by his desperate longing for inner peace and freedom from self-contempt. Contrary to Freud, Lacan conceives the phallus not as the male organ but as the primordial signifier of completeness and full self-realization- it is the phallic signifier, after all, Lacan explains: There exists an intrinsic

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relationship between the subject of language and his object of desire which is represented in Lacan by the "formula of fantasy". In order to win her, Philip invites his friend Griffiths to amuse Mildred and soften her coldness towards her. However, instead, Mildred falls in love with Griffiths and hurts Philip even more.

Nevertheless, out of his masochistic desire for her, Philip unbelievably pays for Mildred's trip to France with Griffiths to prove how one's irrational desire may cause self-devotion. Afloat with his desire for Mildred and driven by his passionate love for her, Philip intensifies his pain by engaging more in pursuing his love of Mildred. Our analysis shows that he is bound to his inner conflict: he knows that Mildred causes him only humiliation and brings him no good except the gradual loss of identity and self-degradation. Lacan's version of the dialectic, which he borrows from Hegel, generates our discussion of the Name-of-the-Father and feminine sexuality. According to Hegel, selfhood emerges through a process of developing self-consciousness through the activity of self-reflection. For the human subject to emerge, it must not simply be conscious of its distinctiveness but must be recognized as a human subject by another. Hegel sketched out this process as the dialectic of 'Lordship and Bondage', more commonly known as the 'Master/Slave' dialectic. In this account, two subjects – a 'Master' and a 'Slave' – are apparently locked in a reciprocal relationship of recognition. In order for the Master to be a subject, he must be recognized by the enslaved person as such;

"in turn, the enslaved person knows he is enslaved because the Master recognizes him as one. The Master is thus free to pursue his life in the firm knowledge that the recognition of the enslaved person affirms his identity. The paradox of the dialectic, however, is that a positive always turns into a negative. Because the Master is dependent upon the enslaved person for the recognition of his identity, he can never be truly 'free'. In contrast, the enslaved person is not dependent on the Master in the same way because he has another source of self-affirmation: his work. The Enslaver and the enslaved person are locked within a struggle whereby one cannot do

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without the other, but at the same time, each is the other's worst enemy". (Lacan 1998b [1978]: 23)

It is this dialectic, according to Lacan, that permeates the imaginary. Moreover, this dialectic introduces into the psychological account of mirroring outlined above the element of aggressivity; that is to say, it posits the relationship between self and others as fundamentally conflictual. It was Hegel's great insight, contends Lacan, to reveal how "each human being is in the being of the other" (Lacan 1988b [1978]: 72).

As mentioned above, we are caught in a reciprocal dialectic of alienation. There are, however, two moments of alienation for Lacan: first, through the mirror phase and the formation of the ego, and second, through language and the constitution of the subject for escape (Introduction XVIII–XX). The struggle between Hegel's *enslaver* and the *enslaved* person determines the essential structuring element in Philip. Philip, the representative of the upper class, conflicts with the waiters Mildred and Christine. However, Philip's position in the upper class does not automatically make her a master. Mildred's behaviour reinforces Philip's superiority; her behaviour reinforces his position, in Hegel's argument, as an "unessential object", as an object with the impress and character of negation" (231). Psychoanalytic criticism builds on Freudian theories of psychology. To further enrich the analysis, Lacan's theory of *Love* and *Desire* was employed to provide a psychoanalytic examination of Philip's Carrey's bondage of love for Mildred, on the other hand, and his gradual loss of identity in his desire towards her, on the other. According to Lacan, desire is the baby's need for food, care, and attention. His mother demands specific responses from him in order to learn how to satisfy her desire. Desire is, therefore, a matter of significant interrelationship; desire is always the desire of the other. In this process, desire can be recognized but never satisfied by an actual object. The woman, like the page, is seen as empty, lacking desire, according to male rules, but never the desiring subject. In order to "(re)construct" desire, a woman has to inscribe herself in the Lacanian context of the imaginary, discovering the relationship between the "ego" and the images that construct the subject.

4. Conclusion

It is argued in the present study that Philip desires his mistress to such an extent that he fails to develop his own independent identity, which contributes to his self-

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deterioration. This is a hazardous situation for him since he finds out that he plays no role in satisfying his desire. In simple words, Philip has no autonomous and self-regulated desire of his own because his desire is initially driven by the intense passion to make Mildred happy and satisfied. Thus, Philip's ultimate goal in life is to have Mildred, and he thinks that the way to win her heart is to eliminate all his subjective desires for Mildred. Based on Lacanian's theory of desire, it is argued that Philip is the victim of his blind love for Mildred, which is formed on the basis of a wrong perception of Mildred as the ultimate object of his desire. Philip mistakenly believes that Mildred is his ideal source of happiness for him. Philip realizes that Mildred is not his type and that he will never experience happiness with her.

Interestingly, he is unable to leave her and get back to lovely Norah, who will always receive him with a kind heart. The reason is the unquenchable desire that drives him into selflessness. The title of the novel, *Of Human Bondage*, is, in fact, a reference to Philip's bond to his desire towards unlovely Mildred, who brings him nothing other than misery. Philip's desire towards Mildred is somehow masochistic. Philip enormously suffers from a sense of self-contempt because of his club foot and his need for true love from others, which is denied to him in the vicarage and the boarding school. This makes him helpless while encountering other people and makes him hurt himself when he comes across a more assertive personality. Early in his relationship with Mildred, Philip understands that he does not deserve his love, but he wants to continue the relationship because he wants to hurt her and himself. Philip hates himself for his lack of self-confidence to defend himself when downgraded by other people, at school, at an art gallery or anywhere in society. Mildred gives him the same sense of contempt that he used to experience in the past. Mildred increases his suffering and adds to his inner conflict of self-contempt and self-acceptance. The desire for her is motivated by the idea that if he can make himself accepted by Mildred, he can come to terms with his contempt for himself and prove himself to others as an acceptable person.

In simple words, Mildred becomes an obsessive idea for Philip. His hunger for Mildred and his strong desire to have her are informed by his desperate longing for inner peace from self-contempt. In order to win her, Philip invites his friend Griffiths to amuse Mildred and soften her coldness towards her. However, instead, Mildred falls in

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love with Griffiths and hurts Philip even more. Nevertheless, out of his masochistic desire for her, Philip unbelievably pays for Mildred's trip to France with Griffiths to prove how one's irrational desire may cause self-destruction. Afloat with his desire for Mildred and driven by his passionate love for her, Philip intensifies his pain by engaging more in pursuing his love of Mildred. Our analysis shows that Philip is bound to his inner conflict. He knows that Mildred causes him only humiliation and brings him no good except gradual loss of identity and self-degradation.

On the other hand, he cannot convince himself to leave her and pursue his plans to be a doctor and actualize his real identity. This inner conflict is resolved only when he stops loving Mildred and forgets her. The interesting thing about Philip is that he finally abandons the love of Mildred but can never truly get rid of his desire towards her until she leaves him forever.

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