The Psychic Life of Power

Theories in Subjection

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of recoil. Conscience is thus figured as a body which takes itself as its object, forced into a permanent posture of negative narcissism or, more precisely, a narcissistically nourished self-beratement (then, mistakenly, identified with a narcissistic stage).

Consider—as a parting shot—how the contemporary efforts to regulate homosexuality within the U.S. military are themselves the regulatory formation of the masculine subject, one who consecrates his identity through renunciation as an act of speech: to say “I am a homosexual” is fine as long as one also promises “and I don’t intend to act.” This, the suppression and sustaining of homosexuality in and through the circular posture by which a body utters its own renunciation, accedes to its regulation through the promise. But that performative utterance, however compelled, will be subject to infelicity, to speaking otherwise, to reciting only half the sentence, deforming the promise, reformulating the confession as defiance, remaining silent. This opposition will draw from and oppose the power by which it is compelled, and this short circuiting of regulatory power constitutes the possibility of a postmoral gesture toward a less regular freedom, one that from the perspective of a less codifiable set of values calls into question the values of morality.

My problem is essentially the definition of the implicit systems in which we find ourselves prisoners; what I would like to grasp is the system of limits and exclusion which we practice without knowing it; I would like to make the cultural unconscious apparent.

—Foucault, “Rituals of Exclusion”

Consider, in Discipline and Punish, the paradoxical character of what Foucault describes as the subjectivation of the prisoner. The term “subjectivation” carries the paradox in itself: assujettissement denotes both the becoming of the subject and the process of subjection—one inhabits the figure of autonomy only by becoming subjected to a power, a subjection which implies a radical dependency. For Foucault, this process of subjectivation takes place centrally through the body. In Discipline and Punish the prisoner’s body not only appears as a sign of guilt and transgression, as the embodiment of prohibition and the sanction for rituals of normalization, but is
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framed and formed through the discursive matrix of a juridical subject. The claim that a discourse “forms” the body is no simple one, and from the start we must distinguish how such “forming” is not the same as a “causing” or “determining,” still less is it a notion that bodies are somehow made of discourse pure and simple.1

Foucault suggests that the prisoner is not regulated by an exterior relation of power, whereby an institution takes a pre-given individual as the target of its subordinating aims. On the contrary, the individual is formed or, rather, formulated through his discursively constituted “identity” as prisoner. Subjection is, literally, the making of a subject, the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced. Such subjection is a kind of power that not only unilaterally acts on a given individual as a form of domination, but also actuates or forms the subject. Hence, subjection is neither simply the domination of a subject nor its production, but designates a certain kind of restriction in production, a restriction without which the production of the subject cannot take place, a restriction through which that production takes place. Although Foucault occasionally tries to argue that historically juridical power—power acting on, subordinating, pre-given subjects—precedes productive power, the capacity of power to form subjects, with the prisoner it is clear that the subject produced and the subject regulated or subordinated are one, and that compulsory production is its own form of regulation.

Foucault warns against those within the liberal tradition who would liberate the prisoner from the prison’s oppressive confines, for the subjection signified by the exterior institution of the prison does not act apart from the invasion and management of the prisoner’s body: what Foucault describes as the full siege and invasion of that body by the signifying practices of the prison—namely, inspection, confession, the regularization and normalization of bodily movement and gesture, the disciplinary regimes of the body which have led feminists to consult Foucault in order to elaborate the disciplinary production of gender. The prison thus acts on the prisoner’s body, but it does so by forcing the prisoner to approximate an ideal, a norm of behavior, a model of obedience. This is how the prisoner’s individuality is rendered coherent, totalized, made into the discursive and conceptual possession of the prison; it is, as Foucault insists, the way in which “he becomes the principle of his own subjection.”2 This normative ideal inculcated, as it were, into the prisoner is a kind of psychic identity, or what Foucault will call a “soul.” Because the soul is an imprisoning effect, Foucault claims that the prisoner is subjected “in a more fundamental way” than by the spatial captivity of the prison. Indeed, in the citation that follows, the soul is figured as itself a kind of spatial captivity, indeed, as a kind of prison, which provides the exterior form or regulatory principle of the prisoner’s body. This becomes clear in Foucault’s formulation that “the man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection [assujettissement] much more profound than himself . . . the soul is the prison of the body” (30).

Although Foucault is specifying the subjectivation of the prisoner here, he appears also to be privileging the metaphor of the prison to theorize the subjectivation of the body. What are we to make of imprisonment and invasion as the privileged figures through which Foucault articulates the process of subjectivation, the discursive production of identities? If discourse produces identity by supplying and enforcing a regulatory principle which thoroughly invades, totalizes,
and renders coherent the individual, then it seems that every "identity," insofar as it is totalizing, acts as precisely such a "soul that imprisons the body." In what sense is this soul "much more profound" than the prisoner himself? Does this mean that the soul preexists the body that animates it? How are we to understand such a claim in the context of Foucault's theory of power?

Rather than answer that question directly, one might for the purposes of clarification counterpose the "soul," which Foucault articulates as an imprisoning frame, to the psyche in the psychoanalytic sense. In the psyche, the subject's ideal corresponds to the ego-ideal, which the super-ego is said to consult, as it were, in order to measure the ego. Lacan redescribes this ideal as the "position" of the subject within the symbolic, the norm that installs the subject within language and hence within available schemes of cultural intelligibility. This viable and intelligible being, this subject, is always produced at a cost, and whatever resists the normative demand by which subjects are instituted remains unconscious. Thus the psyche, which includes the unconscious, is very different from the subject: the psyche is precisely what exceeds the imprisoning effects of the discursive demand to inhabit a coherent identity, to become a coherent subject. The psyche is what resists the regularization that Foucault ascribes to normalizing discourses. Those discourses are said to imprison the body in the soul, to animate and contain the body within that ideal frame, and to that extent reduce the notion of the psyche to the operations of an externally framing and normalizing ideal. This Foucaultian move appears to treat the psyche as if it received unilaterally the effect of the Lacanian symbolic. The transposition of the soul into an exterior and imprisoning frame for the body vacates, as it were, the interiority of the body, leaving that interiority as a malleable surface for the unilateral effects of disciplinary power.

I am in part moving toward a psychoanalytic criticism of Foucault, for I think that one cannot account for subjectivation and, in particular, becoming the principle of one's own subjection without recourse to a psychoanalytic account of the formative or generative effects of restriction or prohibition. Moreover, the formation of the subject cannot fully be thought—if it ever can be—without recourse to a paradoxically enabling set of grounding constraints. Yet as I elaborate this critique, some romanticized notions of the unconscious defined as necessary resistance will come under critical scrutiny, and that criticism will entail the reemergence of a Foucaultian perspective within psychoanalysis. The question of a suppressed psychoanalysis in Foucault—raised by Foucault himself in the reference to a "cultural unconscious" quoted in the epigraph to this chapter—might be raised more precisely as the problem of locating or accounting for resistance. Where does resistance to or in disciplinary subject formation take place? Does the reduction of the psychoanalytically rich notion of the psyche to that of the imprisoning soul eliminate the possibility of resistance to normalization and to subject formation, a resistance that emerges precisely from the incommensurability between psyche and subject? How would we understand such resistance, and would such an understanding entail a critical rethinking of psychoanalysis along the way?

In what follows, I will ask two different kinds of questions, one of Foucault, and another of psychoanalysis (applying this term variously to Freud and to Lacan). First, if Foucault understands the psyche to be an imprisoning effect in the service of normalization, then how might he account for psychic resistance to normalization? Second, when some proponents
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of psychoanalysis insist that resistance to normalization is a function of the unconscious, is this guarantee of psychic resistance merely sleight of hand? More precisely, is the resistance upon which psychoanalysis insists socially and discursively produced, or is it a kind of resistance to, an undermining of, social and discursive production as such? Consider the claim that the unconscious only and always resists normalization, that every ritual of conformity to the injunctions of civilization comes at a cost, and that a certain unharnessed and unsocialized remainder is thereby produced, which contests the appearance of the law-abiding subject. This psychic remainder signifies the limits of normalization. That position does not imply that such resistance wields the power to rework or rearticulate the terms of discursive demand, the disciplinary injunctions by which normalization occurs. To thwart the injunction to produce a docile body is not the same as dismantling the injunction or changing the terms of subject constitution. If the unconscious, or the psyche more generally, is defined as resistance, what do we then make of unconscious attachments to subjection, which imply that the unconscious is no more free of normalizing discourse than the subject? If the unconscious escapes from a given normative injunction, to what other injunction does it form an attachment? What makes us think that the unconscious is any less structured by the power relations that pervade cultural signifiers than is the language of the subject? If we find an attachment to subjection at the level of the unconscious, what kind of resistance is to be wrought from that?

Even if we grant that unconscious resistance to a normalizing injunction guarantees the failure of that injunction fully to constitute its subject, does such resistance do anything to alter or expand the dominant injunctions or interpellations of subject formation? What do we make of a resistance that can only undermine, but which appears to have no power to rearticulate the terms, the symbolic terms—to use Lacanian parlance—by which subjects are constituted, by which subjection is installed in the very formation of the subject? This resistance establishes the incomplete character of any effort to produce a subject by disciplinary means, but it remains unable to rearticulate the dominant terms of productive power.

Before continuing this interrogation of psychoanalysis, however, let us return to the problem of bodies in Foucault. How and why is resistance denied to bodies produced through disciplinary regimes? What is this notion of disciplinary production, and does it work as efficaciously as Foucault appears to imply? In the final chapter of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault calls for a “history of bodies” which would inquire into “the manner in which what is most material and vital in them has been invested.”

In this formulation, he suggests that power acts not only on the body but also in the body, that power not only produces the boundaries of a subject but pervades the interiority of that subject. In the last formulation, it appears that there is an “inside” to the body which exists before power’s invasion. But given the radical exteriority of the soul, how are we to understand “interiority” in Foucault? That interiority will not be a soul, and it will not be a psyche, but what will it be? Is this a space of pure malleability, one which is, as it were, ready to conform to the demands of socialization? Or is this interiority to be called, simply, the body? Has it come to the paradoxical point where Foucault wants to claim that the soul is the exterior form, and the body the interior space?

Although Foucault wants on occasion to refute the possibility of a body which is not produced through power relations, sometimes his explanations require a body to maintain a
materiality ontologically distinct from the power relations that take it as a site of investment. Indeed, the term "site" seemingly appears in this phrase without warrant, for what is the relation between the body as site and the investments which that site is said to receive or bear? Does the term "site" stabilize the body in relation to those investments, while deflecting the question of how investments establish, contour, and disrupt what the phrase takes for granted as the body's "site" (i.e., does the term "site" deflect the project of Lacan's "mirror stage")? What constitutes an "investment," and what is its constituting power? Does it have a visualizing function, and can we understand the production of the bodily ego in Freud as the projected or spatialized modality of such investments? Indeed, to what extent is the body's site stabilized through a certain projective instability, one which Foucault cannot quite describe and which would perhaps engage him in the problematic of the ego as an imaginary function?

*Discipline and Punish* offers a different configuration of the relation between materiality and investment. There the soul is taken to be an instrument of power through which the body is cultivated and formed. In a sense, it acts as a power-laden schema that produces and actualizes the body. We can understand Foucault's references to the soul as an implicit reworking of the Aristotelian formulation in which the soul is understood to be the form and principle of the body's matter. Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* that the soul becomes a normative and normalizing ideal according to which the body is trained, shaped, cultivated, and invested; it is a historically specific imaginary ideal (idéal speculatif) under which the body is materialized.

This "subjection" or *assujettissement* is not only a subordination but a securing and maintaining, a putting into place of a subject, a subjectivation. The "soul brings [the prisoner] to existence"; not unlike in Aristotle, the soul, as an instrument of power, forms and frames the body, stamps it, and in stamping it, brings it into being. In this formulation, there is no body outside of power, for the materiality of the body—indeed, materiality itself—is produced by and in direct relation to the investment of power. The materiality of the prison, Foucault writes, is established to the extent that (dans la mesure ou) it is a vector and instrument of power. Hence, the prison is materialized to the extent that it is invested with power. To be grammatically accurate, there is no prison prior to its materialization; its materialization is coextensive with its investiture with power relations; and materiality is the effect and gauge of this investment. The prison comes to be only within the field of power relations, more specifically, only to the extent that it is saturated with such relations and that such a saturation is formative of its very being. Here the body—of the prisoner and of the prison—is not an independent materiality, a static surface or site, which a subsequent investment comes to mark, signify upon, or pervade; the body is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive.

Although the soul is understood to frame the body in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault suggests that the production of the "subject" takes place to some degree through the subordination and even destruction of the body. In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault remarks that only through the destruction of the body does the subject as a "dissociated unity" appear: "the body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas), the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration." The subject appears at the expense of the body, an appearance conditioned in inverse re-

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ation to the disappearance of the body. The subject not only effectively takes the place of the body but acts as the soul which frames and forms the body in captivity. Here the forming and framing function of that exterior soul works against the body; indeed, it might be understood as the sublimation of the body in consequence of displacement and substitution.

In thus redescribing the body in Foucault, I have clearly wandered into a psychoanalytic vocabulary of sublimation. While there, let me pose a question to return to the issue of subjection and resistance. If the body is subordinated and to some extent destroyed as the dissociated self emerges, and if that emergence might be read as the sublimation of the body and the self be read as the body’s ghostly form, then is there some part of the body which is not preserved in sublimation, some part of the body which remains unsublimated?

This bodily remainder, I would suggest, survives for such a subject in the mode of already, if not always, having been destroyed, in a kind of constitutive loss. The body is not a site on which a construction takes place; it is a destruction on the occasion of which a subject is formed. The formation of this subject is at once the framing, subordination, and regulation of the body, and the mode in which that destruction is preserved (in the sense of sustained and embalmed) in normalization.

If, then, the body is now to be understood as that which not only constitutes the subject in its dissociated and sublimated state, but also exceeds or resists any effort at sublimation, how are we to understand this body that is, as it were, negated or repressed so that the subject might live? One might expect the body to return in a non-normalizable wildness, and there are of course moments in Foucault when something like that happens. But more often than not, in Foucault the possibility of subversion or resistance appears (a) in the course of a sub-

jectivation that exceeds the normalizing aims by which it is mobilized, for example, in “reverse-discourse,” or (b) through convergence with other discursive regimes, whereby inadvertently produced discursive complexity undermines the teleological aims of normalization. Thus resistance appears as the effect of power, as a part of power, its self-subversion.

In the theorization of resistance, a certain problem arises which concerns psychoanalysis and, by implication, the limits of subjectivation. For Foucault, the subject who is produced through subjection is not produced at an instant in its totality. Instead, it is in the process of being produced, it is repeatedly produced (which is not the same as being produced anew again and again). It is precisely the possibility of a repetition which does not consolidate that dissociated unity, the subject, but which proliferates effects which undermine the force of normalization. The term which not only names, but forms and frames the subject—let us use Foucault’s example of homosexuality—mobilizes a reverse discourse against the very regime of normalization by which it is spawned. This is, of course, not a pure opposition, for the same “homosexuality” will be deployed first in the service of normalizing heterosexuality and second in the service of its own depathologization. This term will carry the risk of the former meaning in the latter, but it would be a mistake to think that simply by speaking the term one either transcends heterosexual normalization or becomes its instrument.

The risk of renormalization is persistently there: consider the one who in defiant “outness” declares his/her homosexuality only to receive the response, “Ah yes, so you are that, and only that.” Whatever you say will be read back as an overt or subtle manifestation of your essential homosexuality. (One should not underestimate how exhausting it is to be expected
to be an "out" homosexual all the time, whether the expectation comes from gay and lesbian allies or their foes.) Here Foucault cites and reworks the possibility of resignification, of mobilizing politically what Nietzsche, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, called the "sign chain." There Nietzsche argues that the uses to which a given sign is originally put are "worlds apart" from the uses to which it then becomes available. This temporal gap between usages produces the possibility of a reversal of signification, but also opens the way for an inauguration of signifying possibilities that exceed those to which the term has been previously bound.

The Foucaultian subject is never fully constituted in subjection, then; it is repeatedly constituted in subjection, and it is in the possibility of a repetition that repeats against its origin that subjection might be understood to draw its inadvertently enabling power. From a psychoanalytic perspective, however, we might ask whether this possibility of resistance to a constituting or subjectivating power can be derived from what is "in" or "of" discourse. What can we make of the way in which discourses not only constitute the domains of the speakable, but are themselves bounded through the production of a constitutive outside: the unspeakable, the unsignifiable?

From a Lacanian perspective, one might well question whether the effects of the psyche can be said to be exhausted in what can be signified or whether there is not, over and against this signifying body, a domain of the psyche which contests legibility. If, according to psychoanalysis, the subject is not the same as the psyche from which it emerges and if, for Foucault, the subject is not the same as the body from which it emerges, then perhaps the body has come to substitute for the psyche in Foucault—that is, as that which exceeds and confounds the injunctions of normalization. Is this a body pure and simple, or does "the body" come to stand for a certain operation of the psyche, one which is distinctly different, if not directly opposed to, the soul figured as an imprisoning effect? Perhaps Foucault himself has invested the body with a psychic meaning that he cannot elaborate within the terms that he uses. How does the process of subjectivation, the disciplinary production of the subject, break down, if it does, in both Foucaultian and psychoanalytic theory? Whence does that failure emerge, and what are its consequences?

Consider the Althusserian notion of interpellation, in which a subject is constituted by being hailed, addressed, named. For the most part, it seems, Althusser believed that this social demand—one might call it a symbolic injunction—actually produced the kinds of subjects it named. He gives the example of the policeman on the street yelling "Hey you there!," and concludes that this call importantly constitutes the one it addresses and sites. The scene is clearly a disciplinary one; the policeman's call is an effort to bring someone back in line. Yet we might also understand it in Lacanian terms as the call of symbolic constitution. As Althusser himself insists, this performative effort of naming can only attempt to bring its addressee into being: there is always the risk of a certain misrecognition. If one misrecognizes that effort to produce the subject, the production itself falters. The one who is hailed may fail to hear, misread the call, turn the other way, answer to another name, insist on not being addressed in that way. Indeed, the domain of the imaginary is demarcated by Althusser as precisely the domain that makes misrecognition possible. The name is called, and I am sure it is my name, but it isn't. The name is called, and I am sure that a name is being called, my name, but it is in someone's incomprehensible speech, or worse, it is someone coughing, or worse, a radiator which for a moment
approximates a human voice. Or I am sure that no one has noticed my transgression, and that it is not my name that is being called, but only a coughing passerby, the high pitch of the heating mechanism—but it is my name, and yet I do not recognize myself in the subject that the name, at this moment, installs.\(^{16}\)

Consider the force of this dynamic of interpellation and misrecognition when the name is not a proper name but a social category,\(^{17}\) and hence a signifier capable of being interpreted in a number of divergent and conflictual ways. To be hailed as a “woman” or “Jew” or “queer” or “Black” or “Chicana” may be heard or interpreted as an affirmation or an insult, depending on the context in which the hailing occurs (where context is the effective historicity and spatiality of the sign). If that name is called, there is more often than not some hesitation about whether or how to respond, for what is at stake is whether the temporary totalization performed by the name is politically enabling or paralyzing, whether the foreclosure, indeed the violence, of the totalizing reduction of identity performed by that particular hailing is politically strategic or regressive or, if paralyzing and regressive, also enabling in some way.

The Althusserian use of Lacan centers on the function of the imaginary as the permanent possibility of misrecognition, that is, the incommensurability between symbolic demand (the name that is interpellated) and the instability and unpredictability of its appropriation. If the interpellated name seeks to accomplish the identity to which it refers, it begins as a performative process which is nevertheless derailed in the imaginary, for the imaginary is surely preoccupied with the law, structured by the law, but does not immediately obey the law. For the Lacanian, then, the imaginary signifies the impossibility of the discursive—that is, symbolic—constitution of identity. Identity can never be fully totalized by the symbolic, for what it fails to order will emerge within the imaginary as a disorder, a site where identity is contested.

Hence, in a Lacanian vein, Jacqueline Rose formulates the unconscious as that which thwarts any effort of the symbolic to constitute sexed identity coherently and fully, an unconscious indicated by the slips and gaps that characterize the workings of the imaginary in language. I quote a passage which has benefitted many of us who have sought to find in psychoanalysis a principle of resistance to given forms of social reality:

The unconscious constantly reveals the “failure” of identity. Because there is no continuity of psychic life, so there is no stability of sexual identity, no position for women (or for men) which is ever simply achieved. Nor does psychoanalysis see such “failure” as a special-case inability or an individual deviancy from the norm. “Failure” is not a moment to be regretted in a process of adaptation, or development into normality, ... “failure” is something endlessly repeated and relived moment by moment throughout our individual histories. It appears not only in the symptom, but also in dreams, in slips of the tongue and in forms of sexual pleasure which are pushed to the sidelines of the norm, ... there is a resistance to identity at the very heart of psychic life.\(^{18}\)

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault presumes the efficacy of the symbolic demand, its performative capacity to constitute the subject whom it names. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, however, there is both a rejection of “a single locus of Revolt”—which would presumably include the psyche, the imaginary, or the unconscious within its purview—and an affirmation of multiple possibilities of resistance enabled by power itself. For Foucault, resistance cannot be outside the law
in another register (the imaginary) or in that which eludes the constitutive power of the law.

there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. But this does not mean that they are only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat.

This last caricature of power, although clearly written with Marcuse in mind, recalls the effect of the Lacanian law, which produces its own “failure” at the level of the psyche, but which can never be displaced or reformulated by that psychic resistance. The imaginary thwarts the efficacy of the symbolic law but cannot turn back upon the law, demanding or effecting its reformulation. In this sense, psychic resistance thwarts the law in its effects, but cannot redirect the law or its effects. Resistance is thus located in a domain that is virtually powerless to alter the law that it opposes. Hence, psychic resistance preserves the continuation of the law in its anterior, symbolic form and, in that sense, contributes to its status quo. In such a view, resistance appears doomed to perpetual defeat.

In contrast, Foucault formulates resistance as an effect of the very power that it is said to oppose. This insistence on the dual possibility of being both constituted by the law and an effect of resistance to the law marks a departure from the Lacanian framework, for where Lacan restricts the notion of social power to the symbolic domain and delegates resistance to the imaginary, Foucault recasts the symbolic as relations of power and understands resistance as an effect of power. Foucault’s conception initiates a shift from a discourse on law, conceived as juridical (and presupposing a subject subordinated by power), to a discourse on power, which is a field of productive, regulatory, and contestatory relations. For Foucault, the symbolic produces the possibility of its own subversions, and these subversions are unanticipated effects of symbolic interpellations.

The notion of “the symbolic” does not address the multiplicity of power vectors upon which Foucault insists, for power in Foucault not only consists in the reiterated elaboration of norms or interpelling demands, but is formative or productive, malleable, multiple, proliferative, and conflictual. Moreover, in its resignifications, the law itself is transmuted into that which opposes and exceeds its original purposes. In this sense, disciplinary discourse does not unilaterally constitute a subject in Foucault, or rather, if it does, it simultaneously constitutes the condition for the subject’s de-constitution. What is brought into being through the performative effect of the interpelling demand is much more than a “subject,” for the “subject” created is not for that reason fixed in place: it becomes the occasion for a further making. Indeed, I would add, a subject only remains a subject through a reiteration or rearticulation of itself as a subject, and this dependency of the subject on repetition for coherence may constitute that subject’s incoherence, its incomplete character. This repetition or, better, iterability thus becomes the non-place of subversion, the possibility of a re-embodying of the subjectivating norm that can redirect its normativity.

Consider the inversions of “woman” and “woman,” depending on the staging and address of their performance, of “queer” and “queer,” depending on pathologizing or contes-
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Subversory modes. Both examples concern, not an opposition between reactionary and progressive usage, but rather a progressive usage that requires and repeats the reactionary in order to effect a subversive reterritorialization. For Foucault, then, the disciplinary apparatus produces subjects, but as a consequence of that production, it brings into discourse the conditions for subverting that apparatus itself. In other words, the law turns against itself and spawns versions of itself which oppose and proliferate its animating purposes. The strategic question for Foucault is, then, how can we work the power relations by which we are worked, and in what direction?

In his later interviews, Foucault suggests that identities are formed within contemporary political arrangements in relation to certain requirements of the liberal state, ones which presume that the assertion of rights and claims to entitlement can only be made on the basis of a singular and injured identity. The more specific identities become, the more totalized an identity becomes by that very specificity. Indeed, we might understand this contemporary phenomenon as the movement by which a juridical apparatus produces the field of possible political subjects. Because for Foucault the disciplinary apparatus of the state operates through the totalizing production of individuals, and because this totalization of the individual extends the jurisdiction of the state (i.e., by transforming individuals into subjects of the state), Foucault will call for a remaking of subjectivity beyond the shackles of the juridical law. In this sense, what we call identity politics is produced by a state which can only allocate recognition and rights to subjects totalized by the particularity that constitutes their plaintiff status. In calling for an overthrow, as it were, of such an arrangement, Foucault is not calling for the release of a hidden or repressed subjectivity, but rather, for a radical making of subjectivity formed in and against the historical hegemony of the juridical subject:

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political “double bind,” which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. . . . The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate us both from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us from the state and the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.

Two sets of questions emerge from the above analysis. First, why can Foucault formulate resistance in relation to the disciplinary power of sexuality in *The History of Sexuality*, whereas in *Discipline and Punish* disciplinary power appears to determine docile bodies incapable of resistance? Is there something about the relationship of sexuality to power that conditions the possibility of resistance in the first text, and a noted absence of a consideration of sexuality from the discussion of power and bodies in the second? Note that in the *History of Sexuality* the repressive function of the law is undermined precisely through becoming itself the object of erotic investment and excitation. Disciplinary apparatus fails to repress sexuality precisely because the apparatus is itself eroticized, becoming the occasion for the *incitement of sexuality* and, therefore, undoing its own repressive aims.

Second, with this transferable property of sexual investments in mind, we might ask what conditions the possibility Foucault invites, that of refusing the type of individuality correlated with the disciplinary apparatus of the modern state?
And how do we account for attachment to precisely the kind of state-linked individuality that reconsolidates the juridical law? To what extent has the disciplinary apparatus that attempts to produce and totalize identity become an abiding object of passionate attachment? We cannot simply throw off the identities we have become, and Foucault’s call to “refuse” those identities will certainly be met with resistance. If we reject theoretically the source of resistance in a psychic domain that is said to precede or exceed the social, as we must, can we reformulate psychic resistance in terms of the social without that reformulation becoming a domestication or normalization? (Must the social always be equated with the given and the normalizable?) In particular, how are we to understand, not merely the disciplinary production of the subject, but the disciplinary cultivation of an attachment to subjection?

Such a postulation may raise the question of masochism—indeed, the question of masochism in subject-formation—yet it does not answer the question of the status of “attachment” or “investment.” Here emerges the grammatical problem by which an attachment appears to precede the subject who might be said to “have” it. Yet it seems crucial to suspend the usual grammatical requirements and consider an inversion of terms such that certain attachments precede and condition the formation of subjects (the visualization of libido in the mirror stage, the sustaining of that projected image through time as the discursive function of the name). Is this then an ontology of libido or investment that is in some sense prior to and separable from a subject, or is every such investment from the start bound up with a reflexivity that is stabilized (within the imaginary) as the ego? If the ego is composed of identifications, and identification is the resolution of desire, then the ego is the residue of desire, the effect of incorporations which, Freud argues in *The Ego and the Id*, trace a lineage of attachment and loss.

In Freud’s view, the formation of conscience enacts an attachment to prohibition which founds the subject in its reflexivity. Under the pressure of the ethical law, a subject emerges who is capable of reflexivity, that is, who takes him/herself as an object, and so mistakes him/herself, since he/she is, by virtue of that founding prohibition, at an infinite distance from his/her origin. Only on the condition of a separation enforced through prohibition does a subject emerge, formed through the attachment to prohibition (in obedience to it, but also eroticizing it). And this prohibition is all the more savory precisely because it is bound up in the narcissistic circuit that wards off the dissolution of the subject into psychosis.

For Foucault, a subject is formed and then invested with a sexuality by a regime of power. If the very process of subject-formation, however, requires a preemption of sexuality, a founding prohibition that prohibits a certain desire but itself becomes a focus of desire, then a subject is formed through the prohibition of a sexuality, a prohibition that at the same time forms this sexuality—and the subject who is said to bear it. This view disputes the Foucaultian notion that psychoanalysis presumes the exteriority of the law to desire, for it maintains that there is no desire without the law that forms and sustains the very desire it prohibits. Indeed, prohibition becomes an odd form of preservation, a way of eroticizing the law that would abolish eroticism, but which only works by compelling eroticization. In this sense, a “sexual identity” is a productive contradiction in terms, for identity is formed through a prohibition on some dimension of the very sexuality it is said to
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bear, and sexuality, when it is tied to identity, is always in some sense undercutting itself.

This is not necessarily a static contradiction, for the signifiers of identity are not structurally determined in advance. If Foucault could argue that a sign could be taken up, used for purposes counter to those for which it was designed, then he understood that even the most noxious terms could be owned, that the most injurious interpellations could also be the site of radical reoccupation and resignification. But what lets us occupy the discursive site of injury? How are we animated and mobilized by that discursive site and its injury, such that our very attachment to it becomes the condition for our resignification of it? Called by an injurious name, I come into social being, and because I have a certain inevitable attachment to my existence, because a certain narcissism takes hold of any term that confers existence, I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially. The self-colonizing trajectory of certain forms of identity politics are symptomatic of this paradoxical embrace of the injurious term. As a further paradox, then, only by occupying—being occupied by—that injurious term can I resist and oppose it, recasting the power that constitutes me as the power I oppose. In this way, a certain place for psychoanalysis is secured in that any mobilization against subjection will take subjection as its resource, and that attachment to an injurious interpellation will, by way of a necessarily alienated narcissism, become the condition under which resignifying that interpellation becomes possible. This will not be an unconscious outside of power, but rather something like the unconscious of power itself, in its traumatic and productive iterability.

If, then, we understand certain kinds of interpellations to confer identity, those injurious interpellations will constitute identity through injury. This is not the same as saying that such an identity will remain always and forever rooted in its injury as long as it remains an identity, but it does imply that the possibilities of resignification will rework and unsettle the passionate attachment to subjection without which subject formation—and re-formation—cannot succeed.
Notes to Pages 84–89

CHAPTER 3

NOTE: This essay was previously published in John Rajchman, ed., The Question of Identity (New York: Routledge, 1995).


4. It is important to distinguish between the notion of the psyche, which includes the notion of the unconscious, and that of the subject, whose formation is conditioned by the exclusion of the unconscious.


6. This is not to suggest that psychoanalysis is only to be represented by these two figures, although in this analysis it will be.


8. This question is raised in a different way by Charles Taylor when he asks whether there is a place for Augustinian “inwardness” in Foucault; see his “Foucault on Freedom and Truth,” in David Couzens Hoy, ed., Foucault: A Critical Reader (New York: Blackwell, 1986), p. 99.

It is also taken up in an interesting way by William Connolly in his The Augustinian Imperative (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Press, 1993).


11. For a fuller explanation of Foucault’s reworking of Aristotle, see “Bodies that Matter” in my Bodies that Matter, pp. 32–36.

12. “What was at issue was not whether the prison environment was too harsh or too aseptic, too primitive or too efficient, but its very materiality as an instrument and vector of power,” Discipline and Punish, p. 30; Surveiller et punir, p. 35.


16. For an excellent book that appropriates this Althusserian problematic for feminism, see Denise Riley, “Am I That Name?”: Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).


22. In the above, the terms "attachment" and "investment" might be understood as intentional in the phenomenological sense, that is, as libidinal movements or trajectories which always take an object. There is no free-floating attachment which subsequently takes an object; rather, an attachment is always an attachment to an object, where that to which it is attached alters the attachment itself. The transferability of attachment presupposes that the object to which an attachment is made may change, but that the attachment will persist and will always take some object, and that this action of binding to (tied always to a certain warding off) is the constitutive action of attachment. This notion of attachment seems close to certain efforts to account for drives in non-biologicist terms (to be distinguished from efforts that take the biological seriously). Here one might seek recourse to Gilles Deleuze's reading of drives in *Masochism: An Interpretation of Coldness and Cruelty* (New York: Braziller, 1971; *Présentation de Sacher-Masoch* [Paris: Minuit, 1967]), in which he suggests that drives may be understood as the pulsionality of positing or valuation. See also Jean Laplanche's recent discussions in which "the drive" becomes indissociable from its cultural articulation: "we think it necessary to conceive of a dual expository stage: on the one hand, the preliminary stage of an organism that is bound to homeostasis and self-preservation, and, on the other hand, the stage of the adult cultural world in which the infant is immediately and completely immersed," Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation, Drives, ed. John Fletcher and Martin Stanton (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1992), p. 187.

**CHAPTER 4**

2. I thank Hayden White for this suggestion.
3. Nietzsche distinguishes between conscience and bad conscience in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, linking the first with the capacity to promise and the second to the problem of internalization and of debt. The distinction appears not to be sustained, as it becomes apparent that the being who promises can only stand for his/her future by first becoming regular, that is, by internalizing the law or, to be precise, "burning it into the will." Internalization, introduced in the second essay, section 16, involves the turning of the will (or instincts) against itself. In section fifteen, Nietzsche introduces freedom as that which turns against itself in the making of bad conscience: "This instinct for freedom forcibly made latent . . . this instinct for freedom pushed back and repressed, incarcerated within and finally able to discharge and vent itself only on itself: that, and that alone, is what the bad conscience is in its beginnings" (Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale [New York: Random House, 1967], p. 87).


5. Althusser implicates his own writing in the version of ideological interpellation that he explains: "it is essential to realize that both he who is writing these lines and the reader who reads them are themselves subjects, and therefore ideological subjects (a tautological proposition, i.e. that the author and the reader of these lines both live 'spontaneously' or 'naturally' in ideology)" (ibid., p. 171; p. 110). In this remark, Althusser presumes the authoritative capacities of the voice and insists that his writing, to the extent that it is ideological, addresses its reader as would a voice.

6. Ibid., p. 177.

7. See Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). Silverman notes the "theological" dimension of the "voice-over" in film, which always escapes the viewer's gaze (p. 49). Silverman also makes clear that the voice recognized in the cinematic presentation of voice is not only the maternal voice, but a repudiated dimension of the masculine subject's own voice (pp. 80–81). Silver-