Pynchon, Foucault, Power, and Strategies of Resistance

Will McConnell

Despite diverse critical appreciations and interpretations of Pynchon's work, Pynchon scholars have not addressed sufficiently the relation between Thomas Pynchon and Michel Foucault.[1] Critics have explored the mythological, Freudian and scientific elements of Pynchon's corpus to map the terrain of postmodernist affinities with and differences from modernism. Similarly, critics have investigated Pynchon's affinities with many poststructuralist writers (like Derrida and Lacan), but so far have not placed Pynchon's and Foucault's texts in a dialogic relation to explore the construction of postmodernism. This silence is inexplicable, since Pynchon and Foucault occupy definitive roles in a diversity of writings widely acknowledged to constitute a postmodernist sensibility. In addition, the two writers have explicit affinities in their choice and treatment of subject matter: both explore the composition of power and its relation to the formation and understanding of subjectivity, and both attempt to posit some means of redressing the course of history that results from the instrumentalization of human beings through the exercise of power.

One of Pynchon's preoccupations in *Gravity's Rainbow*, as in the later texts of Foucault, is the presentation of various characters' attempts to discern the presiding structure of dominance and submission in which human beings enact their lives—to identify possible points of resistance. In an analysis of their respective markings of these points of resistance, however, a comparison of *Gravity's Rainbow* and Foucault's later work reveals significant divergences. This essay will not attempt an exhaustive treatment of the relations between these two writers' remarkably polyvocal texts, nor will it use one writer's articulation of power as a framework within which to read the other's work. Instead, focussing on each writer's presentation of the relation between subjectivity and power, I will highlight the implications of the differences in vocabulary and form each writer brings to the presentation of subjectivity and, consequently, to strategies of resistance.

One element common to Foucault's genealogical depiction and Pynchon's fictional presentation of power is the nebulosity of both power and the form in which it is presented. Foucault's most direct

statements about the appearance of power occur in "Lecture Two" of *Power/Knowledge*. For him, "power is not to be taken as a phenomenon of one individual's consolidated and homogeneous domination over others, or that of one group or class over others"; instead, "power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or rather, as something which only functions in the form of a chain. . . . [P]ower is employed and exercised through a net-like organization" (98). To make the exercise of power more visible, "one must . . . conduct an ascending analysis of power, starting . . . from its infinitesimal mechanisms . . . and then see how these mechanisms of power have been . . . invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc., by ever more general mechanisms of global domination" (99).[2] To this end, Foucault effects a transformation of his earlier archaeological method—in which he searches for the ontological being of language—by sublimating the archaeological method with the genealogical method of analysis.

A brief explication of Foucault's shifting terminology is in order. The practice of archaeology in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* is governed by the search for the sudden shift in the articulation of material practices. At this point in his texts, Foucault theorizes that, "if there really is a unity [to what he calls 'dispersion' of historical continuity: roughly, the appearance of the epistemic shifts theorized in *The Order of Things*], it does not lie in the visible, horizontal coherence of the elements formed; it resides, well anterior to their formation, in the system that makes possible and governs that formation" (72). To pursue this research, Foucault posits a rarity of articulation that can account for such shifts in the history of discourse, which he calls the "statement": "a statement is always an event that neither the language ([Saussure's] *langue*) nor the meaning can quite exhaust" (28). The statement forms a bridge between material practices and language. Foucault then attempts to account for the archaeologist's/historian's exposure to the statement, since the ability to identify the statement depends on exposure to a temporal structure exterior to human temporality, and since, for Foucault, what constitutes knowledge of the human being is an effect produced largely by and in language: "Must we admit that the time of discourse is not the time of consciousness extrapolated to the dimensions of history, or the time of history present in the form of consciousness?" (210). This brings his archaeological method to an insurmountable impasse: how can human beings know (and Foucault's archaeologist recognize) the statement if it occurs in a temporality exterior to their own understanding of the spatio/temporal ordering of its occurrence?

To continue with the attempt to discern contemporary practices of power, Foucault had to modify his approach. To this end, he attempts, in "The Discourse on Language" (his 1970 inaugural address upon accepting a post with the Collège de France), to envision a new means of analysis: the genealogical method. He initially envisions archaeology and genealogy as complementary. The substitution of "critical" for "archaeological" analysis is clear: "The critical side of the analysis deals with the systems enveloping discourse; attempting to mark out and distinguish the principles of ordering, exclusion and rarity in discourse" (AK 234). The genealogical method, "by way of contrast, deals with series of effective formation of discourse: it attempts to grasp it in its power of affirmation, by which I do not mean a power opposed to that of negation, but the power of constituting domains of objects, in relation to which one can affirm or deny true or false propositions" (234). The substitution in the terminology here becomes, in Foucault's later texts, a sublimation in the practice of his genealogical method. The archaeological method is effaced from visibility in the later texts; however, it continues to haunt those texts through the notion of "discourse": when genealogy subsumes archaeology, the life-world becomes, for Foucault, only as it appears, and only what appears. In effect, in his earlier work, "language" differs from "discourse." In his later work, Foucault collapses language (*langue* in the archaeological method) into discourse to speak about the appearance of power. This enables him to use historical and contemporary texts to posit the changing articulation of power in material practices without having to account for the epistemological problem he earlier identified through the relation between signifier and signified (that, in his estimation, effectively invalidated the archaeological method). As he says in "Truth and Power," "what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse" (PK 119). Thus, in the later texts, genealogy is both descriptive and interpretative—depending on what is being discussed.

Through this shift in methodology, Foucault attempts to provide himself with an epistemologically sound base from which to describe power at the level of its material practices rather than in its appearance in language. As he says in *The History of Sexuality*, "one needs to be nominalistic, no doubt: power is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society" (93). Foucault's diction in passages like this, coupled with his genealogical method, reveals that, despite his express interest in

describing the exercise of power at the level of material practices and his multiple shifts in disciplinary vocabularies, he remains committed to articulating his critique of power in the linguistic medium of classical philosophy. That is, nominalism is by no means inconsistent with epistemology; in Foucault's case, nominalism leads to a reworking of the traditional methodology of epistemology. As he says in *Discipline and Punish*, "power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (194). Like Pynchon, who uses scientific, literary, religious, mythological and psychoanalytic discourses, Foucault uses other language games, like anthropology, psychoanalysis, political philosophy, scientific discourse and the philosophy of history; however, for Foucault, the foundation that unites these diverse but well-organized discursive practices is epistemology.

This philosophically-based practice is not necessarily traditional epistemology, as a juxtaposition of two quotations will demonstrate. While doing research for *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault said, "it is a fact, a mysterious fact, that in this indefinite spiral of truth and reality in the self, sexuality has been of major importance since the first centuries of our era. It has become more and more important. Why is there such a fundamental connection between sexuality, subjectivity and truth obligation?" (SS 5). These three areas were his final themes for exploring the connections among knowledge, power and subjectivity. He discards the possibility of truth—like sexuality and subjectivity, truth is a function of power; however, the discourse of epistemology provides the ground to posit truth, subjectivity and sexuality as constructs of power. Again, the problem of accounting for the truth-claim of his own critique arises in connection with statements like the following: "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (DP 27). In the first quotation, Foucault would depend implicitly on epistemology to investigate the constructedness of truth; in the second, he would depend on the truth-claim status of his assertion to question theories of epistemology. He attempts to account for this seeming illogicality in a number of ways. For instance, he draws on the difference between *savoir* and *connaissance* (both of which have been translated as "knowledge") in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Similarly, in an interview with Duccio Trombadori, when specifically asked to give an account of the "shifting levels of investigation" in his work, Foucault replies, "the books I write constitute an experience for me that I'd like to be as rich as possible" (RM 27). Elsewhere, Foucault speaks of his work as a "fabrication" (PK 212).

Perhaps the illogicality of philosophy is Foucault's point: in the context of traditional philosophy, such illogicality—the explicit doubling of the logic of identity—appears as a highly subversive force. His formal practice, then, is consistent with his theory of power, but this in turn implies the construction of a new epistemology with the same economy of relations as that found in traditional epistemology: it depends on the articulation of a key term or economy of relations. That is, Foucault's epistemology takes as its foundation this reversibility of the limit rather than the attempt to explain the inversion of the limit through recourse to logic (as in traditional epistemology). As he says in "The Subject and Power":

> What we need is a new economy of power relations—the word *economy* being used in its theoretical and practical sense. To put it in other words: since Kant, the role of philosophy is to prevent reason from going beyond the limits of what is given in experience; but from the same moment—that is, since the development of the modern state and the political management of society—the role of philosophy is also to keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality. . . . [W]hat we have to do with [these] banal facts is to discover—or try to discover—which specific and perhaps original problem is connected with them. (210)

This new epistemology takes as its object an exploration of the limits of various discourses of the social sciences: the area of the reversal between polarities of description/knowledge and interpretation, truth and truth-claim. In the early "Preface to Transgression" (1963), Foucault theorized explicitly this "structure": "The limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusions and shadows" (LCP 34). At this point, a series of juxtapositions with Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* will reveal some important differences between the two writers' presentations of power. I will then address the implications each of these understandings of power has for each writer's exploration of possibilities for resistance.

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon presents a power structure as diversified as Foucault's. At the global level, the chain of command is unclear: characters refer to the force(s) repressing them variously as "the War," "Control," "The Forbidden Wing," "the Firm," "It," "They," "Them," "Empire," "History" and, in the latter parts of the text, "the Rocket," "the Real Text," "Technology," "Blicero/Weissmann." In part, power remains power because of this diffusiveness. As Enzian thinks,

"We have to look for power sources here, and distribution networks we were never taught, routes of power our teachers never imagined, or were encouraged to avoid" (521). Slothrop realizes the complexity of this "structure" (194) in the Himmler-Spielsaal as he recognizes, in Katje's look, that "all her bets are in, she has only the tedium now of being knocked from one room to the next. . . . [H]e's been snuggling up, masturbatorily scared-elated, to the disagreeable chance that exactly such Control might already have been put over him" (209). The source of this power is never specified; rather, the attempt to trace the source of power occupies Slothrop and many others in the latter half of the text. For Slothrop, this diffusiveness engenders a search both hampered and fuelled by paranoia; in fact, paranoia becomes a tool for enquiry. The interconnectedness of the circuits of power is evident when Slothrop imagines "a brilliant Commando raid . . . on Shell Mex House": "But Duncan Sandys is only a name, a function in this, 'How high does it go?' is not even the right kind of question to be asking, because the organization charts have all been set up by Them, the titles and names filled in by Them" (251). As Slothrop thinks earlier of this structure of power, "Who'd know better than an outfit like Shell, with no real country, no side in any war, no specific face or heritage: tapping instead out of that global stratum, most deeply laid, from which all the appearances of corporate ownership really spring?" (243). Tchitcherine gains a similar insight, from a "very large white Finger," into "A *Rocket-cartel*. A structure cutting across every agency human and paper that ever touched it" (566). Thus, power cuts across language, individual desire, business interests, the Allied/Axis division in the war, etc.: "the Rocket has to be many things, it must answer to a number of different shapes in the dreams of those who touch it—in combat, in tunnel, on paper" (727). Pynchon folds the narrator's voice and Slothrop's consciousness together in a passage revealing that the rocket-cartel includes corporate structures as diverse as the German IG Farben, the British ICI, the American du Pont, the Swiss Psychochemie AG, and the British, American and Dutch affiliates of Shell—often colluding while simultaneously working at (apparent) cross-purposes (249–51).

A corollary in dysfunctional if networked organization are the agencies, bureaus, executive branches, research facilities and spy rings whose operations perpetuate the War.[3] These include a spectrum of organizations identified by a bewildering array of acronyms: the PWD, PWE, OSS, SPOG, OWI, SOE, SHAEF, WLB, PISCES, ACHTUNG and ARF. Aside from their common engagement in the power structure that is the War, the relation between most of these networks and the networks of the conglomerates and their affiliates remains unclear.

Similarly, as in the organization of the conglomerates, the interaction of all these groups with one another is often unclear. As Brigadier Pudding, the director of PISCES at "The White Visitation," thinks:

> One is supposed to be operating in concert—yet too often in amazing dissonance—with other named areas of the War, colonies of that Mother City mapped wherever the enterprise is systematic death: P.W.E. laps over onto the Ministry of Information, the BBC European Service, the Special Operations Executive, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and the F.O. Political Intelligence Department at Fitzmaurice House. Among others. (76)

Within Pudding's own organization, which includes factions as diverse as the spiritualist Psi Section and the behaviorist Abreaction Research Facility, illicit channels of control develop. The most notable inversion of the hierarchical power structure is the relation that develops between Pudding and his nominal subordinate Pointsman. In competition with Psi Section for increasingly scarce funding, ARF continues to flourish due to Pointsman's acute understanding of Pudding's fetishization of death. With Katje acting as Pudding's surrogate Death-Mother, "Domina Nocturna," Pointsman enjoys more power than Pudding: he can declare with surety, "'Brigadier Pudding will not go back on any of his commitments. . . . [W]e have made arrangements with him'" (228). This relation reveals another important aspect of power in *Gravity's Rainbow*: those who possess the most power are those who capitalize, figuratively and literally, on the repressions of others. This has important implications for identifying the central difference between Foucault's and Pynchon's subtly yet significantly divergent articulations of the structure of power.

What emerges in Pudding's and various other characters' searches for the origins of power is Pynchon's construction of power primarily as a repressive force that uses the subject's repression of instincts against itself. This is not to say that power is exclusively repressive in Pynchon's text. For example, Katje thinks of, or is the occasion for the narrator's rumination on, the War's capacity to produce subjectivity:

> Don't forget the real business of the War is buying and selling. The murdering and the violence are self-policing, and can be entrusted to non-professionals. The mass nature of wartime death . . . provides raw material to be recorded into History, so that children may be taught History as sequences of violence, battle after battle, and be more prepared for the adult world. (105)

Similarly, the sadomasochistic films of Gerhardt von Göll highlight the valence between reality and fiction as the Germans both produce and reveal aestheticized violence.[4] This is clear when Slothrop and Greta perform or reproduce the sadomasochistic scene of *Alpdrücken* (395–97), and the narrator suggests that Greta's Bianca and Pökler's Ilse are not the only children conceived (both by "accident") as a result of that scene. However, Pynchon leaves the origin of sadomasochism indeterminate. As the narrator says (or Slothrop himself thinks), "somebody has already educated [Slothrop]" (396). At this point, the behavior seems to be *produced* by the power structure outside the individual, a power structure subjects perpetuate in the acceptance of their roles as subjects. In Althusser's terms, the subjects are hailed by the sadomasochistic social/power structure.

A comparison with Foucault on the relation between subjectivity and power will clarify the distinction between production and repression, and reveal that distinction's importance for a reading of the differences between Pynchon's and Foucault's strategies of resistance. For Foucault, the instincts of the subject are *productions* of the power that circulates in the social body:

> The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus . . . a multiple and inert material on which power comes to fasten or against which it happens to strike, and in so doing subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. *The individual, that is, is not the vis-a-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects*. . . . [Individuals] are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising power. . . . The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time . . . it is the element of its articulation. The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle. (PK 98; emphasis added)

In "The Means of Correct Training," Foucault outlines the ramifications of the socially-conditioned subject:

> the art of punishing, in the régime of disciplinary power, is aimed neither at expiation, nor even precisely at repression. It brings five quite distinct operations into play: it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison. . . . It differentiates individuals from one another . . . It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the "nature" of individuals. It introduces, through this

> "value-giving" measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal. . . . In short, it *normalizes*. (DP 182–83)

Hanjo Berressem's understanding of power in Foucault can help clarify Foucault's relation to Pynchon. According to Berressem, "Foucault, whose theory of power presides for long stretches over the poetics of *Gravity's Rainbow*, sees power as an anonymous 'technology' . . . a global network of infinitely complex and ramose power relations into which the subject is inscribed" (206). But Berressem's representation of Foucault mis-presents the subject's relation to power. The subject in Foucault's work is not inscribed "into" this network; for Foucault, "the subject" signifies that discursive entity *produced by* the network of social power. Similarly, Berressem decontextualizes Foucault's analysis by removing it from the historical context in which it is stated,[5] thus effacing Foucault's resistance. Foucault's entire project is to return power to the specific historical context from which it issues by making its methods of production as well as its productions visible. This does not make power "anonymous"; rather, it makes power specific to the particular historical situations in which specific ideas of subjectivity are defined. That is, for Foucault as for Pynchon, the network of power is anonymous; the exercise of power is not. As Foucault says, "in itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable" (SP 220).

This fact is fundamental for understanding Foucault's notion of resistance, given that he allows no recourse to identifying a pre-inscribed subject. His search for strategies of resistance is his attempt to mark the difference between the network and the exercise of power. Implicit in this distinction is a project for shifting, if not eradicating, power by capitalizing on the gaps, silences, overlaps—in short, the de-stabilizing pressures—inherent in power itself. The subject must look for non-disciplinary forms of power. That is, if Foucault does not allow the subject any exit from the circuits of power, neither does he construe the effects of power as entirely negative. As he says in a 1982 interview: "One cannot impute to me the idea that power is a system of domination which controls everything and which leaves no room for freedom. . . . [R]elations of power are not something bad in themselves, from which one must free one's self. I don't believe there can be a society without relations of power, if you understand them as means by which individuals try to conduct, to determine the behavior of others" (ECS 124, 129).

In *Gravity's Rainbow*, Slothrop and Greta's encounter has its parallel in Pökler and Leni's enactment of the same cinematic scene; however, Pökler's sadomasochism seems drawn from a source of violence within himself. There is no explicit mention of Pökler's education in sadomasochism: the film he has viewed seems to parallel his desire. In fact, the directness of and violence in the narrative voice of the scene suggests that, although Pökler uses the movie images to enact his blurring of the projection of the power fantasy with/in his enactment of it in reality, no split consciousness experiences the fantasy/reality of the enactment with Leni. For example, Pökler is so "flooded" with the image that "[o]nly later did he try to pin down the time" of the enactment of the fantasy that is also Ilse's conception (397). The ease with which Weissmann later manipulates him suggests that Pökler never fully engages in a self-reflexive acknowledgement of his own perpetuation of the circuit of power: "Pökler understood, with relief and two seconds of actual love for his protector, that the game was still on" (427). The "convenience" "They ha[ve] sold him" (428) is the complicity in his unwillingness to examine his own desires, or to accept responsibility for the desires he has assimilated. Sanctioning his guilt sanctifies his complicity: his total passivity, like Gottfried's, is a holy gift to the structure of power. Thus Pökler cannot (and will not) see the situation from his own side: "Even in this initial moment, he was seeing it from Their side—every quirk goes in the dossier, gambler, foot-fetishist or soccer fan, it's all important, it can all be used" (420).

Slothrop's enactment of the *Alpdrücken* scene is narrated differently, revealing a fundamental difference between his and Pökler's levels of understanding the operations of power. Initially, Slothrop is unaware of his propensity to aestheticize and act out violence in a sadomasochistic exchange. When Greta asks him, "'Are you very cruel?'" Slothrop answers simply, "'Don't know'" (396). At this point, Slothrop resembles Foucault's subject produced by power—in effect, a different characterization of, or figure for, Pökler's subjectivity. However, Slothrop's reflection on Greta's question passes through (in Freud's phrase, "works through"[6]) education by unknown external forces as he recognizes his own culpability: "somebody has already educated him. Something . . . that dreams Prussian and wintering among their meadows, in whatever cursive lashmarks wait across the flesh of their sky so bleak, so incapable of any sheltering, wait to be summoned . . . No. No—he still says 'their,' but he knows better. His meadows now, his sky . . . his own cruelty" (396).[7] This is a self-conscious act in the sense that, at the very least, it is a making-active of the passivity of inculcating the social economy of violence.

Slothrop/the narrator blurs the distinction between the externally imposed drive and the internally receptive and/or projected instinct, but both continue to be possibilities in the formation of the social subject and sphere. Put another way, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, both remain possibilities for cure.

This possibility emerges more distinctly in Katje's reflection on her sadomasochistic oven game with Blicero and Gottfried, suggesting her self-consciousness in replicating social and socialized violence:

> In a conquered country, one's own occupied country, it's better, she believes, to enter into some formal, rationalized version of what, outside, proceeds without form or decent limit day and night, the summary executions, the roustings, beatings, subterfuge, paranoia, shame. . . . [T]his Northern and ancient form, one they all know and are comfortable with . . . shall be their preserving routine, their shelter, against what outside none of them can bear—the War, the absolute rule of chance. (96)

The allusion here to childhood fable suggests that, even in his/her innocence, the child carries within him/her self the propensity for violence later exploited and encouraged by the parental and wider social sphere. Pynchon explicitly distances this version of innocence—this socially produced, normalized subject—from the socially inculcated version: "In developing an official version of innocence, the culture of childhood has proven invaluable" (419).

We can now articulate the key difference between Pynchon's and Foucault's textual presentations of power. Since both Pynchon and Foucault repeatedly note the difficulty of defining a generalized route of escape from the network of power due to the complexity of specific experiences of power, I will explore the possibility that the key difference lies in the affectivity each author invokes in the reader through his means of addressing the reader. That is, the affective experience of reading the texts is effected by each writer's adoption of different forms in which to voice his central strategy of resistance.

The narrator's intercession in another scene of *Gravity's Rainbow* suggests the importance of the process Slothrop undergoes. In the folding-together of the narrator's voice and Major Marvy's consciousness, the more authentic version of innocence is clear. As Major Marvy performs a rape fantasy, the text reflects the role of the reader in the scene, thus enacting a self-reflexivity in the reader's passive experience of violence. Constituting the pleasure, the *jouissance*, of reading as voyeurism simultaneously posits the reader's passive complicity in the act of violence and repels that passivity by

exposing the mechanism (one-way gaze) of the reading subject's intimacy/insularity before the text:

> She'll do anything he orders, yeah he can hold her head under the water till she drowns, he can bend her hand back, yeah, break her fingers like that cunt in Frankfurt the other week. Pistol-whip, bite till blood comes . . . visions go swarming, violent, less erotic than you think—more occupied with thrust, impact, penetration, and such other military values. Which is not to say he isn't enjoying himself innocently as you do. (606)

Through Major Marvy, Pynchon addresses the reader's passive culpability in the creation of the scene. The syntax and diction of the direct address suggest that this process of engendering self-reflexivity is intended to work regardless of the specific reader's level of enjoyment of the particular scene. Redressing an ahistoricized reading/understanding process, Pynchon enacts a change, through the reading subject's performance of self-consciousness, that moves across the self-awareness of passive participation in violence into self-consciousness as an activity of resistance. Thus, although human beings cannot withdraw from the network of power, they can potentially withdraw, through acts of self-consciousness, from the simple replication, the exercise, of power. As Slothrop thinks (or is counseled by/through the narrator), "these are the els and busses of an enormous transit system . . . [B]y riding each branch the proper distance, knowing when to transfer, keeping some state of minimum grace though it might often look like he's headed the wrong way, this network of all plots may yet carry him to freedom" (603).

Most of the characters who end up in the counterforce undergo (or, the text suggests, have undergone) just such a transformation of consciousness. Katje, Enzian, Pirate Prentice and Roger Mexico must all give up their fantasies of hermetic exclusion—including their strategies for deferring the pain of guilt—that keep them from capitalizing on moments of overlap in the network of power. As Roger (or the narrator) thinks:

> Well, if the Counterforce knew better what those categories concealed, they might be in a better position to disarm, de-penis and dismantle the Man. But they don't. Actually they do, but they don't admit it. Sad but true. They are as schizoid, as double-minded in the massive presence of money, as any of the rest of us. . . . The Man has a branch office in each of our brains. . . . [E]ach local rep has a cover known as the Ego. . . . We do know what's going on, and we let it go on. . . .

> Letting it sit for a while is no compromise, but a decision to live, on Their terms. (712–13)

This is also the place of sadomasochism in the text. As Thanatz argues:

> "why are we taught to feel reflexive shame whenever the subject comes up? Why will the Structure allow every other kind of sexual behavior but *that* one? Because submission and dominance are resources it needs for its very survival. They cannot be wasted in private sex. . . . It needs our lusts after dominance so that it can co-opt us into its own power game. There is no joy in it, only power. I tell you, if S and M could be established universally, at the family level, the State would wither away." (737)

The release of social repression frees an exercise of sexuality that, in its enaction between two (or among more) people, generally constructs power as performance. It both makes the individuals' exercise of the circuit of power self-conscious and releases the repressed violence of the un- or subconscious privately. This behavior approaches polymorphous perverse sexuality without the idealization of a total escape from the drive toward violence.

Returning now to Foucault's epistemologically-based textual practices, we can see their differences from Pynchon's incitement to self-consciousness. Foucault does not directly address the reader to enact an experience of self-consciousness; however, in the last decade of his life, he increasingly participated in the "live" exchange of interviews to capture some of the livingness of his thinking—rather than occupy the power-enabled position of simply publishing books, with traditional authorial control and without the surprise of sudden discovery or the potential for unexpected and uncontrollable events. Similarly, whereas Pynchon uses the novel—the traditional medium for delineating the coming-to-consciousness of the self—to transgress its formal characteristics and rework the idealism of the process of self-consciousness, Foucault uses epistemology—the traditional medium for questioning the subject's ability to know—to transgress traditional epistemology's link to transcendental truth and to attempt to override all remnants of the Cartesian Ego. As he says in "The Subject and Power":

> When in 1784 Kant asked, *Was heisst Aufklärung?* he meant, What's going on just now? What's happening to us? What is this world, this period, this precise moment in which we are living?

> Or in other words: What are we? . . . Compare this with the Cartesian question: Who am I? I as a unique but universal and unhistorical subject? I for Descartes is everyone, anywhere at any moment.
>
> But Kant asks something else: What are we? in a very precise moment of history. Kant's question appears as an analysis of both us and our present. . . . Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be. . . . We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality [the type of individualization linked to the state] which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (216)

In Foucault's reworked epistemology, knowledge involves a historical making visible of the invisible structures of disciplining and producing the subject; thus, his methodology involves the reading of gaps, silences and overlaps in the articulation of the structure of history. As his numerous statements about the importance of his texts as experiences reveal, this performance, and not the finished product of the already-written text, is an exercise of revolt that carries the potential for freedom. Foucault says, "it would be impossible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape" (SP 219). The valorization of silence, escape, withdrawal from the system, if not from the struggle against that system or network of power, suggests that Foucault constitutes resistance as the refusal to continue to write one's subject-ivity. Resistance is a holding-back of the appearance of the free subject in textual form. In this sense, the texts present nothing more than the "lines of fragility" that suggest "the reality of possible struggles" (FL 188). But this escape has little to do with the creation of a hermetic environment in which the subject withdraws from the difficult process of formulating resistance. By the logic of Foucault's theory of epistemology, to write one's life is to imprison one's actions within the system one struggles to escape. Jim Miller reads Foucault's sadomasochism (and his famous silence on the issue in philosophical circles) as just such a silent activity/experience of movement toward freedom. He quotes Foucault on the subject: "There is a creation of anarchy within the body, where its hierarchies, its localizations and designations, its organicity, if you will, is in the process of disintegrating. . . . There is something 'unnameable,' 'useless,' outside of all the programs of desire" (274). The striving after the unnameable occurs in the reality of experience, the now of this moment.

Despite their diverging textual views of the path(s) to resistance, Pynchon and Foucault rejoin each other in this space. Although

Pynchon enacts in his fiction what Foucault performed in his life, both seem to conceive of the private life (theirs and others') as a space of invisibility that potentially harbors the project of a new self and a new subject.[8] For this reason, we should leave Foucault and Pynchon to their respective silences, and work to produce our own.

—*McMaster University*

Notes

[1]For example, Hanjo Berressem devotes two pages (206–07, 215) to exploring the relation of Foucault's constructions of power to Pynchon's *Vineland*. In effect, Berressem refracts Foucault's notion of power through Lacan's work on the relation of the signifier/signified to desire. While this focus highlights Foucault's Lacanian reading of Freud, it undervalues Foucault's focus, in his later texts, on the problem of the productive aspects of language: how language produces the material existence of subjectivity. Such a focus ignores Foucault's shifts of terminology and, thus, shifts in subject matter.

[2]As Jana Sawicki outlines Foucault's concept of power: "1. Power is exercised rather than possessed. 2. Power is not primarily repressive, but productive. 3. Power is analyzed as coming from the bottom up" (21).

[3]"The War" is an indeterminate signifier for the activities and interconnections of the political-military-industrial complex. Thus, for example: "The War, the Empire, will expedite such barriers between our lives. The War needs to divide this way, and to subdivide, though its propaganda will always stress unity, alliance, pulling together. . . . [I]t wants a machine of many separate parts, not oneness, but a complexity. . . . Yet who can presume to say *what* the War wants, so vast and aloof is it . . . so *absentee*" (130–31).

[4]Through another Von Göll film, *Martín Fierro* (to be shot on the Lüneburg Heath with the Argentine anarchists), Pynchon also suggests that the creation of fictional images in the social sphere can produce new circuits of power and subjectivity. Pynchon parodies the self-conscious artist as von Göll says, "'It is my mission . . . to sow in the Zone seeds of reality. . . . I can lead you back to the Garden you hardly remember'" (388). Like all other activities in the novel, von Göll's filmmaking is directly linked to the sprawling complex of power relations.

[5]Here, too, the risks of overstating Lacan's influence on Foucault are evident. Lacan's concentration on Desire suppresses a historical approach to discerning the development of its articulation in the social sphere; Foucault occupies a far more indeterminate position in his relation to history. As he says in a late interview:

> This idea of "discontinuity" in relation to *Les Mots et les Choses* has, indeed, become a dogma. . . . [T]he fact remains, however, that the book says exactly the opposite. . . . [I asked] what was the transformation

> needed to pass from one type of knowledge to another type of knowledge? My approach, therefore, was quite the opposite of a "philosophy of discontinuity." . . . [M]any readers . . . failed to see that the whole work of the book consisted precisely in setting out from this apparent discontinuity . . . and trying, in a way, to dissolve it. (PPC 99–100)

Foucault is far from an anti-historicist; in fact, his view of history and his practice of writing that history have important consequences for his attempt to define a strategy of resisting power.

[6]This is not to suggest that Pynchon represents a simple return to Freud. Pynchon's Freudian themes are refracted through Norman O. Brown's rereading of Freud in *Life Against Death* and *Love's Body*. Specifically, Pynchon is concerned with Brown's assertion that psychoanalysis can "formulate the conditions under which the dominion of death and anality could be abolished" (LAD 207), that is, that psychoanalysis can expose repression and re-release the exercise of polymorphous perverse eroticism. Pynchon explores this eroticism largely on the terrain of sadomasochism. Although he seems to agree with Brown's plea for a return to earth and to the body, the fate of lovers who attempt to construct an idyll that escapes power suggests that Pynchon considers Brown's program for the return of polymorphous perverse sexuality—"a little more Eros would make conscious the unconscious harmony between 'dialectical' dreams of all kinds" (LAD 281)—naively idealistic. Pynchon's criticism is subtle: "AN ARMY OF LOVERS CAN BE BEATEN" (GR 155, 158).

[7]Two further episodes of Slothrop's eroticized violence may clarify the distinction here. In an earlier scene, with Katje (221–22), Slothrop (or the narrator who focalizes the scene through Slothrop) remains remarkably un-self-reflexive about the origin of the erotic scene in violence; he simply performs the scene without reflecting on it. In a scene with Bianca, some time after his sadomasochistic play with Greta, Slothrop reflects explicitly on the encounter, discovering that he is "*inside his own cock*" (470). This "metropolitan organ" organizes all other desires ("all other colonial tissue" [470]) around it, and so makes both the violence and the subject who enacts that violence its techné. The text suggests that eros and violence are inextricable; however, Slothrop's impetus to reflect on his erotic practices is clear, although his ability to escape the desire that is inextricable from the occasional violence accompanying those practices remains indeterminate.

[8]Both seem to conceive of this new subjectivity as a scattering of the subject that is too diffuse to be captured by the network of power/writing. Foucault simply refuses to write the emancipatory project, since the valid project of resistance is far more open than even his own diffusive writing strategy can allow. As Miller notes, Foucault prefers limit experiences which enact a "philosophy-as-life" (9). Slothrop is eventually "[s]cattered all over the Zone. . . . It's doubtful if he can ever be 'found' again, in the *conventional* sense of *'positively identified and detained'*" (712; emphasis added). The

different readings of Weissmann's and Slothrop's tarots suggest that the new subjectivity must be even more diffuse than the most diffusive subjectivity produced by the diffuse power structure: whereas Weissmann's controlling card can be identified, Slothrop's controlling card cannot.

Works Cited

Berressem, Hanjo. *Pynchon's Poetics: Interfacing Theory and Text*. Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1993.

Brown, Norman O. *Life Against Death: The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History*. 1959. London: Sphere, 1990.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972.

---. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Random House, 1979.

---. "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault." Trans. J. D. Gauthier, S.J. *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 12.2–3 (1987): 122–33.

---. *Foucault Live (Interviews, 1966–84)*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1989.

---. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1: *An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Pantheon, 1978.

---. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*. Ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977.

---. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977–1984*. Trans. Alan Sheridan et al. New York: Routledge, 1988.

---. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*. Trans. Colin Gordon et al. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

---. *Remarks on Marx: Conversations with Duccio Trombadori*. Trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito. New York: Semiotext(e), 1991.

---. "Sexuality and Solitude." *London Review of Books* 21 May–3 Jun. 1981: 3–7.

---. "The Subject and Power." *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1982. 208–26.

Freud, Sigmund. "Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. Vol. 12. London: Hogarth, 1958. 147–56.

Miller, Jim. *The Passion of Michel Foucault*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993.

Pynchon, Thomas. *Gravity's Rainbow*. 1973. New York: Penguin, 1987.

Sawicki, Jana. *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body*. New York: Routledge, 1991.