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Alexa Cucopulos April 11, 2016

Poiesis and Death: Foucault's Chiastic Undoing of Life in *History of Sexuality Volume 1*

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An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
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Abstract

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I seek to read Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality Volume 1* (1976) for its poetic tactics in order to suggest that its poetic sensibility offers a conception of life alternative to *bios*. The book claims that the modern understanding of life that arises in the 20th century is rooted in the rise of biological and psychological discourses from which the ideas of "life-itself" and the species body erupt. Foucault claims that modern power, which creates sexualized subjects, has access to both individual bodies and the species at large. The concept of "sex" lends power this dual access, culminating in a eugenic shaping of the population. For its roots in biology, Foucault calls this modern power "biopower." I suggest here, that a poetic reading of the book allows for an alternative and perhaps resistant conception of life, lying in the Greek etymological root of poetry, "poiesis" meaning "to make." The rethinking of life that I offer lies in the constant unmaking and remaking of the subject as a mode of bristling against a power that relentlessly tracks and monitors bodies and regulates populations in order to optimize the health and longevity of the entire species. In his essay, "Lives of Infamous Men" (1977), Foucault makes a return to the archives that he uses in his first major work *History of Madness* (1964). These archives contain documents from those interned in the Classical Age. In this essay Foucault refers to these archival documents as "poem-lives" due to the mixture of intensities that he experiences while reading them. I read *History of Sexuality Volume 1* as a poem-life of the modern species body, for it is a document of our own lives wagered on modern tactics of power. The chiasmus is the main poetic device through which Foucault reveals modern power as a fiction that results in mass death. At the end of this thesis I suggest that queer theorist, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick performs this poetic resistance to life as bios in her book *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) and her essay "White Glasses" (1991).

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Table of Contents:

Preface:

Philosophy requires that I frame this thesis in a particular way. That is, I should tell you that this is a thesis about French theorist Michel Foucault. I should tell you that he was a gay man who worked primarily alongside the French post-structuralists and post-modernists throughout the 1960's, 70's and 80's, until his AIDs related death in 1984. And, for the sake of grounding my work, I should tell you that this thesis deals primarily with his most famous book *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* (1976), which critiques our understanding of power as repressive.[1] I should also provide a brief summary of this book, as one does to give a reader proper tools before providing one's own insight:

The story goes: Sexuality is repressed with the rise of capitalism in the Victorian era. Its pleasures and excesses are incompatible with the bourgeois idea of productivity. Sex becomes permissible only in regards to reproduction, and all else is silenced. Ever since, we have been trying to liberate ourselves. Foucault calls this the "repressive hypothesis," an idea for which Freud stands in as a symbol; psychoanalysis makes us speak about our repressed sexual desires and understand ourselves as subjects primarily in terms of sex. To speak about sex is to resist a power that silences us.

Foucault disagrees with this story. Repression, he claims, is not the primary form of power that takes hold in the 17th century and persists until now. He instead suggests that discourses and practices surrounding sex have proliferated. Science cannot turn away from sex as the object of its gaze and we begin to understand subjects in terms of their perversions. Sexuality, rather than something we have repressed, is something we have created through the rise of modern scientific discourses (i.e. biology, psychology, medicine, etc.). This post-

[1] I will refer to *The History of Sexuality I: An Introduction* as *Sexuality One* throughout this work.

Darwinian 20th century emergence of biology also allows the concept of "life-itself" to arise, where health is understood no longer just on an individual basis, but also at the level of the species.

Foucault does not mean to say that sex was not real prior to this new technology of power. More aptly, sex, which before was "an obscure and nameless urge," now becomes the main point of our intelligibility.[2] Because it is dually implicated in both the individual (as a sexualized subject) and the species body (as concerned with propagation), sex becomes a mode through which power can discipline individual bodies and regulate entire populations. Power no longer "*take*[*s*] life or *let*[*s*] live" as it does in the time of the sovereign; instead, this new form of power that Foucault terms "biopower" (literally life-power) "*foster*[*s*] life or *disallow*[*s*] it to the point of death."[3] Paradoxically, this power concerned with the cultivation of life culminates in a "eugenic ordering of society," where our own tactics of optimization concerning the health of the species and the purity of the race, are the very mechanisms that put us to death.[4] Biopower enables the entire population to kill itself in the name of life. The book ends with our death as a species.[5]

Academic convention also tells me I should situate myself in the context of other thinkers and mention some of the ways in which Foucault has been taken up in order to give my work some relevance: Foucault is foundational to queer theory. Judith Butler, for instance, takes up Foucault's notion of productive power in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble* to expose how gender

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[2] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1990), 156.
[3] Ibid., 138.
[4] Ibid., 149.
[5] Ibid. This paragraph and the preceding two paraphrase *Sexuality One.*

is a product of power that we take to be a given. She destabilizes the gender binary that we take for granted in the same way that Foucault destabilizes the notion of sex as our hidden truth. Gayle Rubin, in her essay "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality" (1984), uses Foucault to re-centralize sex as a crucial factor in thinking about politics, claiming that sex is not a frivolous side issue, but an insidious function of power.[1] Later in this thesis I will discuss how one particular queer theorist, Eve Kokofsky Sedgwick, employs Foucault through her acts of writing in her book *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), and her essay "White Glasses," published in her 1993 collection, *Tendencies.*[2] These works are also, in many ways, acts of memorialization for her friends who died of AIDS in the 1980's and 90's.

More generally, Foucault's concept of disciplinary power has led queer theorists to examine gender as fiction, a performed concept into which subjects are habituated. Queer theorists have also taken up again and again the idea of perversions in regards to a norm to examine deviant sexualities. Foucault's ideas have been repeatedly redeployed in terms of "Foucauldian power" and "Foucauldian sexuality," as theories unified under Foucault himself.

To say all of this about Foucault is not untrue. I also do not think that the expectations of academic writing that ask me to give a brief recount of Foucault and his concepts relevant to my work here are not useful. To do so is perhaps necessary, even, for anyone to engage with this thesis at all. But this stock symbol of Foucault, these household terms that have been systemized into a larger Foucauldian theory—this is not my Foucault. This famous figure of Foucault is not the Foucault of which I want to give an account.

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[1] See Gayle S. Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," in *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011), 182-90.
[2] See Eve Kokofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic," in *The Epistemology of the Closet,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1-63. and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "White Glasses" in *Tendencies,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 252-266.

There are not one but many Foucaults. In his first seminal work, *History of Madness* (1961), he provides two prefaces to the book. The first one is the original 1961 preface to the first edition, in which he gives a romantic and delirious account of his project in regards to how to make madness speak without using the tactics of reason, which exclude madness in the first place. The second preface, written in 1972, comes from a more ironic Foucault who rejects the idea of a new preface entirely. He writes, "I really ought to write a new preface for this book, which is old already. But the idea I find rather unattractive. For whatever I tried to do, I would always end up trying to justify it for what it was, and reinsert it, insofar as such a thing might be possible, in what is going on today."[3] He goes on to explain all the ways in which a work disperses:

> A book is produced, it is a minuscule event, an object that fits into the hand. But at that moment, it takes its place in an incessant game of repetitions, for its doubles, both near and far start to multiply; each reading gives it for an instant an impalpable unique body; fragments of it pass into circulation and are passed off as the real thing, purporting to contain the book in its entirety, and the book itself sometimes ends up taking refuge in such summaries; commentaries double the text still further, creating even more discourses where, it is claimed, the book is itself at last, avowing all that it refused to say, delivering itself from all that which it so loudly pretended to be. A reissue in another place and in another time is yet another of these doubles, something which is neither totally an illusion, nor totally an identical object. [4]

Already we find two different Foucaults in these prefaces. For 1972 Foucault, a Foucault that is out-of-sync with his own work, writing this preface dictates a certain reading of the book from which no others can stray. But instead, Foucault understands a book as an "object-event," something that one can hold in one's hand, but also something temporal and ephemeral, relevant and then not, fragments of which are taken up at different times, in different places, within

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[3] Michel Foucault, "Preface to the 1972 Edition," in *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Kahlfa, (New York: Routledge, 2006), xxxviii.
[4] Ibid., xxxvii.

different contexts.[5] A book, too, comes from just one shard of a fragmented author. The 1972 Foucault that interrupts our reading of *Madness* reminds us that this book and its original preface comes from another Foucault that, if you will, "is neither totally an illusion, nor totally [self] identical."[6] This interruption confronts us with the fact that this work was written from a self that does not fit under the umbrella term "Foucault," but one that shatters this illusion of a coherent author entirely. For older Foucault to dictate a reading of this book would be to deny the book's shifting meanings and his own shifting identities, undone and redone, together and fragmented.

Fragmented Foucault is my Foucault — the self-contradictory Foucault, the bad philosopher Foucault, the historically inaccurate historian Foucault, the Foucault that changes in every encounter I have with his work, the Foucault that splits once again in the miniature dialogue at the end of his 1972 preface: "But you have just written a preface" a voice from nowhere states. "At least it's short" another retorts.[7]

So instead of repeating this gesture (though it seems I already have) of giving you background on his life and work, summarizing his theories, and then telling you how this applies to my own work here, all of which would assume one coherent man and author, I want to give a reading of Foucault that allows the possibility for other Foucaults. More so, I want to read his work as having the ability to transform the self of the reader as well. With this in mind, I will briefly say the following about the endeavor of this thesis:

The first time I read *Sexuality One* I was disturbed. Above anything else, I felt an intensity I have been unable to shake ever since. For a long time, I had no words for what I felt in reading the book. I still don't. I later read Foucault's essay "Lives of Infamous Men" (1974), in

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[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., xxxix.

which he returns to his archival project that he began in *Madness.* In the archives Foucault undergoes something in his encounters with the remnants of violence and power, documents that took part in putting people to death in the Classical Age, documents that are the only evidence that these anonymous people ever lived. He writes, "This is not a book of history. The selection found here was guided by nothing more substantial than my taste, my pleasure, an emotion, laughter, surprise, a certain dread, or some other feeling whose intensity I might have trouble justifying now that the first moment of discovery has passed."[8] The way in which Foucault describes his encounter with the archival documents is the same way I would describe my encounter with *Sexuality One*, a book famous for its theories, but hardly ever taken up on the level of its strangeness.

Sexuality One is Foucault's most famous work, foundational to queer theory, famous for the repressive hypothesis, the psychoanalytic incitement to speak, the proliferation of perversions, the 20th century emergence of life-itself.[9] But this thesis reads the text differently. It is a result of an obsessive return to *Sexuality One* again and again, like Foucault's own obsessive return to the archives in "Infamous Men": "the book of a little obsession that found its system."[10] This thesis, too, is a paper of a little obsession that found its system, that could not get away from the strangeness of a book that has otherwise been read as just another work of theory. The shard of Foucault I am reading here is Foucault the poet and Foucault the reader of poetry.

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[8] Michel Foucault, "Lives of Infamous Men" in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., vol. 3 of *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 2000), 157.
[9] Foucault, *Sexuality One.*
[10] Foucault, "Infamous Men," 161.

Foucault calls the archival documents of "Infamous Men," "poem-lives," an odd concept whose explanation I will save for later for the sake of space and brevity.[11] However, I will mention here that poem-lives emerge from Foucault's reading of these documents as poetry. They are real lives that have been recorded through documents that played a part in their deaths, such as documents of internment. In coming to them retrospectively, out-of-sync with their place and time, Foucault undergoes what he describes as "a certain effect of beauty mixed with dread."[12] The poetry of these lives erupts only in Foucault's intimate encounter with them, and thus, I think when he calls them "poem-lives" he is referring less to a quality of the documents themselves, and more to his own reaction to them, a disorienting experience they make him undergo.

The Greek etymological root of poetry, "poiesis," means "to make." Foucault's self is undone by these poem-lives and transformed in the experience of reading them. Thus, if we trace poetry back to its implicit meaning of "making," the poetry of this encounter lies in the undoing and remaking of Foucault when he confronts subjects entirely ungraspable to him in bearing witness to that unbreachable rift between the episteme of these lives and his own. He becomes inarticulable to himself, and then redone, as if something like a mad dispersion of the self makes way for a transformation. Perhaps we can say that in this poetic encounter of being undone and transformed, he is undergoing a "limit experience," where one is put in touch with the bounds of their life, and experience that makes one tend toward his own impossibility.[13] In other words, the experience of one's own epistemic limits forces a subject to split from oneself, or more aptly,

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[11] Ibid., 159.
[12] Ibid.
[13] See Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault" in *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., vol. 3 of *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 2000), 239-73.

within oneself, and look back on oneself as strange, while still being unable to cross over to an outside. There is no outside, just an asymptotical tending toward the limits of one's own life.

I have explained my endeavor somewhat, but academic convention requires that I give you a thesis statement. So here is something of one: This thesis on its most basic level is an extremely close reading of *Sexuality One* that reads the book for not just its content, but its poetic aspects. I read the book as a "poem-life" of the species body that emerges in modern biopower in in the same way that Foucault reads the archival documents as poetry, making way for a self-transformation. I suggest that this constant undoing and remaking of the self is an ongoing resistance to biopower, a power that constantly tracks and orders life. Whether or not this poetic receptivity to self-transformation is an ethical way to live is not a question I am prepared to fully address here. But I do think it has ethical implications in terms of how we understand subjectivity that I will hopefully shed light on when this paper finds its conclusion.

"Your thesis statement was supposed to come on the first page."

"It wouldn't have made sense without the explanation."

Introduction:

A note on poem-lives

The intensities I feel each time reading *Sexuality One* are similar, I think, to what Foucault feels in the archives when he reads the documents of those interned in the classical age. In "Infamous Men," published just a year later, he describes undergoing a physical sensation, an "effect of beauty mixed with dread" when he encounters these "lowly lives reduced to ashes in the few sentences that struck them down."[1] He calls them *poem-lives*.

The concept of a poem-life is a strange one, one I am still not sure I entirely understand. Foucault himself never gives a definition of this term he uses to describe these documents, which include small and lowly lives: "these cobblers, these army deserters, these garmet-sellers, these scriveners, these vagabond monks, all of them rabid, scandalous, or pitiful."[2] Importantly, the remnants of their lives also took part in putting them to death: "archives of confinement, of the police, of petitions to the King, and of *lettres de cachet*."[3] He also distinguishes these lives from the terrible and inglorious men recorded in history who are famous for their infamy. Instead, these lives, "are infamous in the strict sense: they no longer exist except through the terrible words that were destined to render them forever unworthy of the memory of men."[4] Foucault explains that this kind of infamy reduces them down to "the very form in which they were driven out of the world," and they can appear to us in no other way.[5]

The project of collecting the remnants of these lives is not a revivification. It attempts to see them in only what remains, all that is already dead. Hence Foucault's decision not to give

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[1] Ibid., 159, 158.
[2] Ibid., 160.
[3] Ibid., 164. *Lettres de cachet* were letters that one could write to the king in the Classical Age requesting the internment of a family member.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.

them any sort of context or historical order. "The dream," he explains, "would have been to restore their intensity in an analysis."[6] However, he is unable to do so because, he writes, "the first intensities that had motived me remain excluded. And since there was a good chance that they wouldn't enter into the order of reasons at all, seeing that my discourse was incapable of conveying them in the necessary way, wouldn't it be better to leave them in the very form that had caused me to first feel them?"[7] Foucault acknowledges his own inability to access these lives. He cannot restore them through a historical analysis because they are completely other to him, of a different time and order that is utterly inaccessible from his own historical position. Thus, he chooses to leave them as they are; remnants that gesture at some life that was a product of another episteme, and fated to death because of it.

I imagine archival Foucault dumbfounded by these records of lives illuminated by violence, just as I am dumbfounded by our own lives in *Sexuality One* illuminated by the violence of our own eugenic grid of power. The intensity that he feels in this corporeal gesture of folding oneself over the archives, this intensity that "fades almost at once," is similar to what I feel after undergoing the strangeness of *Sexuality One*.[8] Like Foucault bent over these poem-lives, my own body repeats this gesture of folding in on itself. It hunches over with the same attentiveness to the text, my ear hovering above the page, listening for the "not one but many silences" that pierce *Sexuality One*.[9] Like archival Foucault, I can feel in this odd book "the excesses, the blend of dark stubbornness and rascality, of these lives whose disarray and

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[6] Ibid., 158.
[7] Ibid., 159.
[8] Ibid., 157.
[9] Foucault, *Sexuality One,* 27.

relentless energy one senses beneath the stone-smooth words."[10] Perhaps we might add biopower's plot points, graphs, and normal curves.

I read *Sexuality One* as a poem-life of the modern episteme. The book has many of the qualities of a poem-life. For it records our own lives, reduced to ashes by our own tactics. In our concern with the health and longevity of the species, eugenic logic takes place. We kill ourselves in the name of life. Holocausts erupt out of a concern for the purity of the race. The book is a kind of documentation of this life that makes us self-strange. That is, it holds up a mirror to the network of power through which we are subjectivated, forcing us to look back on this power as an arbitrary game with arbitrary rules that is, at the same time, deadly. Foucault writes:

> These devices are what ought to make us wonder today. Moreover, we need to consider the possibility that one day, perhaps, in a different economy of bodies and pleasures, people will no longer quite understand how the ruses of sexuality, and the power that sustains its organization, were able to subject us to that austere monarchy of sex, so that we became dedicated to the endless task of forcing its secret, of exacting the truest confessions from a shadow.[11]

Foucault situates us in the future anterior tense, the tense of the "will have been." He looks to the past of a future that has not yet come, where our episteme no longer exists, power has developed new relations, and sex is no longer the point around which power takes shape. We *will have already* come and gone.

This somewhat comical element of looking back on an episteme of which one is not a part is something that Foucault encounters in the archives. In "Infamous Men," he describes these documented encounters with power as humorous in the incongruity between an infinitesimal life and an enormous power that strikes it down: "The most pitiful lives are described with the imprecations or emphasis that would seem to suit the most tragic. A comical

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[10] Foucault, "Infamous Men," 158.
[11] Foucault, *Sexuality One,* 159.

effect, no doubt: there is something ludicrous in summoning all the power of words, and through them the supreme power of heaven and earth, around insignificant disorders or such ordinary woes."[12] What today seems like a ridiculous amount of power taking down such an ordinary life, in its own time goes unquestioned as the necessary action to take toward these lives that posed what was a legitimate threat.

Sexuality One cannot pull us out of our episteme, but it does attempt to take us to its limits. By envisioning a future in which power takes on a different economy, Foucault distances us, if only for a moment, from the episteme in which we exist and through which we understand ourselves as subjects. Foucault attempts to induce an aporia of the reader by making us look back on ourselves as strange while also being unable to escape the epistemic regime in which we exist. A self-estrangement takes place and as subjects we are fragmented.

Sexuality One is the life of the species body brought to light by the mechanisms of its death. I come to it like Foucault in the archives, undergoing his own self-undoing in the experience of these documents that are remnants of a life already come and gone. These documents, because they are inaccessible to Foucault insofar as he is entirely outside of the episteme in which they took place, reflect Foucault back onto himself, in a way. I can only suggest that the intensities Foucault was feeling had to do with his own, perhaps unintentional, realization of the arbitrariness of his own episteme, the precariousness of his own subjectivity, this feeling incited by the lives documented in "the precarious domicile of these words."[13]

So what is a poem-life? The best answer I can give comes from what I have already mentioned in my preface. A poem-life, I think, is attached to poetry's etymology in "poiesis," or

[12] Foucault, "Infamous Men," 165.
[13] Ibid., 162.

"making." The poetry that happens is not in the documents themselves. The poetry erupts in Foucault's encounter with them that causes him to undergo a transformation.

In her book *Mad For Foucault* (2010), Lynne Huffer describes this poetic interplay between Foucault and the archives as erotic. She writes, "When Foucault enters the archive, the archival 'body' is transformed: new parts of the archive are eroticized in a new clash between the poem-lives and power. This sex play in the archives creates new configurations of the shadows and profiles of the archival body."[14] She goes on to show how Foucault's transformation of the archival body works in both directions. The archives, too, have an effect on Foucault, "where the archives—the known—act on the knower. Thus, 'the situation [of power] may be reversed' by an erotic, ethical listening that undoes the subject in his will to knowledge, producing vibrations, physical sensations, and feelings in the knower that, paradoxically, cannot be named."[15] The Foucault that goes into this site—a site that is a collection of violent documents about real people, pitiful lives that have lived and died somewhere in history's elisions, used by historians in order to repeat the violent historical gesture of writing history's definitive narrative over again, and entered by Foucault himself to gain information about these people—this is not the same Foucault that comes out of the archives. In Huffer's "erotic, ethical listening," which I will later describe as a poetic listening, Foucault experiences these lives as intensities. His position as a subject confronting the alterity of the archives is undone. In the face of something so utterly ungraspable, unknowable beyond the few words that bring them to us, Foucault becomes ungraspable to himself.

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[14] Lynne Huffer, *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 251.
[15] Ibid.

Why poem-*lives?* They may just as well be poem-deaths, since the archives do after all collect remnants of people who lived in the past. But I think Foucault chooses the word "lives," because of their transformative potential for the subject that encounters them. It is not that these people are brought back to life, but rather, they undermine life as articulated through the episteme of their observer. Foucault as a subject coming from a different order of power, is undermined. They reveal power's arbitrary rules and games through which one is subjectivated, and thus put one's own self into question. They open the potential for new rules and games. But this opening of potential for new rules and games, the same move we see Foucault make at the end of *Sexuality One,* stops there, at the limit to how and what one can know.

The poem-lives bring Foucault to his limits. If we read *Sexuality One* as a poem-life, that is, if we read it as a document of a power that kills through arbitrary rules and games, we experience this epistemic undermining that takes us to our own limits. What transpires is a close reading of the poetic tactics *Sexuality One* uses in order to induce the self-transforming experience of a limit.

Chapter I:

Poiesis as a listening for exclusions and elisions

Section I:

A poetic rethinking of life

This chapter is about a poetic remaking of life in biopower. In order to undergo this remaking of life that resists *bios*—a conception of life that relentlessly tracks and monitors in order to eugenically shape the species at large—we need to read *Sexuality One* as poetry, as Foucault does with the archival documents, precisely for poetry's concern with transformation. That is, poetry is a transformative genre, based on its own rules and games that find their system, creating and undoing themselves.

I suggest here that to read a document as poetry is to listen to what is not said. In other words, we must listen to the silences, as Foucault does when he senses a life, unknowable to him, that exceeds the archival words. Because this life can only appear in the mechanisms of its death, to sense the life that teems beneath the words, the plot points, the normal curves of biopower, one must feel this as an intensity that comes about in the confrontation of what is not there. In doing so, we cannot make this life appear, but we can feel it in its absences.

Sexuality One stems from Foucault's earlier project in *History of Madness*.[1] Our sexually saturated apparatus of power emerges from historically contingent and constantly shifting relations to madness, culminating in Freud, claiming to have finally made madness speak. Madness acts as a precursor to *Sexuality One* insofar as it examines our shifting relations of madness to power right up to the point of its culmination in bios. Huffer asks, "If Foucault called *Sexuality One Madness'* 'twin,' is bios the bad twin of the ghost of *Madness*? And, if bios is

[1] Huffer, *Mad For Foucault.*

crucial for the deployment of the grid of modern sexuality, might there be another concept of life that promises transformation?"[2] She locates this other concept of life in *eros*, or an erotic interplay between Foucault and the archival poem-lives.

Despite their differences, both works trace "the sounds of missing bodies."[3] Or at least this is how Mark Jordan, in his book *Convulsing Bodies,* describes Foucault's earliest major project in *History of Madness*. I think this impossible task to trace the sounds of missing bodies, or to listen for a history that never happened—voices that were excluded from language, we might add—is a task that Foucault never truly leaves behind.[4] *Infamous Men* is Foucault's archival experience with poem-lives, *real* lives both comic and tragic. Their actually having lived and died separates them from just mere literature for Foucault: "These discourses really crossed lives; existences were actually risked and crossed in these words."[5] Perhaps poetry's ability to border both fiction and reality is also why he chooses this genre to describe them, for power is both an arbitrary game and the very real mechanism that kills us.

Both Jordan in *Convulsing Bodies* and Huffer in *Mad for Foucault* discuss the impossibility that is *Madness*. How can we hear madness without subjecting it to the violence of reason? Huffer writes, "Foucault's ethical project in *History of Madness* is built on a paradox. The paradox is familiar: to explain unreason or make it speak is to betray unreason with reason's language about madness"[6] She goes on: "The stakes are epistemological—what can we know?—and ethical—to whom are we accountable? They are also thoroughly historical: to explain

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[2] Ibid., 256.
[3] Mark D. Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies: Religion & Resistance in Foucault* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 14.
[4] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley et al., vol. 2 of *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1998), 369.
[5] Foucault, "Infamous Men," 160.
[6] Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 242.

unreason is to return, impossibly, to the time before a great division, an epistemic break that cannot be breached. Unreason exposes the alterity of history, the untranslatability of the historical other."[7]

I read *Sexuality One* as having the same stakes with which Huffer reads *Madness*. The book attempts to make us other to ourselves, situating us in the future anterior tense, attempting to pull us outside of our present moment and make us look back on ourselves as strange—to experience ourselves from the other side of an unbreachable epistemic break. This self-estrangement is what Foucault is attempts to achieve when he propels us into a retrospective future on the very last page of the book. Foucault attempts to make us "untranslatable" to ourselves in order to experience the same inarticulability he feels in his encounters with the archival poem-lives.

My reading of the peculiar book repeats Foucault's brush with these anonymous lives in the violent site of the archives. Foucault is in a position of violence; he only comes to know these lives through history's objectification of them that reduces these people to a few words and phrases. Here, I also find myself in a position of violence, observing biopower from within its very structure. But in listening for the bodies that scream out and convulse beneath power, I am forced to undergo an experience that I cannot quite describe as anything other than a disorientation, an intensity, a dissolution.

As I've already pointed out in my introduction, this collection of archival documents in "Infamous Men" is, Foucault states, "guided by nothing more than my taste, my pleasure, an emotion, laughter, surprise, a certain dread, or some other feeling whose intensity I may have

[7] Ibid., 242.

trouble justifying, now that the first moment of discovery has passed."[8] So too is this project. I am haunted by this restless bouquet of intensities—laughter, surprise, dread, vertigo we might add—that the experience of *Sexuality One* induces in me. Each time after reading its final, ironic line—"The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our 'liberation' is in the balance"—I am left in shock and silence.[9]

What are we to do when confronted with this poem-life of modern power that is all the violence of ourselves? I am caught in the same paradox that Huffer identifies in *Madness*. The question has perhaps shifted from how to make unreason speak to how to make visible those masked over through normalization and silently rejected into death. How does one see this other that is at once ourselves without performing the same panoptic surveillance of power? The question, I suppose, is how can we see ourselves in a way that does not succumb to biopower's continuous surveilling gaze?

The answer, I think, lies in a double meaning of surveillance. In French, the verb "to surveil"— surveiller — is comprised of its root verb "veiller," meaning "to watch," and the prefix "sur," or "over," which suggests an intensification of this watching. Rather than a behavior of care or attentiveness that the verb veiller connotates, this intensified watching transforms into the constant violent surveillance of modern power. The counter play to this relentless monitoring, plotting, and regulating is in this other notion of what it means to watch held in the root of the verb—the wakefulness of keeping vigil, of mourning, of caring for someone, of tending to the body of the archive, the body that has collapsed onto itself in madness, the species body subject to eugenic ordering.

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[8] Foucault, "Infamous Men," 157.
[9] Foucault, *Sexuality One*, 159.

In reading *Sexuality One* as a poem-life, I repeat here Foucault's archival experience where he encounters the life of the other through the violence that strikes it down. Similarly to Foucault's experience of undergoing a self-undoing intensity in the archives, *Sexuality One* undermines my position as an "I" with full agency. Rather, my "I" undergoes a dissolution, an aporia. I am reflected back onto myself as utterly strange. My body is left fragmented in its gesture of collapse. But in reading this book as poetry—that is, as receptive to allowing it to take me to my own limits—the poetic possibility of a self-transformation arises.

We can only find these flash existences, these shadows and murmurs if we read for Foucault's poetry, if we listen to all the silences that perforate power because to read as poetry is to read with a receptivity to a text that allows us to feel its intensities. Just as poetry bends the rules of language to make something else appear or relies on the music of phonemes to reach a meaning other than the one designated to the words themselves, *Sexuality One* performs power's ruses to hollow them out and allow "a light coming from elsewhere" to make visible all that gets elided in power's mechanisms of hypervisibility.[10]

While it is a book that is in itself destructive, hollowing out power of all its truth, revealing its truth as mere games and arbitrary rules, perhaps it opens up a space for something else within it. What comes after the austerity of *Sexuality One*? The book is, after all, an introduction. Is there something in the line breaks, the caesuras, the rhythmic pauses rife within his work for which we must listen? Jordan, who reads Foucault as a "writer of absence," recognizes his poetic sensibility. He writes, "The action that Foucault performs in bending down to hear the murmurs is a direct response to a command in Char: 'The poet recommends: 'Bend down, bend down further.'' To the page of poetry. The archival document not yet recognized as

[10] Foucault, "Infamous Men," 161.

poetry. To the murmurs of the silenced mad. To the echoes of retreating gods."[11] This image gives us Foucault the poet, Foucault the reader of poetry, bending over the archival documents, listening for the murmurs behind the clinical words that recorded 17th century madness. Here, I mimic Foucault, transforming these documents into poem-lives through this erotic, poetic listening. My own interaction with *Sexuality One*, the effacing intensity I undergo in my reading, transforms the book into a poem-life. Of whom? Perhaps the species body; the face dissolving at the edge of the sea at the end of *The Order of Things*.[12] I sense a similar rascality, as Foucault does behind the archival words, exceeding the simulacrum of life that is bios. These sensation made possible through the poetic attentiveness to silence allows the book to transform me as well.

Sexuality One ends with silence. After all of its compulsive stuttering and reiterations of itself, it leaves us with its last irony, poking fun at us for seeking our liberation in the very site of our subjection, which is this array of sexuality: bodies and pleasures organized around while simultaneously creating the fictitious sign of sex. It is here, at the end of the book, confronted with our own irony, that we must bend down, bend down further, to listen to all that silence. This is where the book really begins, I think. This is where we become crucial as readers whose to listen for these fissures within language, the points where language ceases and closes in on itself, as it does in a poem, at a line break, a stanza break, the beats between a refrain.

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[11] Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies*, 19.
[12] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences,* trans. *Les Mots et les choses*, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1970), 387.

Section II:

Gestures of exclusion and poetic listening

The gestures of exclusion that occur within power require this other kind of listening in order to become attuned to what is excluded in its very structure, to experience it in its absence, its condemnation that occurs at the moment of its birth. The exclusion of madness, for instance, is built within the very structure of reason; it depends on madness for its own positivity. In *Sexuality One* this exclusion of madness becomes internalized; we are all understood in terms of our madness (which transforms into the language of perversions) enabling power to take on a new form of eugenic logic about correction and purification. Everything is made visible through biopower, concerned with the optimization of life. However, Foucault reveals how, paradoxically, this proliferation of biological discourses, and this relentless gridding of life for the sake of its own propagation, ends in holocausts of the race.

First, however, I would like to show how this gesture of exclusion emerges in *Madness*, for this exclusionary structure becomes internalized in biopower. It will also become necessary for my later discussion of *Sexuality One's* chiastic undoing of these paradoxical structures from which power emerges. Significantly, Foucault discusses a tripartite structure of reason, madness, and unreason. Although it is impossible to systematize these terms neatly, for they are not used in the same ways throughout the book, generally speaking, madness is created for reason. That is, reason depends upon the exclusion of madness, not as something it can ever itself be, but as something it can study, an object of its gaze. Foucault writes, "*The necessity of madness* throughout the history of the West is linked to that decisive action that extracts a significant language from the background noise and its continuous monotony…"[13] Unreason erupts from

[13] Foucault, "Preface," xxxii.

this "continuous monotony" in the background of reason's exclusion of madness. That is, it is a byproduct of this exclusion from which reason can continue to create madness, objectify and other and create the world as a mad object of its study.

In his 1961 preface to *Madness* he points to a "universality of the Western *ratio*" that develops from its division from and exclusion of the Orient.[14] The violence of imperialism and the violence of reason go hand in hand for Foucault. This silencing is a violent gesture that is not a mere act of taking over, but of creating something for the purpose of its exclusion. A positivity arises from ascribing something to the realm of complete negativity. Through this process of exclusion, it is rendered inarticulable. This "silencing" that is within the very structure of imperialistic division allows the west to pursue its imperialist agenda by creating for itself a silent inaccesibable other that can only ever be the object of its annexation.

In a 1971 interview with Fons Elders about his work in *Madness*, Foucault makes explicit this comparison between silencing and imperialism when he says:

> [I]n order to know madness it first had to be excluded. Maybe we could also say that in order t o know other cultures—non-Western cultures, so-called primitive cultures, or American, African, and Chinese cultures etc.—in order to know these cultures, we must no doubt have had not only to marginalize them, not only to look down upon them, but also to exploit them to conquer them and in some ways through violence keep them silent? We suppressed madness, and as a result came to know it. We suppressed foreign cultures, and as a result came to know them.[15]

It is also worth noting that Foucault is writing in the backdrop of the French-Algerian war that took place from the mid-50s to the early 60s, historically situating his work in his criticisms of France's imperialist endeavor to annex Algerian land. In the imperial silencing of these other

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[14] Foucault, "Preface," xxx.
[15] Michel Foucault, interview by Fons Elders, *Freedom and Knowledge: a hitherto unpublished interview*, ed. Fons Elders, trans. Lionel Claris, (Amsterdam: Elders Sepcial Productions BV, 2013), 28.

cultures, which is an imposed silence that establishes peopled land as empty and for the taking, the west comes to know other cultures as objects of its gaze.

Basically, the act of exclusion causes something to become a type or a character, and thus allows it to be known—but only known through the lens of the one performing the exclusion. That is to say, through this exclusion that is simultaneously a typification or characterization, something becomes known only through the retrospective gaze of that which has condemned it to the region of the unknowable: "A region, no doubt, where it would be a question more of the limits than of the identity of a culture."[16] That is, this creation of something (i.e. madness) occurs through its exclusion. The exclusion is precisely what delimits the episteme and is therefore a constitutive part of it.

Instead of coming to know something through a method that creates an "other" as an object of its gaze, Foucault wants to bend down toward the silence of that which is first and foremost silenced. To make madness speak would be disingenuous, once again subjecting it to the violence of the ratio. I think this is where these exclusionary structures call for Char's gesture of bending down and listening for the breaks in the poem, the rhythmic pauses that rupture reason and language and allow this other to appear, even if only through a physical "sense." We must read for these absences, "both empty and peopled at the same time, of all the words without language that appear to anyone who lends an ear, as a dull sound from beneath history, the obstinate murmur of a language talking *to itself…*"[17]

A Foucauldian absence cannot be taken as merely empty.[18] The shock of this paradox, sensing a presence in these voids, is the shock of seeing all the death behind an episteme. It is the

[16] Foucault, "Preface," xxix.
[17] Ibid., xxxi.
[18] Ibid.

shock of sensing the real lives condemned by so few words behind the archival texts. The geographic architectures of exclusion in Paris are haunted by the mad just as our epistemic structures are haunted by madness. In the same way one feels an uncomfortable spectral presence, one feels the disquieting murmur of the excluded from within the episteme, if only one bends down close enough to listen.

Foucault implicates western imperialism again at the very end of *Madness*. He describes the moment at which an oeuvre, or an artistic or literary body of work, collapses into nothingness. Madness, which he defines as the absence of an oeuvre, does not reveal the unifying secret behind the works, but instead shatters the oeuvre entirely.[19] At the end of *Madness,* Foucault invokes Nietzsche, Artaud, and Van Gogh, three figures who notoriously went mad at the end of their lives. Their works were irreconcilable with their descent into madness; "Van Gogh, who did not want to 'ask the doctors' permission to paint', knew very well that his oeuvre and his madness were incompatible."[20] In other words, their going mad was the anticlimactic end to "ingenious" oeuvres, bodies of work that veered so close to some sort of "truth." Their truth instead was in their exposure as farce, as the ultimate inability to tap into madness. Madness hollowed out their bodies of work and divested them of the truth into which they supposedly gazed. Literature and art, that which was supposed to be the point of connection between madness and reason, that which could make madness speak, culminates in madness itself, silencing their oeuvres by revealing just how arbitrary they are. What was once a cohesive corpus, at the moment of this collapse, becomes inane, mad speech.

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[19] Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Khalfa, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Jean Kahlfa, (New York: Routledge, 2006) 535-6.
[20] Ibid., 536.

Foucault writes, "Nietzsche's madness is the collapse of his thought."[21] Nietzsche experiences an incoherent self at the end of his life that also makes his work and thought incoherent. The oeuvre of these thinkers is absent and impossible as they fall into madness. Foucault describes this as a moment of confrontation between a body of work and its undoing. He explains:

> [E]verything that is necessarily blasphemous in an oeuvre is reversed and, in the time of the oeuvre that has slumped into madness, the world is made aware of its guilt. Henceforth and through the mediation of madness, it is the world that becomes guilty (for the first time in the history of the West) in relation to the oeuvre: it is now arraigned by the oeuvre, constrained to speak its language, and obliged to take part in a process of recognition and reparation, to find an explanation *for* this unreason, and *explain itself* before it.[22]

Although Foucault invokes real people who went mad, this concept of madness as the absence of an oeuvre is also applicable to epistemes that collapse when confronted with their own madness. In other words, when Foucault hollows out our sexual dispositif in *Sexuality One* and reveals the arbitrary games of power, he renders the episteme mad. Sex can no longer sustain its "oeuvre" of sex and bodies when it is rendered an incoherent, arbitrary game.

Once madness enters into the oeuvre of the ratio, for instance, reason collapses. In this confrontation a coherent body of work must face its own ruses. Until it experiences its own absence, it has laid claim to a hidden unifying secret that brings it together in a single point of connection.

Foucault suggests that when this confrontation occurs, when an episteme meets its annihilation through the seed crystal of madness, the west will become "guilty." The word "guilt" is a strange choice, and one of which we should immediately be wary. Its invocation is highly ironic. After having just read the entirety of *Madness* about the impossibility of making

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[21] Ibid., 537.
[22] Ibid.

madness speak and the violent gesture that is the ratio, the word "guilty" (which is a concept that emerges from a moral condemnation similar to those attached to madness), and Foucault's off-hand mention of madness's "language," sparks an instant doubt: How can madness, necessarily excluded from reason and language, confront reason with guilt to force reason to speak?

Foucault employs "guilt" to mark an ironic a reversal. Madness, always subject to reason's silencing and objectification, given speech only through a kind that is disingenuous to it and impossible for it, will now demand a speech that reason cannot give when it is confronted with its own madness. When the western ratio faces its "guilt" and the precarious violent structure of exclusion on which it maintains itself, it will need to "explain" itself to unreason. But it will be unable to do so in this reversal that has rendered its codes meaningless and arbitrary. In fact, the moment of the episteme's confrontation with its own madness is the moment at which its unsustainability is revealed, the moment it is shown to be rooted in the very thing it excludes, and thus the moment that it shatters.

With the word guilt Foucault seduces us with something that looks like an ethics, or a moment of atonement, which is exactly what we desire after nearly six hundred pages of reason's violent gesture. The careless reader sees this confrontation as madness' moment of redemption; suddenly confronting reason and making reason stand guilty before it. We picture the pathetic figure of reason cowering in the face of madness. But a more careful reading suggests that when madness arraigns reason, the moment of confrontation is the moment of a complete collapse of the entire oeuvre, the entire episteme. The precarious structure of reason sustains itself only by neglecting its groundlessness, neglecting that it has walked off a precipice, or more aptly, has only ever been situated on thin air. Madness is this precipitous realization where the oeuvre gives out: "Madness is an absolute rupture of the oeuvre: it is the constitutive moment of an abolition,

which founds the truth of the oeuvre in time; it delineates the outer limit, the line of its collapse, the outline against the void."[23] Madness cannot confront reason in something like its historical moment. Madness is always already silenced, and can only remain that way. Thus, Foucault bends down toward the poetic silences of the mad. *Madness* is a collection of documents almost entirely written *about* the mad, but never directly by them; the mad absence from speech shocks us.

[23] Foucault, *Madness*, 536.

Section III:

The intensification of life in twentieth century eugenics

Crucially, Foucault's concern with imperialism in his early work in *Madness* shifts to a concern with eugenic movements in the modern era of biopolitics. The stakes of *Madness,* how to make madness speak in a mode different from reason's objectification, are intensified in *Sexuality One*; can we make life appear in a way that is different from biopower's panoptic gaze?

Eugenics erupts within and also enables biopower insofar as it focuses on the health of the species. The dark side of this life-optimizing power is that it leads to holocausts of the population that occur in the name of life. A power that seeks to make live through purification of the race simultaneously has the ability to subject the entire population to death. Importantly, this happens in the midst of psychoanalysis, which plays a key role in this eugenicist logic, particularly for its emphasis on sex and the proliferation of discourses surrounding sex.[24]

Sex takes hold of bodies on both the micro and macrocosmic levels. It is that which gives power access to both "the life of the body and the life of the species," enabling its eugenic hold on society: "Spread out from one pole to the other of this technology of sex was a whole series of different tactics that combined in varying proportions the objective of disciplining the body and that of regulating populations."[25] In other words, sex is both a means of mastering the individual, monitoring and plotting bodies down to their finest parts, as well as the mode through which individual data is amalgamated into descriptive and prescriptive information about the species.

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[24] It is important to note that Foucault does not regard psychoanalysis itself as eugenic, just one of the main ways in which we become sexualized subjects in the 20th century. Eugenic logic takes hold of us on the level of "sex," because it is something that lends access to both the species and the individual.

[25] Foucault, *Sexuality One*, 146.

These two axes of life—the individual and the species—come together in a violent calculus of normalization.

Foucault's norm develops from Georges Canguilhem's understanding of the norm in his book, *The Normal and the Pathological* (1966). He explains: "Since *norma*, etymologically, means a T-square, normal is that which bends neither to the right nor left, hence that which remains in a happy medium; from which two meanings are derived: (1) normal is that which is such that ought to be; (2) normal, in the most usual sense of the word, is that which is met with in the majority of cases of a determined kind, or that which constitutes either the average or standard of a measurable characteristic."[26] The notion of norm as situated in this ambiguous space of what is and what ought to be imbues seemingly neutral statistical information with value judgments. Canguilhem goes on: "One should also stress how this ambiguity is deepened by the realist philosophical tradition which holds that, as every generality is the sign of an essence, and every perfection the realization of the essence, a generality observable in fact ties the value of realized perfection, and a common characteristic, the value of an ideal type."[27]

In her book *Sleights of Reason* (2011), Mary Beth Mader elaborates upon the violence of a seemingly neutral collection of data. Instead, this descriptive data transforms into what "ought" to be, both as a predictive mechanism for the future and in the notion of a general norm determining some "essence" of a particular population. In expounding upon the notion of normalization in the final act of *Sexuality One*, situating the Foucauldian norm as rooted in but departing from Canguilhem's norm, she links biopower's eugenic logic to statistical normal curves. Foucault explains power's shift from sovereign law based power to a power that "effects

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[26] Georges Conguilhem, *The Normal and the Pathological*, trans. Carolyn R. Fawcett, (Brooklyn: Urzone, Inc., 1989), 125.
[27] Ibid.

distributions around the norm."[28] Foucault clarifies that it is not that law has faded away entirely; rather, "law operates more and more as norm, and […] the judicial institution is increasingly incorporated into a continuum of apparatuses (medical, administrative, and so on) whose functions are for the most part regulatory."[29]

Mader suggests that the most fundamental technology of this life optimizing power is the normal curve. She argues that we should not take Foucault's norm to mean "law […] rule, custom, or tradition," but instead "the statistical sense of the norm as the mean of a normal curve."[30] Mader also picks up on Foucault's description of modern power as "continuous," suggesting that not only is power continuous in the sense of constant monitoring, but also in the sense of mathematical continuity where disparate plot points on a graph are amalgamated into the curve of a normal mean, giving the population a quality of coherence. These discrete plot points visibly coalesce into a single line, a line that holds political weight, a line that has the ability to shape populations. Power's dual role of individualizing down to the finest particles of life and synthesizing bodies into groups creates a feedback loop where the individual is utterly bound to the race, and the race to the individual. Both are linked in an implicative relation where the health of one directly concerns the health of the other. Later, I will discuss this linkage as a chiasmus: the health of the individual determines the health of the species and the health of the species determines the health of the individual. In this sense, they become inextricably bound, leading to the concept of the "species-body."

In these statistical sleights, the species-body lends information about single individuals (no matter where they are situated on these normal curves) and the individual contributes to the

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[28] Foucault, *Sexuality One,* 144.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Mary Beth Mader, "Sleights of the Norm" in *Sleights of Reason: norm, bisexuality, development,* (Albany, State University of New York Press: 2011), 43, 50.

combined information of an entire group. Mader explains this relationship between individuals and groups when she asserts, "it is the continuous nature of some statistical distributions and the statistical use of basic mathematical notions such as the ratio and the average that ground the continuity of both the individual and collectives in Foucault's account of modern biopower."[31] This calculus of normalization has implications for the creation of modern subjects. Mader outlines how statistics goes from qualitative description of individuals to qualitative comparison that inextricably situates these individuals within the context of a larger group. Further, even, these different normal curves are mathematically compared, from which new curves are developed based on their intercomparison.[32]

Mader writes, "[normalization] creates social continuities on the basis of politically instituted mathematical continuities through the immense apparatuses of linked regulatory institutions and practices that employ statistical tools."[33] The normal curves are not merely descriptive of the population; they have political sway, molding a population through the logic of optimization. The underbelly of this highly politicized technology is the "eugenic ordering of society."[34]

Through what strange twists does eugenics emerge in the twentieth century? I suggest here that Foucault makes a shift from imperialist logic in the story of the 17th century that we find in *Madness* — reason's creation and exclusion of madness mimicking the creation and exclusion of the "ethnic other" in the western imperialist regime — to a eugenic logic that arises within modern bios. As power develops into a panoptic grid, taking hold of life on every level, the imperial agenda of the 17th century becomes the eugenic agenda of the twentieth century.

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[31] Ibid., 45.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 64.
[34] Foucault, *Sexuality One,* 149.

Foucault historically situates modern eugenics as culminating in the Nazi regime. Pointedly, in section five, he compares modern power to a holocaust. He points to an irony inherent in this regime of life and bios: "wars were never as bloody as they have been since the nineteenth century, and all things being equal, never before did regimes visit such holocausts on their own populations."[35]

Through this process of normalization, humans become a singular species-body and life becomes life-itself. Foucault calls this moment of especiation, if you will, "the entry of life into history, that is, the entry of a phenomena peculiar to the life of the human species into the order of knowledge and power, into the sphere of its political techniques."[36] That is, as "immanent risks of death" such as "epidemics and famine" became decreasing concerns in the industrial and agricultural revolutions, a space emerged for power to focus on the intensification of life and the development of its technologies.[37] Foucault goes on: "biological existence was reflected in political existence." The biological relaxation around death leads to power's shifting focus on making live instead of taking life. He asserts, "it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body."[38] And so, in an incidental relaxation toward the threat of death, politics, too, shifts its focus from the sovereign "right of death" to a "power over life."

Through a complex series of switch points or *échangeurs*, this life-power becomes inherently lethal on the level of the population. These switch points are the points at which two unrelated epistemic orders meet in such a way that is more than a mere combination of the two; a new regime arises that fuses elements of both systems into a new apparatus. In her discussion of

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[35] Ibid., 136-7.
[36] Ibid., 142.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 143.

Abnormal, Foucault's 1974-5 lectures at the Collège de France, Mader describes how these switch points function in the case of the production of criminals, which occurs at the interchange of medical and legal practices. Importantly, "Foucault identifies the operative strength of these switch points with their epistemological fragility."[39] This new conceptual realm where the medical meets the legal, importantly, is linked to a logic of *gradation*, that Mader cites as the early emergence of normalization.

Mader quotes further, "the norm brings with it a principle of both qualification and correction."[40] She elaborates, "a central part of the uniqueness of normalization, as opposed to prior exclusive forms of power, is that it controls precisely by qualifying, but by qualifying bodies with quantifiable qualities. By endowing bodies with measurable features, it installs the conceptual basis for their control and management."[41] Mader points to the ways in which biopower is "productive" insofar as it equips bodies with points at which power can control them. Similarly to how reason creates madness for its objectification and observation, biopower qualifies bodies with observable traits from which it can gain individual and regulatory control. In the vein of eugenics, these bodies are not equally equipped. The traits with which certain bodies are equipped are inherently attached to values and hierarchized as a part of their ordering, allowing for racisms to occur. Eugenics is especially dangerous for these racisms because the murder of biopower is insidious. The traits deemed optimal are those that power "makes live" while others are passively rejected into death.

Mader goes on to discuss normalization's connection with a logic of correction that emerges in *Discipline and Punish*. She explains, "The notion of the norm is what permits power

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[39] Mader, "Sleights of the Norm," 46.
[40] Ibid., 47.
[41] Ibid.

to assume a therapeutic guise. For if the lawbreaker and the law follower can be situated on a continuum of lawful conduct, the corrigibility of the lawbreaker, and the fragility of the law follower, come into sight."[42] In *Sexuality One*, we see how this corrective normalization becomes explicitly linked to sex. In a dangerous interchange, psychoanalysis links up with the logic of normalization, enabling power to take control on the level of the individual insofar as one is a sexualized individual, and the level of the population, insofar as reproduction is linked to the purity of the race.

Importantly, Mader also reveals how these normal curves shape the species body through their future oriented logic. The normal curves are not merely descriptive tools that give information about the population, but they are also used as tools of prediction. She explains this process in five parts: "individual measurement," where data is gathered from individuals in a population, "aggregation of individual measurements," where "these individual measurements are tabulated together, "mean of the measurements," where an average is calculated to lend information or a "property" to the group, "rational redistribution of the results of aggregation and averaging," where this group information is applied back to individual members "in the form of calculated likelihoods, or risks, expressed as *ratios* or rates," and finally "generalization of the results," where the information about the smaller sample group is meant to lend information about the larger population.[43]

In this future oriented logic Mader reveals certain logical sleights that occur in the process of transferring the descriptive information collected from individuals to the prescriptive future oriented predictions applied to entire populations. A temporal fissure occurs between the past information of people measured and the future-oriented mathematical sleights of using this

[42] Ibid., 48.
[43] Ibid., 54.

past data for future prediction. The predications are applied back onto populations in the form of eugenic regulation. In my next chapter I will show how this eugenic shaping of the species body ties into a chiastic logic of biopower. Further, I will explain the ways in which Foucault uses chiastic poetic tactics in *Sexuality One* to reveal similar epistemological discontinuities similar to the temporal sleights that Mader reveals here.

Chapter II:

The poetics of undoing *Sexuality One*

Section I:

Sex as a hollow signifier

Poetry is intimate with silence. We must recognize Foucault's work as poetry, as he does the remnants of anonymous lives in the archives, and listen for what convulses in its silences. *Sexuality One* is a disturbing book. I can only describe my experience with it as maddening, something of what Foucault calls a "limit experience," where we are put into touch with our own borders. It is repetitious, obsessive, self-annihilating. Foucault is a thinker of paradox; not only does he invoke paradox throughout his writing, but his writing is also mimetic of paradox. But perhaps the self-undoing logic of these paradoxes open up a space for something else. Through this rupture, a light enters. In this chapter, I will explore how Foucault' poetic devices create these fissures through which, if only for a moment, a flash of light seeps through and makes something else visible. But visible only as fragments, shadows, and hauntings.

Sex, then, is that ultimate signifier that allows Freud to subject madness to the codified order, or what Foucault calls an apparatus of power, a system of technologies, or a *dispositif,* (which better illustrates that this "code" is both discursive and non-discursive, concerned with the gridding and disciplining of bodies and pleasures as much as a proliferation of discourses surrounding sex). All things, including seemingly delirious speech found in practices of free association, implicate sex, that which lies at the base of our unconscious. Our episteme, then, orders itself around sex. Simultaneously, this idea of "sex" is created through the sexual constellation of discourses and disciplines.

Another way to understand this perhaps, is to understand how the epistemic ordering of the 19th century and this new madness engage in a mutually reflective relationship. Madness is not excluded because it threatens the codified order, as it does in the Great Confinement. Importantly, this type of exclusion is still an exclusion within. It threatens the codified order of reason, which nonetheless depends on madness for its existence. But now, our madness is implanted within the episteme itself as some sort of necessarily hidden truth in each of us. It must maintain the illusion of its exclusion and inaccessibility in order to continuously inform language and technologies of power.

Foucault identifies a hollow or a "lacunary reserve" that forms where language and speech, or an order and its madness, imply one another.[1] This lacunary reserve is the reserve of unreason from which reason can keep pulling from to make the world around it an object of its gaze. Between madness and reason is this lacuna of meaning where neither can cross but are nonetheless connected. He writes, "Western madness has become a non-language because it has become a double language (a language which only exists in this speech, a speech that says nothing but its language) — i.e. a matrix of the language, which strictly speaking, says nothing."[2] That is to say, we have now made madness speak because the code of language, or more broadly the apparatus of power, organizes itself around that which it is the dual site of our madness and our truth: sex. Sex as the ultimate sign, both the signifier and the signified, allows it to take on the status of the hidden causality behind everything. Foucault writes, "First, the notion of 'sex' made it possible to group together, in an artificial unity, anatomical elements, biological functions, conducts, sensations, and pleasures, and it enabled one to make use of this fictitious

[1] Foucault, *Madness*, 547.
[2] Ibid.

unity as a causal principle, an omnipresent meaning, a secret to be discovered everywhere."[3] Once everything is sexualized, it can all point back to sex.

That last form of mad speech, or excluded language, that Foucault refers to in "Madness, the Absence of an Oeuvre" (1964) is not a breaking of the rules of language or an utterance that is forbidden. It is this language that says nothing. Language, this structure of meaning, suddenly hollows itself out in this fourth form of mad speech. The seeds that Foucault plants here in this appendix essay to his first major work, become fleshed out in *Sexuality One*. The book divulges the lacuna at the heart of our knowledge. If madness is the absence of an oeuvre, then one could say that *Sexuality One* exposes the madness that is our very episteme. An oeuvre, or a coherent body of work, suddenly dissipates when madness enters. Madness is not that which organizes an oeuvre, but that which explodes it. *Sexuality One,* revealing the lacuna in our episteme, is the event of madness that explodes our contemporary oeuvre.

In Part IV of *Sexuality One* Foucault explains, "At issue is not a movement bent on pushing rude sex back into some obscure and inaccessible region, but on the contrary, a process that spreads it over the surface of things and bodies, arouses it, draws it out, and bids it to speak, implants it in reality and enjoins it to tell the truth: an entire glittering array, reflected in a myriad of discourses, the obstination of powers, and the interplay of knowledge and pleasure."[4] In writing a poem-life of the sexual episteme, Foucault reveals how the meaning we attribute to sex erupts from within itself.

Because *Sexuality One* confronts the modern period, an episteme through which we still function, the book is most fundamentally disorienting. The book provides an uncanny reflection of ourselves. Sexuality, once understood as madness, is now the site of our intelligibility. In

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[3] Foucault, *Sexuality One,* 154.
[4] Foucault, *Sexuality One,* 72.

other words, sex is the main idea that we have objectified and transformed into the object of our knowledge. It is that which we hold at a distance, that at which we gaze, but also the very thing that defines us and gives us back to ourselves. Volume I confronts us with sexuality, an uncanny image of who we are. It looks exactly like us, but when cast in all its mad light, all its arbitrariness, all its games and ruses, it undermines our very subjectivity because it is the constitutive part of us that must remain hidden. The transgressive play of language in Sexuality One illuminates sex in all its disarray. The liaison to our truth is shattered.

Section II:

The chiastic function of power

The main poetic device of *Sexuality One* is the chiasmus. The word "chiasmus" stems from the Greek word for "crossing," and the Greek letter "chi," written as "X." It is the literal image of a criss-cross. Significantly, the crossing over that occurs in a chiasmus is self-contained insofar as the structure is self-referential. Its latter terms mirror its initial terms through a process of inverted parallelism: AB,'B'A'. When the first clause of the chiasmus is placed above its second clause, the terms visibly connect in the form of an X, at once interlacing them and canceling them out. The chiasmus creates an impossible effect of both separation and inextricability. Its parts at once depend upon and negate one another, where the latter half of the structure uses the terms of the former in order to reverse and invert itself. For instance: Sexuality is not subordinate to sex, but sex is secondary to sexuality. In this section I will show how power functions mostly through this chiastic logic. Later, I will reveal how Foucault undoes this logic through the chiastic structure of *Sexuality One*.

In the 1961 preface to *Madness* Foucault draws attention to the chiastic relationship between reason and madness. He identifies an initial "caesura" "that establishes the distance between reason and non-reason."[5] He declares that we must "speak of that gesture of severance, the distance taken, the void installed between reason and that which it is not, without ever leaning on the plentitude of what reason pretends to be."[6] In other words, reason and non-reason chiastically engage in a relationship of interdependence and irreparable opposition. Reason creates madness in order to maintain itself (for reason is defined through its dis-identification with madness as well as through its discourses *about* madness), but also holds madness at an

[5] Foucault, "Preface," xxviii.
[6] Ibid.

unbreachable distance. Madness is an object created by and for reason. In the birth of madness, a rift erupts at the same time, installed by reason at the moment of madness' conception (which is also reason's own conception). Foucault seeks to speak of this initial gesture of fragmentation without using reason's tactics that turn madness into an object of language. The question of how to speak of this gesture without iterating its fracture—a question with high ethical stakes, for this gesture is a lethal one—carries over to *Sexuality One*.

Foucault illustrates these poles of reason and non-reason as inextricably bound while drifting increasingly apart. He describes what he calls "the dialogue of their rupture" when he writes, "There, madness and non-madness, reason and unreason are confusedly implicated in each other, inseparable as they do not yet exist, and existing for each other, in relation to each other, in the exchange that separates them."[7]

Foucault goes on to complete the chiasmus of this initial phrase when he points to an ambiguous "rupture in a dialogue" that occurs with the emergence of "modern man" and the transformation of madness into mental illness at the end of the eighteenth century. Madness and reason are no longer separated into different domains, such as in the Great Confinement, where the mad are conglomerated into a heterogeneous mass and locked away from the rest of Paris, but still within its borders. This notion of an 'exclusion within' becomes increasingly internalized in the modern era, which Foucault identifies as the era of mental illness. The man of reason and the madman become one and the same in the silent space of dialogic rupture between reason and non-reason. The modern man adopts the dual role of the figure of reason and madness, creating a more finely ingrained internal exclusion that exists within each individual. This dual individual, both mad and not mad, is the figure of modern man. Psychiatry erupts from

[7] Ibid.

and also creates the figure of the mentally ill person who has internalized this duality. Foucault explains, "In the midst of the serene world of mental illness, modern man no longer communicates with the madman: on the one hand is the man of reason, who delegates madness to the doctor, thereby authorizing no relation other than through the abstract universality of illness; and on the other is the man of madness, who only communicates with the other through the intermediary of a reason that is no less abstract, which is order, physical and moral constraint, the anonymous pressure of the group, the demand for conformity."[8]

We find once again a chiasmus describing reason's relation to madness, now internalized together in the mentally ill patient. In this chiasmus he is both reasonable and mad; because of the mutual negation of one another he is subsequently neither one nor the other. The man of reason assigns his madness to the doctor, only relating to madness at an abstract medical distance; the man of madness only communicates through this reasonable intermediary that takes the form of social order. Foucault already, in this first preface, introduces the concept of a subject situated in relation to a larger group and disciplined within it. He hints at his project that will follow in *Discipline in Punish* (1975) and taken up again in the full-fledged form of biopower in *Sexuality One,* where subjectivity occurs on the axes of the individual and the population.

Foucault makes much of these chiastic turns that exist at the borders of epistemic breaks, out of which new epistemic regimes emerge. These epistemic twists carry with them figments of the old and new that come together in something like a chemical reaction, out of which a substance new in form arises. *Sexuality One* is all about these chiastic relationships that develop into the network of modern power.

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[8] Ibid.

These chiasms can be paroxysmal, as is the case with *Sexuality One*, which ends in holocausts of the race. The échangeurs I mention in the previous chapter, for instance, come out of this dangerous chiastic logic, where the individual and the species are implicated in one another. In such a formation, the life and health of the species is always at stake. But eugenics comes to full fruition at the interchange between old forms of power involving alliance and inheritance, and the new bourgeois system of longevity and sexuality. The bourgeois family cell is the site of their fusion. Foucault explains, "The family is the interchange of sexuality and alliance: it conveys the law and the juridical dimension in the deployment of sexuality; and it conveys the economy of pleasure and the intensity of sensations in the regime of alliance."[9] Alliance— associated with kinship, inheritance, and patriarchal transmission of wealth and name—combines with sexuality—associated with pleasures and sensations as objects of analysis, a body that produces and consumes, and the proliferation of discourses. They come together in the family cell, which incorporates both the old concepts of lineage and inheritance with the new concepts of biology and sexual development.

Psychoanalysis plays an interesting role in this strange combination of old and new. Foucault asserts, "The medicine of perversions and the program of eugenics were the two great innovations in the technology of sex of the second half of the nineteenth century."[10] Perversions erupt from the interchange between medicine and psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis itself takes hold of "what was for many centuries thought of as madness; the plentitude of our body from what was long considered its stigma and likened to a wound; our identity from what was perceived as an obscure and nameless urge."[11] Foucault describes this constellation of

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[9] Foucault, *Sexuality One*, 108.
[10] Ibid., 118.
[11] Ibid., 156.

sexuality—"bodies, pleasures, and knowledges"—as always pointing back to the "fictitious unity" of sex.[12] The eruption of sex happens through "a reversal" that "was already making itself felt at the time of the Christian pastoral of the flesh."[13]

In the chapter "The Deployment of Sexuality," Foucault describes this reversal. Already in the sixteenth century "procedures for analyzing 'concupiscence' and transforming it into discourse were established" coming out of Catholicism and Protestantism. The ritual of confession is just one example that takes on its new form in the modern era as the psychoanalytic talking cure. At the end of the eighteenth century, a technology of sex arises that is separate from religious institutions "without being truly independent of the thematics of sin."[14] Traces of these values associated with religious practices of "spiritual examination" still exist within these new medicalized technologies that "was ordered in relation to the medical institution, the exigency of normality, and—instead of the question of death and everlasting punishment—the problem of life and illness. The flesh was brought down to the level of the organism."[15] In other words, through a chiastic inversion of Christian rituals of the flesh, concerned with punishment after death, sexual technologies become medicalized, concerned with correction and normalization of life. The flesh becomes the organism.

Through yet another chiastic interchange between sexuality and alliance, these sexual technologies become eugenic. The blue blood of the aristocracy transforms into the sex of the bourgeoisie: "The concern with genealogy became a preoccupation with heredity, but included in bourgeois marriages were not only economic imperatives and rules of social homogeneity, not

[12] Ibid., 156, 157.
[13] Ibid., 156.
[14] Ibid., 116.
[15] Ibid., 117.

only the promises of inheritance, but the menaces of heredity."[16] The aristocratic concern for maintaining class and status through marriage and inheritance shifts to the bourgeois "preoccupation" with health and the fear of its genetic degenerescence. Foucault goes on, "families wore and concealed a sort of reversed and somber escutcheon whose defamatory quarters were diseases or defects of relatives."[17] Alongside the themes of nobility that permeate the bourgeoisie in these new ways involving genetic lineage (as opposed to land and money), there is simultaneously a future-oriented concern of "the indefinite extension of strength, vigor, health, and life," not just for practical economic purposes but "because of what the cultivation of its own body could represent politically, economically, and historically for the present and future of the bourgeoisie." [18]

With this image of the inverted escutcheon, Foucault suggests a mise-en-abymic logic to the new technologies of longevity.[19] This power, focused on the optimization and prolongation of life functions through a fear of genetic degenerescence. Foucault explains, "That death is so carefully evaded is linked less to a new anxiety which makes death unbearable for our societies than to the fact that procedures of power have not ceased to turn away from death."[20] These life-optimizing procedures of power are obsessed with death. At the juncture of heredity and biology erupts a logic of deteriorative reproduction. The homeostasis of inheritance becomes the mise-en-abyme of heredity; we find a repetition with a lack. The future threatens erosion. It is not a

[16] Ibid., 124.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., 125.
[19] The "mise-en-abyme," literally translating as "into the abyss," is a structure of repetition, in which something repeats itself within a larger framework ad. infinitum. Chinese nesting dolls, for instance, are an example of a mise-en-abyme.
[20] Foucault, *Sexuality One,* 138.

linear trajectory of reproduction, but instead an abyssal structure linked to the weakening of the body, the osteoporosis of the family skeleton.

Sexuality One defines sex as the deployment through which power can take control of these bodies because of its dual access to the individual and the species. Developing from Christianity's technologies of the soul that deals with sexual urges in regards to sin, modern perversions held with them this value of sin in the form of "perversions." Morality in regards to perversions is understood as deviations from a norm. Importantly, because individuals in modern normalizing power are "fundamentally comparative" these perversions become the main point of our subjectivity that bind us to the population insofar as we are always understood in comparison to the larger species body. These perversions become medicalized in a psycho-medico discourse of modern power. The ultimate signifier of Sex, something that in its very structure is elusive, becomes the lacunary reserve of this productive power. It is the murmur out from which more bodies are endowed with measurable properties. In this sense, sex as a byproduct of sexuality looks a lot like the byproduct of unreason that comes out of the chiastic connection between reason and madness.

This entire system of technologies focused around the prolongation and optimization of life, becomes paroxysmal in its chiastic relationship to death. Death recedes into the background in this new form of power that develops chiastically from sovereign power. Foucault writes, "This death that was based on the right of the sovereign is now manifested as simply the reverse of the right of the social body to ensure, maintain, or develop its own life."[21] He suggests that biopower is not a mere reversal, but an ironic doubling of sovereign power, a new "austere monarchy." The right of the sovereign, "which was formulated as the 'power of life and death'

[21] Ibid., 136.

was in reality the right to take life or let live."[22] Biopower is not merely the reverse of a power that displays "his power over life only through the death he was capable of requiring."[23] This "formidable power of death" now occurs through power's emphasis on life.[24] Foucault explains, "Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity; massacres have become vital."[25] We find the murderous displays of a monarch reversed into the growing life of the population. When the species and the individual are placed on the same grid, "the power to expose a whole population to death is the underside of a power to guarantee an individual's continued existence."[26] And so, we have not broken away from the deadly right of the monarch into an era of life or bios, but rather, through an inversion and a reversal, we have entered into mass death through the logic of vitality.

Foucault shows how our dispositif of power comes from a structure that derives its meaning from within itself. This structure is the signifier of sex. Importantly, these chiasma form out of negativity, or lack. Sex itself is chiastic. It creates a reversal and inversion of the first clause, nullifying its beginning terms. The chiasmus not only is self-nullifying, but it also lands in the negativity or inverse of where it began. This chiastic tactic, through reversal and inversion, allows us to see sex not as the madness in our unconscious, but as a fiction that we create and then ascribe to a hidden place within everyone.

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid., 136.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., 137.
[26] Ibid., 137.

Volume I is structurally chiastic. It's poetic form is mimetic of its content. Parts 4 and 5, "The Deployment of Sexuality" and "Right of Death and Power over Life" are the inversions of Parts 1 and 2, "We 'Other Victorians'" and "The Repressive Hypothesis." Part 3, "Scientia Sexualis" is the turning point of the chiasmus, where the problem of sex is constituted as a problem of truth. Within the section a reversal occurs at the point in which Scientia Sexualis is revealed as a kind of Ars Erotica. It is at this turn where our medical understanding of power shows itself as a kind of erotica, or where knowledge and power link up into a structure of pleasure and intensification, that the latter half of the book sets up a convex mirror to the first half of the book. Through a chiastic reversal, the Freudian tropes we find in the first half of the book are redeployed as power's ruses. With the latter half of the book ironically appropriating the bases of our episteme set up in the first part of the book (i.e. eros and thanatos as compulsions within us that are repressed), Foucault sets up these vectors of our intelligibility not as a hidden secret that we must reveal through confession, but rather as a secret created through and intensified by confession, or the proliferation of discourses surrounding sex. Elusive in its very structure, sex intensifies itself through an assemblage of power, knowledge, and pleasure.

This middle section reveals sex as the lacuna of our ontological and epistemological frameworks. Foucault depicts sex as the blind spot of power: "the learned discourse on sex that was pronounced in the nineteenth century was imbued with age-old delusions, but also with systematic blindness: a refusal to see and to understand; but further—and this is the crucial point—a refusal concerning the very thing that was brought to light and whose formulation was urgently solicited" (55). Thus sex takes on the dual nature of the center and the limit of the episteme. It is that to which everything refers, but also that point that remains necessarily hidden. Sex is necessarily an elusive point that we might even think of in terms of the "lacunary reserve"

of unreason that Foucault describes in “Madness, Absence of an Oeuvre.” When he describes sex as secondary to sexuality Foucault performs a chiastic reversal that hollows out sex. Sex does not contain a hidden secret; rather, it is the byproduct, the murmur, that arises from the proliferation of discourses surrounding sex. Sex is created by and for sexuality so it can sustain itself, it can continue to proliferate and take hold of bodies on micro and macrocosmic levels.

Section III:

Sexuality One as Mallarmé's "Sonnet en X"

One of the more historically grounded reasons for Foucault's poetry to be taken as a serious part of his project is the influence many of the French symbolist poets of the late 1800's had on 20th century French thought. Poet Stéphane Mallarmé, for instance, explores how meaning erupts through language and poetic form. His poem, "Sonnet en X" is an example of meaning that arises within the poem itself through its play of language. The poem is non-sensical insofar as the words do not form coherent phrases or imagery. But Mallarmé finds that when language reflects itself through structure and music, it creates its own internal system of meaning.

Lucien Dällenbach, in *The Mirror in the Text* (1977), analyzes the effect of the poem's poetic mirroring. The poem organizes itself around the made-up word "ptyx," which informs its entire rhyme scheme. When real words are rhymed with this non-word, the word takes on its own meaning while also informing the meaning of the rest of the poem. Dällenbach explains, "[Mallarmé] shows that X is an appropriate inverse symbol of reflexion itself because of its symmetrical form; that it refers to the enigmatic word ('ptyx') which repeats it in an echo; that this word in turn, reflects the poem, of which it is the perfect equivalent, as a 'total, new word, foreign to the language and as it were incantatory'…"[27] He continues: "challenged by the two negations that surround it ('nul', 'aboli'), it annihilates the poem as well by showing the essential negativity of both of them as *fictions*."[28]

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[27] Lucien Dällenbach, "C Mallarmé's 'Sonnet en X'" *The Mirror in the Text*, trans. Jeremy Whiteley and Emma Hughes, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1977), 179.
[28] Ibid., 180.

Sexuality One works in the same X-shaped logic, where the meaning attributed to sex is created by its own reflection in everything else, thereby enabling everything to point back to sex. Foucault writes this "poem" that is *Volume I* in order to undo sex as both the cause of everything and that to which everything refers. Instead, he exposes it for all its vanity.

In his essay "Madness, the Absence of an Oeuvre" (1964), Foucault articulates four types of language prohibitions.[29] He terms "language faults" that which is a violation of linguistic structures such as grammar and syntax, bordering the taboo and the impossible. In short, this first prohibition excludes madness as a violation of language's "code." The next prohibition consists of words or phrases that are forbidden within this code. He calls these "blasphemous words," such as words that have a particular religious or sexual charge. The next form of prohibition is "censorship," or words whose *meanings* are prohibited, disallowing one to even speak about them in metaphor. And most important here is the prohibition of speech that is "transgressive not in its meaning, not in its verbal matter, but in its *play*."[30] The threat of this language lies not in the words or their meanings, but the fact that this language is self-referential, extracting meaning from itself. Meaning is generated where there is none, working similarly to Mallarmé's "Sonnet en X," that establishes a mirage of meaning in its self-reflection.

This transgressive speech at play is the language that we find in Mallarmé as well as *Sexuality One*. Foucault explains this language does not have a hidden meaning, but instead "sets itself up from the very first instant in an essential fold of speech. A fold that mines it from the

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[29] Michel Foucault, "Madness, the Absence of an Oeuvre," in *History of Madness*, ed. Jean Kahlfa, trans. John Murphy and Jean Kahlfa, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 541-549.
[30] Ibid., 545.

inside, perhaps to infinity."[31] *Sexuality One,* in all of its poetics, mines this obscure lacuna at the heart of speech. The language flees into itself.

In the 19th century and 20th, Freud incites a new mad relation between language and speech. Madness no longer takes the form of forbidden speech acts but instead, it is the play of language itself. With Freud, mad speech becomes articulated through language in psychoanalysis. He claims to bring inane speech into the codified order to decipher it. Forbidden speech no longer draws from the codes of an already existing language, either by invoking impossible linguistic structures or uttering the forbidden. Language now reveals that its own secret, that which must remain hidden, is also the very condition for its existence and constellation of meaning. Language is necessarily elusive; that which it eludes is not prior to speech, but created by it so that it installs within itself the act of transgression or the appearance of liberating something. It appears to tap into a "hidden meaning," when actually this hiddenness is implanted within its very structure. Speech becomes masturbatory, creating what is hidden for its own propagation.

This exclusion within is an important motif throughout *Madness* (as well as the works that follow it), for the moment and space of exclusion is also the site of intelligibility for reason. We find this logic of 'exclusion within' from the point of the Great Confinement onward, where quite literally Paris grew so that its perimeters now encircled the spaces of confinement previously outside the borders at the time of the leper. Geographically, these architectures of negativity, representing that which the larger population is not (and therefore enabling any positive definition of what it is), are now held within the borders. This geography is also a symbol for the birth of an episteme occurring at the moment of rupture between itself and what it

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[31] Ibid.

has excluded. Foucault situates the conception of the western ratio, for instance, at the violent site of exclusion of madness. Importantly, this exclusion is not merely an exclusion of pre-existing madness that suddenly, through progress, came to be better identified and recognized. Rather, it is the incitation of madness itself. Reason as we know it is utterly dependent on madness. But through the retrospective gaze of reason that takes place after its violent birth, we cannot articulate madness through reason since it is always already excluded from the episteme. The experience of madness is rendered inarticulable at the moment it comes into being.

That is, madness in its very structure is necessarily misunderstood and incommunicable, always already silenced. Yet, it lies within reason as a necessary part of its formation. Regardless of their co-dependence, we still find a distinct division between reason and madness at the time of the Great Confinement. While madness poses a threat to reason insofar as reason depends on that which it rejects, the line of transgression still remains clear, at least up until the 19th century. Freud obfuscates the reason/madness divide introducing something that looks like poetic "language at play," where madness and its speech actually begin to inform a linguistic order. Freud claims to lend us access to our madness, our unconscious, which is also the site of our truth.

Similarly to the prior forms of exclusion within, "madness," or this new form of madness as something secretive which contains our hidden truth, is excluded within language while also being the necessary condition for its existence. With the rise of Freudian tropes of eros and thanatos, and sex as the access point to our hidden truth, Foucault characterizes this fourth form of forbidden speech as one that submits speech that "conforms to the recognized code to a different code, whose key is contained within the speech itself, so that the speech is doubled inside itself; it says what it says, but it adds a mute surplus that silently states what it says and the

code according to which it is said."[32] With everything that is said, something still remains to be said. The hidden secret always remains hidden.

In other words, beneath language a silent murmur of unreason erupts that allows the code of language to always point back to something more that exceeds it. This murmur comes from the play of the language itself. Madness is no longer forbidden speech that threatens an order of meaning, but instead it is the "prodigious *reserve* of meaning."[33] It is not a reserve of meaning in the way madness enables reason in the age of the Great Confinement, by being that which it is not. Nor is it a reserve in the sense of a metaphysical pool out of which meaning erupts. Foucault explains, "'reserve' here should understood less as a stock than as a figure that contains and suspends meaning, which furnishes the void where all that is proposed is the still-unaccomplished possibility that a certain meaning might appear there, or a second, or a third, and so on to infinity."[34] The linguistic code depends on an implication of more than what is stated. Images in dreams become symbols of our deepest desires; our drive toward sex is implicated in all of our actions.

Freud is thought to have made madness speak, to bring its speech into the realm of language and to subject it to a certain code to extract meaning from it. Language, or this proliferation of discourses, now seemed to directly refer to the sexualized madness that teems in our unconscious and indicates the hidden truth of who we are as subjects. "Freud did not discover the lost identity of meaning," Foucault objects. Instead, "he identified the irruptive figure of a signifier that is *absolutely unlike* the others."[35] This signifier is "sex," an irruptive figure that in *Sexuality One* we see creates a proliferation of discourses that all point back to it; it

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., 547.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 546.

is that to which everything refers. Conversely, everything is implicated within it. Foucault writes, "sex was thus able to function as a unique signifier and as a universal signified."[36]

What remains after all our truths are hollowed out? Is it enough to say that this destruction of truth, the revelation of it as arbitrary is an "ethical" move? Rather, I think something appears in the absences. I think these empty spaces are where we can find the traces of missing bodies. In my next chapter I will show hoe this poetic reading of a text can make life appear in a mode that resists bios.

[36] Foucault, *Sexuality One,* 154.

Chapter III:

Poetics and mourning

Section I:

Poiesis as keeping vigil

As I mentioned in the introduction, the gesture of keeping watch suggested by the French verb, "veiller," is the counter play to the intensified monitoring we find in the insidious surveilling gaze of biopower. Instead of coming to know lives in the mode of imperialism that silences the "ethnic other" and makes it an object of its gaze, in the mode of reason that depends upon its exclusion of madness, or in the mode of biopower that tracks lives on micro and macrocosmic levels to eugenically shape populations—instead of all this violence, we must come "to know" the historical other (of the archives, of ourselves presented uncannily before us in *Sexuality One*) through the more intimate connotation of knowing. Knowing not as studying an object, but knowing in the more affective sense of the verb. Huffer situates this kind of knowing in eros, or an erotic engagement with the archives. She calls this "an erotic will to knowledge" that "contests bio-logos."[1]

Poetry in particular, or poiesis, this erotic encounter with the other in a more intimate, affective sense of getting to know them made possible through a retrospective poetic engagement, opens up a space of self-undoing, a space of fissure. Why poetry? This "feeling" that pierces us at the end of a poem escapes language, due in part to poetry's employment of linguistic rules in order to collapse them, achieving more of a physical intensity than anything else. This "feeling" or disturbance comes partly from a poetic interplay between speech and silence. What a poem says is of equal or perhaps lesser importance to all that remains silent. Its

[1] Huffer, *Mad for Foucault*, 248.

meaning, especially in Foucault's work, is informed by its silences. We must pay close attention, then, to its line breaks, stanza breaks, and rhythmic pauses. Moreover, from a more personal perspective as poet, poems are a mode to tend toward something unnamable, perhaps something not there, always with an implicit acknowledgement that all it can hope to achieve is an illumination through shock, feeling, fragments of emotion, and sentiments utterly inarticulable. In this sense, all poems are a failure to speak.

The poem, too, requires a reader onto whom it can have an effect. The reader undergoes *something* through the process of reading a document as poetry. In Foucault's case, he sees the archival remnants (documents that were not originally written as poems) and engages them on the level of these poetic qualities. The poetic process becomes creative. A creative interplay occurs at the meeting point of chance encounters among, for Foucault, himself, these lives, and the power that kills them. The reading-as-poetry of these remnants of both the violence of power and history is the counter play to a game of power that has killed these people, and a history that has elided them. This receptivity to poetic silence is the process of excavating these missing bodies, the process of mutual creation and destruction that lets in a "light from elsewhere"— that exposes, by chance, the evidence of bodies used by power; their hints, scents, convulsions, murmurs. The light from elsewhere casts a silhouette of figures on their way out. Huffer writes, "from our position in the present—within a psychological bio-logos—we cannot access eros directly, except as the shadow cast by something as its leaving."[2] Insofar as this encounter is always untimely, a little too late, these lives are inherently tragic, already gone and irredeemable. Their absence suddenly pierces us in the evidence of their shadows that point back only to their absence. But it is also in that temporal discontinuity that we find a rift from which the silhouettes

[2] Ibid., 249.

of figures leaving can appear at all, if only for a moment. The shock of these shadow-figures puts us in touch with our own limits.

In my introduction I describe the gesture of bending down and listening to the page of poetry, or as Jordan describes, listening to "the archival document not yet recognized as poetry."[3] I repeat Foucault's gesture of bending down and listening, a gesture that Huffer, in *Mad for Foucault,* calls an "ethical listening."[4] The ethical listening I present here comes in the form of reading a document as poetry. Reading for poetry allows us to read for what interrupts language. This interruption comes in the form of an absence, something not there.

Importantly, this physical act of listening resembles a body collapsing in madness or in mourning. Nietzsche famously embodies this mad gesture of collapse in the definitive moment of his madness. Huffer writes about Nietzsche's madness and its influence on Foucault; the space that Nietzsche opens up is where Foucault's writing begins. She illustrates this moment: "An incident often recounted to describe the first signs of Nietzsche's illness occurred in January 1889, when Nietzsche causes a public disturbance at a piazza in Turin after witnessing the whipping of a horse. Nietzsche ran to the horse, threw his arms around its neck, then collapsed to the ground."[5]

Huffer and Jordan alike point to the importance of a body doubled over. In the same way that language collapses in on itself in the fourth form of transgressive speech, a body collapses in madness or grief. This motif of bodies doubled over represents the aporetic, fragmented subject that we find in this act of self-estrangement. But it is also a literal corporeal undoing, a skeletal collapse induced by something else—madness, loss, a body folded over another in vigil.

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[3] Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies*, 19.
[4] Huffer, Mad for Foucault, 249.
[5] Ibid., 85.

The undoing of the mad body, doubled over is representative of this confrontation with one's own limits. It is the explosion of an oeuvre when it confronts its own madness. In many ways, this self-collapse, which is also a putting in touch with one's own limits, is what "Madness, the Absence of an Oeuvre" (1964) is about. This fourth form of transgressive language does not involve a crossing over to something outside of language, but rather the very suspension of language itself, its own impossibility and inhibited stuttering when its chiastic form closes in on itself. In other words, this transgression does not come from an outside-inside division, but the x-shaped reversal and inversion of the chiasmus that creates a rift within itself. When this rift is exposed, there is no outside, just an utter suspension, an utter silence when both terms must confront their own paradox.

Huffer describes the archive as "the site of an ethical encounter where the self-reflective symmetry of the knowing 'I' is confronted by a real alterity that puts the reasoning subject into question."[6] These poem-lives interrupt Foucault's self-coherence as a subject. It is not merely the poem-lives and their clash with power that makes way for an "erotic" transformation, as Huffer describes it; but it is in Foucault's interaction with them that the space for transformation is made possible. Picking up on the etymology of poeisis, Huffer points to poetry as a process of creation, or in this case, a constant undoing and remaking of the self.

Recognizing the archival remnants as poetry She writes, "When Foucault enters the archive, the archival 'body' is transformed: new parts of the archive are eroticized in a new clash between the poem-lives and power. This sex play in the archives creates new configurations of the shadows and profiles of the archival body."[7] But in the same way that Foucault's engagement with these poem lives brings new figures into play, the archives also act upon him.

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[6] Ibid., 249.
[7] Ibid., 251.

The "I" we find in *Infamous Men* is a passive one. This I undergoes something in this place of violence. Tending to the poem-lives creates this opening for "a light from elsewhere" to enter and bring them into ephemeral illumination. In the next section, I will examine how queer theorist, Eve Sedgwick, picks up on Foucault's poetic listening.

Section II:

Poetic reading and the gesture of mourning in Eve Sedgwick

The experience of this self-undoing shock of lives elided occurs only in the confrontation of something already dead. It is not a process of revivification or redemption, but rather an intensity that one feels in bearing witness to the traces of an absence. Significantly, the attunement to this absence comes in the very form of its elision, as with the archival lives of those lost irredeemably to history.

The act of mourning, then, comes in the gesture of tending to the archival documents as poetry. Or in my case, tending to *Sexuality One* as a poem, to listen and watch for those masked over by hypervisibility, those elided by the temporal rifts in the normal curves. To encounter a document as poetry is to restore its rifts and experience the uneven ground within something seemingly continuous.

In my preface, I mentioned that Foucault is foundational for queer theory. Namely, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick is a queer theorist who I think takes up this kind of Foucauldian poetic listening in ways that others do not. *Sexuality One* has been used in queer theory for its content. But there is also something about Foucault's way of writing, his induction of a poetic experience, a poiesis, that has been overlooked. Sedgwick, working primarily in the 80's and 90's and highly influenced by the gay politics of the time, is attuned to Foucauldian poiesis in a way that perhaps she herself is unaware. Reading Foucault's most famous work in the light of a poetic undoing of the reader the induces a limit-experience, enables us to understand Sedgwick's work as also confronting this limit experience through poetic undoings. With a background in English and critical theory, Sedgwick's literary account of philosophical concepts such as epistemology and

subjectivity allows for a restoration of the movement and fractures in concepts that otherwise try to pin life down and make it still.

In "Axiomatic," the introduction to her 1990's book *Epistemology of the Closet,* Sedgwick wants to return to the space of the gay closet before it becomes a publicly intelligible signifier. She marks the birth of the closet occurring at the very point of its rupture in the 1969 Stonewall riots, a reaction to police raids of New York City gay bars. The closet comes to be from an attempt to "rupture or vacate that space", and so its very birth is in a site of rupture, of breaking away from it.[8] To go back into the closet prior to this time, would be to go into an impossible space, a space whose existence is made possible only by the fact that it is always already vacated. Sedgwick describes this pre-Stonewall closet as "the stigma-impregnated space of refused recognition, sometimes also a stimulating aether of the unnamed, the lived experiment."[9] This impossible space of the closet prior to its epistemic entrance of rupture informs Sedgwick's rethinking of epistemology and subjectivity. What would it mean to think of the subject within this inarticulable and unthinkable space? The question is similar to Foucault's attempt to understand madness without subjecting it to reason's objectification, or Huffer's follow up idea of understanding life in a different way within the grid of bios.

In her first axiom Sedgwick confronts the problem of thinking difference. She states the seemingly obvious fact that "People are different from each other" only to show how few tools we have to conceptualize difference. She writes, "A tiny number of inconceivably coarse axes of categorization have been painstakingly inscribed in current critical and political thought: gender, race, class, nationality, sexual orientation are pretty much the available distinctions."[10] While this

[8] Sedgwick, "Axiomatic," 63.
[9] Ibid., 63.
[10] Ibid., 22.

is perhaps a point of contention with Foucault's proliferation of discourses that track down individuals to their most minuscule parts, I think Foucault and Sedgwick alike acknowledge that something about the subject gets elided in an attempt to track, name, and categorize. These elisions are not an erasure of something already there, but something that was never there in the first place due to a structural impossibility for it to appear. Madness, for instance, is necessarily excluded in its very structure. Its speech is elided at the moment of its conception; its conception is made possible only through this elision.

In many ways, Foucault and Sedgwick are pointing to identity politics as dangerous. Jordan also discusses this danger, particularly in relation to the gay identity. He explains, "The problem with 'gay pride' is not the pride but the identity implicit in 'gay.' Overturning *scientia sexualis* requires giving up the desire for theories about sex—including the theories that underwrite identity politics."[11] An "identity" is just another objectified and stable quality of which power can take hold.

Sedgwick, too, is concerned with gay identity, especially in its relation to memorializing those who have died of AIDS. These "crude axes" to understand a subject are drastically insufficient for mourning the loss of a loved one. She writes, "For some people, the sustained, foregrounded pressure of loss in the AIDS years may be making such needs clearer: as one anticipates or tries to deal with the absence of people one loves, it seems absurdly impoverishing to surrender to theoretical trivialization or to 'the sentimental' one's descriptive requirements that the piercing bouquet of a given friend's particularity be done some justice."[12] Sedgwick's epistemological tools, then, are linked to particularity in a different way than biopower's obsessive tracking of the most infinitesimal details of individuals. Her particularity lies in a

[11] Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies*, 117.
[12] Sedgwick, "Axiomatic," 23.

"piercing bouquet," a sudden intensity one feels in a friend's absence or immanent death. Her image of the bouquet, other than just being a symbol of mourning, also suggests the many selves that make up a subject. It has a temporal aspect as well, for a bouquet is a collection of scents—a sensory experience that cannot be seen or pinned down, something that diffuses as soon as it is felt, a presence that is both there and not there. The olfactory sense is most closely linked to memory, making way for a piercing bodily remembrance of a person before one can conceptualize who this person is. It is a mode through which one feels someone in their very absence.

Sedgwick's conception of subjectivity, unlike coarse axes of identity, is bound up with death and mourning, the fleeting existences of a loved one. She proposes the idea of "nonce taxonomies" as an alternative, playing upon the idea of taxonomy, a means of categorizing something in Latin, a dead, still language to which she attaches the idea of a nonce or aleatory temporality, suggesting that memorialization of the dead takes place not in the stone smooth words of an epitaph, but in the ephemeral moments of remembrance that are a "making and unmaking and *re*making and redissolution of hundreds of old and new categorical imaginings conceding all the kinds it may take to make up a world."[13] She situates these nonce taxonomies in something like gossip, a notion considered philosophically trivial and devalued for its association with effeminate gay men, but for this reason eludes the gesture of crudely objectifying a life in order to take control of it.

Importantly, Sedgwick's memorialization takes place in temporal fissures that exist between past and present. Foucault's genealogical project consists of tracking events lost to history, events that never happened. He does not seek to revivify these lives or tell these events.

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[13] Ibid.

Rather, he seeks to make them appear in all their absence. In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault explains, "geneology, must define event those instances when they are absent, the moment when they remained unrealized."[14] How does one make present an absence without forcing some contrived appearance of an irredeemable event? I think the answer lies in Sedgwick's gesture of mourning, which confronts the paradoxical present tense, and Foucault's poetic readings of the archival documents that make these lives present in the very moments and mechanisms of their death.

The present tense is the impossible tense, a section of time that cannot be grasped, the moment that gets elided between the past and future. It is always already touched with death, over as soon as it begins. Foucault's genealogical project is connected to identifying these historical elisions, sensing events that never happened, irredeemable moments. The instability of the present tense conceives of death in a way different from the deadly underbelly of biopower or the taxonomic dead language of something sedimented in history. The death of the present tense is a constant and repeated death; but it is one that allows for a constant self-transformation. Digging up these present moments, allowing them to be felt, illuminated as they are already on their way out, is where Foucault's genealogy lies. Reading a document as poetry is the mode through which he can perform this genealogy of tracing lost time because it calls for a different kind of listening; poetry requires us to bend down further and listen to what murmurs in its silences. The implication of something that is not there and can never be retrieved undoes the self who encounters this lost, or never lived, moment.

Significantly, for Sedgwick AIDS acts as an essential motivator for these nonce taxonomies in that immanent death propels this need for gossip. We can only commemorate our

[14] Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 369.

loved ones properly through pointing to their fleeting specificities. Sedgwick strikingly points to the "anticipation" of a beloved's absence. In doing so, she complicates the life/death opposition, intermingles the two or perhaps even expands their gap. They create a space of both overlap and stark separation. Anticipation suspends the loved one between life and death, in a queer and paradoxical process of mourning someone while they are still alive. In awaiting death we conflate living and dying, obfuscate the two, or perhaps lay bare their already apparent synonymy. And yet, the two are not the same. They work in an inextricable synergy while preserving their difference. Living is not dying and dying not living; the processes suggest different realities and evoke different experiences. But they unfold together, in harmony and in violent clash, such as living within the confines of an immanent death—such as watching a beloved die from AIDS. This very specific AIDS-related anticipation of death creates a temporal rift that at once captures the perennial process of dy*ing* with the transient moment of liv*ing*. Anticipation is the gerund of life and death.

Jane Gallop, who works alongside Sedgwick in the 1990's and also has a background in both theory and literature is interested in the temporalities Sedgwick illuminates through her writing. In her book, *Deaths of the Author: Reading and Writing in Time* (2011), Gallop picks up on Sedgwick's ability, through her poetry and writing (that I read here as gestures of mourning), to confront that moment that lies somewhere between life and death.[15]

Gallop discusses the opening to Sedgwick's 1993 collection of essays entitled *Tendencies.* The Foreword, "T Times" opens with a description of a New York City gay pride parade in 1992 followed by the declaration "It was a queer time."[16] She then fractures this

[15] Jane Gallop, *The Deaths of the Author*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[16] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "T Times" in *Tendencies,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), xi.

singular queer time rooted in the past tense, by remembering it in the present: "I suppose this must be called the moment of Queer."[17] She splinters this historical moment further with a strange parenthetical, italicized intrusion: "*(Though it's other moments, too. Right now: the moment just before the inauguration of an ostentatiously heterosexual president who makes an audible, persistent claim to support lesbian and gay rights. Long moment of a deathly silence that means the AIDS drugs we've been struggling to hold on for are just not in the pipeline. When Melvin Dixon and Tom Yingling disappear from us, and Audre Lorde.[…]).*"[18]

Sedgwick divulges the elisions that occur in a historical retelling of history that makes all of these moments into one. All the death that goes into this moment—the queer figures of Dixon, Yingling, Lorde, and those other figures forgotten after their lives ended in unanswered anticipation for AIDS drugs. Gallop writes, "In the list of current gay political issues, included as alternative ways to characterize this moment—in the long parenthesis in italics included as an alternative to the main text—we find AIDS, and death."[19] I think we can add onto Gallop's analysis that we also find the exposure of an elision, and even more, in this parenthetical exposure of alternative ways to characterize this time, we *sense* other anonymous death that we can never know, only feel.

Gallop also discusses Sedgwick's memorials for her friend and colleague Michael Lynch, whose obituary she began while he was in the process of dying from AIDS. In a temporary recovery, she transformed this obituary into an essay in which she processed her own diagnosis of breast cancer she received after hearing of Lynch's improvement. Through the lens of coping with the anticipated death of her friend, Sedgwick confronts her own immanent death, her own

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[17] Ibid., xii.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Gallop, *Deaths of the Author*, 91.

approach to her life's limit. Gallop points to how the version we find in *Tendencies* is followed with the haunting end note that Sedgwick includes later declaring Michael Lynch's death from AIDS in 1991.[20] Gallop shows how this endnote "delimits precisely a present moment between 'a week ago' and 'in a couple of weeks."[21] It "falls across…the ontological crack between the living and the dead" Sedgwick herself explains in her essay "White Glasses," which talks about her process of coping with Lynch's death.[22]

All of this is to say that Sedgwick, in her own poetic acts of writing and mourning, illuminates these moments that are impossible to articulate. They are lost as soon as they happen, such as the moment of death. Her gesture of retrospectively adding this final announcement of Lynch's death to the end of her essay is the gesture of another Sedgwick, different from the Sedgwick that wrote the original piece, coming back and delimiting a present moment, the moment of Lynch's death, that is forever irredeemable.

This delimitation of a lost present moment, I think, is the gesture of noticing and being shocked and undone by an absence. This is the kind of mourning, or watchful gesture (veiller) that is the counter play to biopower's continuous surveillance (surveiller) and pinning down of life. It restores some movement into life, through delimiting its threshold of death, divulging its fleeting ephemerality, creating a process of constantly bristling up against power. To find the poetic absences that perforate power—the elisions of the mad, those rejected into death by biopower, the temporal discontinuities of the future oriented, predictive normal curves—one must perform this gesture of mourning that does not just mourn the loss of someone else, but also mourns the loss of oneself, dissolves one's subjectivity, ignites one's own self undoing.

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[20] Ibid., 111.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Sedgwick, "White Glasses," 257, qtd. in Gallop, *Deaths of the Author*, 111.

Conclusion:

Academic convention requires that I provide some sort of conclusion to all that I have just said. Because I have already gone on too long, and because in this conclusion I fear doing exactly that which I have already done in my preface—declare absolute control over my work, declare my coherence as an authorial agent against the process of self-fragmentation that is writing—I will try to keep this brief.

I began with the question of poem-lives. Why does Foucault choose to call poetry the remnants of lives that he, by chance, comes across in the violent site of the archives? Foucault walks into the archives with an intention to collect information about these lost people of the Classical Age, with the intention to arrange them into some sort of chronological order with perhaps some analysis and connective tissue between them. To do so, however, would be to perform that violence of the historian, who creates coherent narratives about history, masking over the multiple and infinite events that were lost somewhere inside of this trajectory. Instead, Foucault walks out of the archives undone. The intentional subject that that walks in is splintered by that which he hears and sees beneath the words in the archival documents.

The poetry of the archives, then, is not an essential quality of the document, but it is something that occurs, an event, a self-undoing that Foucault undergoes in the face of those lives lost somewhere in history's elisions. The poetry is a "poiesis," a making — or more aptly, an undoing and remaking—of the subject.

Foucault writes "in order for some part of them to reach us, a beam of light had to illuminate them, for a moment at least. A light coming from elsewhere."[1] The archival lives are not illuminated by Foucault himself. The illumination is made possible only from the interplay

[1] Foucault, "Infamous Men," 161.

between these infamous lives' brief and deadly encounters with power and Foucault's chance encounters with them, sensing the lives exceeding the words, yet still bound to them. This sensing of something not there, that still exceeds these words, and this process of being undone by the shock of that absence— this is what it is to read something as poetry.

Perhaps, this "light coming from elsewhere" is made possible through the fragmentation that occurs in these archives. The presence of a passive I at the beginning of "Infamous Men" indicates that Foucault undergoes some unnamable transformation in experiencing the shock of these comic and tragic anonymous lives. The fissures of himself allow a light from elsewhere to shine in and cast shadows of these lives that are already gone.

With this conception of poetry in mind, I have tried to give an account of reading *Sexuality One* in the same way. In my first chapter, I claim that this requires a poetic listening, which means to listen for a work's silence, the absences that perforate the text, that which is elided by power. It is not to try and make it speak or be seen, but rather, to be receptive to its very absence. In listening to a document this way—a historical document, a philosophical document, an archaeological stratigraphic cross section (all disciplines under which Foucault has been identified)—one surpasses just the theoretical systems or information that is there, and engages with work on a different level. That is, one allows oneself to be transformed through a self-undoing and self-remaking experience.

Thus, the stakes of *Madness* (how do we hear madness without subjecting it to reason's violence?), which are the heightened stakes in *Sexuality One* (how do we conceptualize life in a different way than eugenic bios?—(which is also a question concerning our own historical time period and therefore ourselves as subjects)—calls for this poetic listening.

In my second chapter, I go into the more concrete poetic tactics of *Sexuality One*, namely the chiasmus. The chiasmus shows these paradoxical structures that lie at the heart of our epistemes: Reason is chiastically attached to madness, and in the modern era, life is chiastically attached to death. Foucault divulges the paradoxical chiastic formations that function in these episteme regimes, and then uses the chiastic structure of *Sexuality One* to undo them. I make the comparison of this strange book to Mallarmés "Sonnet en X," where the made up work "ptyx" is that which informs the poem's entire meaning. "Sex," the main concept that orders the episteme and creates sexualized subjects is "ptyx," a made up empty signifier that nonetheless informs the meaning of entire epistemic regime. In all of this poetry of undoing, oneself as a subject is put into question. If we listen poetically, to that which is not there, we experience the undoing of ourselves, the possibility of not being there; we are brought to our epistemic limits.

With sensing these elided events of madness and life that Foucault gives us in a poetic reading of his text, which is also a self-undoing reading, I suggest that this makes possible another kind of reading of other theorists, in particular, Eve Sedgwick. I give an account of how she captures these elisions of subjectivity in offering a different kind of epistemology that is closely tied to mourning, particularly mourning AIDS related deaths, people who were disallowed into death by their untimely historical situation. In her "nonce taxonomies" and her obituaries for her friends written both in their lives and after their deaths, she captures wisps of some lost present moment that can never be redeemed; this form of mourning and memorialization sheds light on someone's absence, and undoes oneself, brings Sedgwick to the threshold of her life.

I land on the conclusion, then, that this alternate conception of life as bios, which is not outside of bios because it cannot be, but is a resistance within bios, a resistance that is constant

and never done, an indefinite process of bristling up against power, is the alternate conception of "surveiller" that I mentioned in my introduction. In order to watch life (veiller) without the intensification of the panoptic gaze, we need some aspect of mourning. In the archives and in *Madness*, Foucault mourns these lives lost to history. In *Epistemology of the Closet* and "White Glasses," Sedgwick mourns the loss of her friends to AIDS, both while they are alive and after that are dead. In *Sexuality One* we are made to mourn ourselves in the future anterior perspective the book provides in its last pages.

The book calls for a mourning of ourselves while we are still alive. It brings us to the closest point of our death and disappearance; it brings us to our limit, that threshold moment right before we pass into death. It makes us consider the possibility of something that is other than us, and it therefore leaves us undone, bodies folded over in madness, in grief, in vigil. But it leaves a space open for our remaking, and undoing again. This recursive, spiraling process is a constant resistance to life as bios, a constant process of seeing life otherwise.

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