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“REAPPEARANCE OF PAUL, ‘SICK’”: FOUCAULT’S BIOPOLITICS AND  
THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PASOLINI’S APOSTLE

*But what is it that this man is bringing us? Let’s don’t forget that in the deepest parts of himself he is a slave of law. The archetypical idea which he makes of God corresponds exactly to the archetype of the idea of power.*

-Intellectuals listening to Paul’s house arrest speeches  
in Rome (i.e., his declamations in the Village of New York City)<sup>1</sup>

*Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. ...We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries.*

-Conversational comment of Michel Foucault<sup>2</sup>

*Reappearance of Paul, ‘sick’.*  
-Stage Direction of Pasolini<sup>3</sup>

***Introduction: (Saint) Foucault with (Saint) Paul – by way of (Saint) Pasolini***

**I**t is worth reflecting on why much of what now fits under the more general heading of the “turn to religion” in philosophy and critical theory may be described as organized around high profile discussions of Paul by Jacob Taubès, Alain Badiou, Giorgio Agamben, and Slavoj Žižek. On this score, it still seems safe to claim that precious little unpacking of this phenomenon has yet occurred, above all because such labour requires sustained interdisciplinary work that is (let’s face it) not easy in the increasingly routinized, professionalized, streamlined “research time” of the contemporary academic. Without mourning or lamentation, however, it is nonetheless true to claim that most philosophers *still* do not know the basics of the past fifty years of biblical scholarship on Paul. By the same token, it is

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<sup>1</sup> Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, trans. Giovanni Joppolo (Paris : Flammarion, 1977), 173. I understand that an English translation of the Italian notes of Pasolini for the (unmade) Paul film is underway, forthcoming with Verso. In the present paper, all translations from the French translation are my own.

<sup>2</sup> “The Subject and Power”, in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 216.

<sup>3</sup> Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, 48.

by now painfully clear that biblical scholars are simply not going to unleash agenda-setting ideas within this particular interdisciplinary space of thought so long as they continue only to make declarations about (and, ironically but implicitly, defences of) "the historical Paul" without being aware of how tried and true philosophical categories like time, being, actuality, and ideology are being negotiated within the dismissively designated "anachronistic" interpretations of the philosophers. Which is all to say that, no matter how shrill various disciplinary denunciations of other disciplines become, such pointless gestures cannot illumine the most pressing question: what is it about the genealogies of biblical scholarship and of philosophy that install, as it were, a "pre-established harmony" so many find in operation between "Paul and the philosophers" today?<sup>4</sup>

In respect to the genealogical analysis of these pre-established or subterranean attractions between particular construal of Paulinism and constructions of contemporary philosophy, it is important to give rather dogged and naively literalist attention to what is sometimes mistaken as mere rhetorical flourish: that only materialism is sufficient to undergo or unpack the Christian experience today (Žižek); that Paul becomes uniquely comprehensible only in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Agamben); and that any effort to think around the false universalism of liberalism-as mask for the regnant powers of an unchallenged late capitalism—does well to consider alternative models of political subjectivity one discerns in Paulinism (Badiou).<sup>5</sup>

It is in light of an interest to map-conceptually, historically, and politically—such provocative little incitements to and from recent philosophers and the ancient apostle that I have become intrigued with Pier Paolo Pasolini's extensive notes on an (unmade) Paul film, sketched between 1968 and 1974. The point is not simply that Pasolini was just as obsessed by the apostle as recent philosophers, but that his obsession shows a great deal about the striking rhetorical declarations just mentioned concerning the contemporaneity sensed to be operating between the apostle and those singular pressures under which we, too, must produce critical theory capable of understandingly intervening in the world in which we find ourselves. More specifically in this context, Pasolini's filmic *détournement* of Paulinism elicits very useful questions for Michel Foucault's project and its intriguingly abortive, missed, or at least minimal encounter with Paul.

Interestingly in relation to the project of Foucault; for example, Pasolini "turned" to Paulinism at the same time as he began to see a transformation within the regime of modern power from an Oedipal/paternal regime of the central sovereign or institution to a more diffuse pattern of control that would operate by way of a "conformist" normalization; this latter regime

<sup>4</sup> An extensive contribution to this multidisciplinary genealogical project may be found in Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries eds., *Paul and the Philosophers* (forthcoming), which should appear later this year.

<sup>5</sup> See Slavoj Žižek, *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), 134; Alain Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003), 2ff.; Giorgio Agamben, *The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* (Meridian Crossing Aesthetics Series), trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

functioning as a peculiar form of "repressive tolerance". It was as a filmic exploration of comparative pressures of ancient and modern, religious and secular "conformisms" or normalizations in which Pasolini initially situates the screenplay.<sup>6</sup> By the same token, we should not miss the way Pasolini stages the question of different regimes of power and control by his presentation of Paul's career over a (modern) thirty year period beginning with European Fascism in the late 1930's and concluding with "democratic" gatherings in the Village of New York City in the late 60's. In this respect, as well, Paul becomes a site on which to think a shift in power from modes of repression to modes of production and incitement.

It is in light of the problem of a post-Oedipal, post-totalitarian, post-repressive economy of power that Pasolini's articulation of a Paulinist "scandal" must be understood, a scandal Pasolini understands as a kind of politico-sexual resistance to the diffuse productive mechanisms of control. In this specific respect, Pasolini's work invites us to see differently the archival relation between Paul and Foucault, an archival relation that will in turn solicit our expansion and revivification of a forgotten appendix about Paul within Foucault's *History of Sexuality*. This essay will present a preliminary sketch of the stakes of what Pasolini often described—in ways analogous to Foucault's own work—as "neo-capitalist" sovereignty. Subsequently, in that light we will consider the opaque or subtractive moment of resistance that Paolini articulated as Paul's "apocalyptic sexuality," perhaps the most prescient politico-theological legacy within Pasolini's notes for the unmade Paul film.

#### ***On Paul's "Reappearance" (Just When Arrogant Sinners Are Consigned to Being Mere Deviants)***

To understand why, in Pasolini's script, there is a "Reappearance of Paul, 'sick,'" it is worth exploring how the dominant forms of understanding in Pasolini's engagement with Paul are surprisingly similar to those governing Foucault's engagement with the history of sexuality. Pasolini, for example, is throughout intent on articulating Paul as a figure of relevance within a "neo-capitalist" order where power operates not by way of central or repressive institutions. Here the effect of power is not so much a resounding "No!" from the central/paternal authority, but rather the more diffuse incitements to production, consumption, and participatory incorporation into a more elaborate and efficient network of economic and social relations. In this respect, for example, it is very fitting that Pasolini contemporizes the New Testament book of Acts by having Paul shipped as a dissident and prisoner not to the "center" of empire (the historical Paul's Rome) but rather to the megalopolis whose power is coextensive with the machinations of consumer society and the stock market themselves, New York City.<sup>7</sup>

Pasolini's script resonates at this point with crucial aspects of Foucault's overall effort to rethink the subject of power. As Foucault writes in *Discipline and Punish*: "The body of the king, with its strange material and physical presence, with the force that he himself deploys or transmits to some few

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<sup>6</sup> Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> See Pasolini's comments in *Saint Paul*, 10f.

others, is at the opposite extreme of the new physics of power represented by panopticism.<sup>8</sup> Above all, the spatial location of power has shifted in the move from one economy of power relations to another, a shift in economy that effects a shift in the spectacular self-presentation of power to an image in which power "has its maximum intensity not in the person of the king, but in the bodies that can be individualized by these relations."<sup>9</sup> The spectacular effect is remarkable, as, without the locus of the sovereign's effervescent body, how is it possible to represent diffuse mechanisms of individualizing, normalizing power when power is itself decentralized, as it were unlocatable, both everywhere and nowhere? Foucault occasionally states the logical and phenomenological problem brilliantly, declaring that—without this readymade *locus* of sovereign decision—the presentation and explanation of power relations becomes all the more "singular," indeed, all the more audacious than a mere king making decisions over life and death. The audacity of the new economy emerges inasmuch as it presents itself as a kind of normalcy, a routinized and efficient setup that best contributes to the proliferation of "life."

And if the spectacular presentation of power relations becomes all the more singular, somehow all the more audaciously self-grounding, once released from its incarnation in the body of the sovereign monarch, then *resistance* also becomes all the more difficult to imagine. One can ignore, contradict, and resist the dictates of the concretized sovereign, of course with sometimes violent repercussions. It demands a different order of thought to imagine ignoring, resisting, or contradicting the post-sovereign diffusion of power activated by scientific (which is often in Foucault to say generalizable) knowledge. There is therefore a "slow, continuous, imperceptible gradation that made it possible to pass naturally from disorder to offence and back from a transgression of the law to a slight departure from a rule, an average, a demand, a norm."<sup>10</sup> Thus, interestingly, we pass from an economy of power symptomatized or indicated by "the crime, the order of sin" to new apparatuses of measurement for the general population, new forms of capture that were now so diffuse within the population that the exceptional status and exceptional declarations of the sovereign no longer served as the exemplary index of law and limit. No longer the Hobbesian or Schmittian decision of the sovereign distinguishing friends from enemies of the state, "the social enemy was transformed into a deviant," demanding a reworking of the idea of power and resistance alike.<sup>11</sup>

How, after all, does one resist when mechanisms of power are imagined not to come from a repressive outside but to emerge by way of new and populace-wide apparatuses of measurement, all those mechanisms by which the new economy of power attempts to measure and to more effectively proliferate "life"? Much more pointedly, and to summarize a great deal of recent discussion of the viability of Foucault for ongoing critical theory, the real question for resistance in the new economy of power is this: how does one resist when power is that which is imagined to be making the way life is

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<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Penguin, 1977), 208.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 298.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

the way life is? This duplication or radically immanent self-grounding of power is the traumatic issue for Foucault, who tries to imagine an unrestricted economy of power relations or a "network" in which "there is no outside."<sup>12</sup>

To repeat, here is the critical issue: the logic of Foucault's story implies a new economy of power relations, which are not less "singular" because now "generalized." The new economy is, all the more, grounded in specific, even decisionistic, techniques of distinction-making, only now without this distinction-making being localizable within the spectacular image of the sovereign. Foucault is forced therefore into a number of profoundly labyrinthine statements, power always and ever feeding back into itself without apparent exit. He writes, for example, that, "The panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations function in a function, and of making a function function through power relations."<sup>13</sup> This intensely reflexive or immanent construal of power is also that which enables Foucault to invert the role of power from a repressive to a productive function:

We must cease once for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it "excludes," it "represses," it "censors," it "abstracts," it "masks," it "conceals." In fact, power produces; it produces reality.<sup>14</sup>

When power is not imagined as existing exterior to the life of the populace, when it is "not localized" even in "the general form of the law or government" then "there is neither analogy nor homology [to guide our thinking about power], but a specificity of mechanism and modality."<sup>15</sup> When power becomes immanent to life and those tactics imagined to measure it, in other words, cultural critics are stuck with an "exorbitant singularity" that "masks" its sovereign impositions all the more by becoming indistinguishable from the measurable "way" of life itself.<sup>16</sup>

This line within Foucault's work seems to me the really difficult and productive problem, and it is one that many interpreters of the philosopher misunderstand. It is not simply that Foucault 'goes too far' in his 'pessimistic' views about the effectivity of specific disciplinary tactics, that panoply of specific, modern "micro-powers" as so many measurable gestures, activities, habits of mind and affect. The difficulty here for the cultural critic occurs instead at the level of Foucault's *model* whereby "life" and even "being" merge seamlessly into a thinking of "power." Here we must hear echoes not only of the specific historical or genealogical stories Foucault tells (of the prison, of psychoanalysis, of population statistics, and so on) but also of the consistent, if often unmarked and unfootnoted, references to Nietzsche and Heidegger, the latter being that philosopher Foucault once claimed to think about the most but write about the least, the former being the philosopher

<sup>12</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 301.

<sup>13</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 206-7.

<sup>14</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 194.

<sup>15</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 27.

<sup>16</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 23.

who-as it were-interpreted Heidegger to Foucault.<sup>17</sup> Differently put, it seems at just this point that the problematic appears which inspired Lacan to reverse the anxiety of "old father Karamazov" about the death of God, inasmuch as (the old father believed) the death of the divine sovereign would mean that "everything is permitted."<sup>18</sup> If the sovereign (divine) monarch, the paternal law which functions as the system's fulcrum, leverage point, or external ground is removed—Lacan countered—then the problem is rather that *nothing is permitted*. Without the external measure of repressive prohibition, how would one even distinguish between musing subservience and bold transgression?

As the Karamazov story and its Lacanian inversion imply, the collapse of an "outside" position from which power is exerted (but also in terms of which power is sheltered, preserved, saved) cuts loose an explosion of indeterminacy and ambiguity about power and its contestation. Or, to make the line fit with what is to follow in and outside of Pasolini's Paul, with this collapse of an external sovereign power emerges Foucault's occasional despair about the possibility of "resistance"—as well as all those moments of exhilaration in which those interpreters of Foucault, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, proclaim that, finally, "biopolitical" immanence has liberated the significance of *productive bodies*. And just here, between the utter loss of a site of resistance and a paradoxical explosion of new life, we shall find Pasolini's Paul.

### *Inside the Outside of the Law of Being*

As I am suggesting, one way to interact with Foucault on the question of immanent "biopower"—power made immanent to measure life itself—is by way of attention to the background philosophical model rather than, say, by way of a direct empirical questioning of whether Foucault's analyses of specific modern tactics of measurement and control 'go too far' in their sense that there is no substratum, no *subiectum* or subject, on which an external "power" could inscribe itself. After all, by what measure would we measure the relation, or separate the distance, between "subject" and "power"? The problems of thing, measure, mediation, and cognition here echo very closely those paradoxes by which Hegel challenges Kantian critical reason at the beginning of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, a section worth quoting at length:

For, if cognition is the instrument for getting hold of absolute being, it is obvious that the use of an instrument on a thing certainly does not let it be what it is for itself, but rather sets out

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<sup>17</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 108–23. More recent engagements with the relationship between these thinkers may be found in Timothy Rayner, *Foucault's Heidegger: Philosophy and Transformative Experience* (London: Continuum, 2007); and Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg eds., *Foucault and Heidegger: Critical Encounters* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: the Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (Book 17), trans. Russel Grigg (New York: Norton, 2007), 119f. The reversal, and its relation to Lacan's larger engagement with topics of Paul and the law, is a topic that will be developed in the much longer and differently developed version of this paper to appear in *Zero Degree Apostles*.

to reshape and alter it. If, on the other hand, cognition is not an instrument of our activity but a more or less passive medium through which the light of truth reaches us, then again we do not receive the truth as it is in itself, but only as it exists through and in this medium. ...It would seem, to be sure, that this evil could be remedied through an acquaintance with the way in which the *instrument* works; for this would enable us to eliminate from the representation of the Absolute which we have gained through it whatever is due to the instrument, and thus get to the truth in its purity. But this "improvement" would in fact only bring us back to where we were before. If we remove from a reshaped thing what the instrument has done to it, then the thing—here the Absolute—becomes for us exactly what it was before this [accordingly] superfluous effort. On the other hand, if the Absolute is supposed merely to be brought nearer to us through this instrument, without anything in it being altered, like a bird caught in a lime-twig, it would surely laugh our little ruse to scorn, if it were not with us, in and for itself, all along, and of its own volition. For a ruse is just what cognition would be in such a case, since it would, with its manifold exertions, be giving itself the air of doing something quite different from creating a merely immediate and therefore effortless relationship.<sup>19</sup>

As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in their book *Commonwealth*, the turn from stable, transcendental structures of cognition (here: Kant) toward an immanent phenomenology (Hegel) is a move that implicitly questions the proper limits, or property rights, of common being itself.<sup>20</sup> As such, they point out, the move toward an immanent phenomenology is a move that bears a strong family resemblance to the Foucaultian gesture of handing over without reserve "the subject" to an immanent realm of power relations constituting a "biopolitical" sphere. This sphere, of course, is one in which—as in Hegel's post-Kantian phenomenology—all dreams of stable structuring roles on the "outside" of such immanent divisions of labor appear as a "ruse," an obfuscating and even comical moment of thought, the humor of which is generated by the way that labor and represented property structures do not, and cannot, coincide. Indeed, as will be explored below, in this transformation from Kant to Hegel or the early materialism of Marx to that of the late Foucault, Hardt and Negri find a clue for the unleashing of productive bodies into a sphere in which no structures may circumscribe themselves as safe and unquestionable realms of the transcendent. This move,

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<sup>19</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1979), 47.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009). For the genealogical story, see chapter 1, "Productive Bodies," esp. 30f. Their genealogy is intriguing, and invites much needed further reflection about the relation between capitalism and the turn to the phenomena of everyday life within *fin-de-siècle* continental philosophy. The same move is occurring in other fields as well, and has a bearing on the way in which biblical studies moved, in a sweeping shift in paradigms, to "apocalypticism" as an essential name under which to understand early Christian religion.

Hardt and Negri claim, will constitute liberation in a biopolitical space of the "phenomenology of bodies."

Hardt and Negri are perhaps the most *hopeful* of interpreters of Foucault when they see in the death and dissemination of sovereignty a profound opening for political subjectivity. For Foucault, they argue, the death and dissemination of central authority is not simply the death of the sovereign monarch but the death of all self-protectively abstract and stable sovereignties that might be articulated in terms of transcendental argumentation, whether Kantian categories or even categories of nameable and self-same material substrata, as in the "subject" of the early Marx. What is beyond these epochs of "transcendental" power is, therefore, an epoch in which there is no fulcrum found in any "outside" of the immanent space of bodies and their productions. Unlike many of Foucault's interpreters—who tend to see this transfer from one economy of power into another as the end or annihilation of all spaces of resistance—Hardt and Negri focus on the way it is likewise the end or annihilation of all spaces within which active power could be safely cordoned off against the effects of bodies and their productive capacities. Freed from a deferral to transcendent structures of thought, Foucault, and we in his wake, are able to traffic in a "phenomenology of bodies" that is indistinguishable from "biopolitics": "Its first axiom is that bodies are the constitutive components of the biopolitical fabric of being."<sup>21</sup> Echoing Hegel's demonstration of the "ruse" of Kantian schemata, they write:

Labor, freed from private property, simultaneously engages all our senses and capacities, in short, all our "human relations to the world-seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, thinking, contemplating, sensing, wanting, acting, loving." When labor and production are conceived in this expanded form, crossing all domains of life, bodies can never be eclipsed and subordinated to any transcendent measure or power.<sup>22</sup>

One should not miss, in this context, the way Negri's ontological explorations of the biblical book of Job (*The Labour of Job*), begun in an Italian prison, were borne of a "question of how to develop an adequate understanding of repression so as to resist it and to find a way to interpret political defeat as a critique of Power."<sup>23</sup> The reading is therefore integrally related to Negri's understanding of the age of biopower, as Job presents us (Negri argues) with a negotiation of unjust power relations precisely *after* all hope of any justificatory ground *outside* this oppressive, invasive relation—any stable "measure"—begins to seem impossible. Negri reads Job's situation as does the divine voice (or the narrator) at the end of the biblical book, both claiming that the efforts of Job's counsellors to justify his suffering in terms of some calculation of cause and effect were for nothing.<sup>24</sup> Job's refusal of the

<sup>21</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 31.

<sup>22</sup> Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 38.

<sup>23</sup> See the preface of Antonio Negri's *Labor of Job*, trans. Matteo Mandarini (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Colleagues who are more sophisticated interpreters of Job than I am point out that this may be a flat footed reading, as the (ambiguously) narrative/divine voice at the end of the biblical book does not uniformly or without qualification dismiss the counsellors. They will forgive me if, for the moment, I will let the reading slide.

calculable justice of the would-be counselors, in fact, coincides with Negri's own break with Marxism, a theoretical and practical project grounded in "a culture of measure."<sup>25</sup> Without external leverage or measure by which to distinguish oppressive power from space of resistance (or, incidentally, by which to discern measured ground by which to *justify* resistance), it is no wonder that Negri claims it was Job who "led [him] to a close friendship with Foucault."<sup>26</sup>

Or, as Judith Butler writes, Foucault's subject of power is a body "for which materialization [as a substratum, as a body] and investiture [by power] are coextensive."<sup>27</sup> Such is Butler's mode of framing the way that, in Foucault, we are trying to think an economy of relations in which there is no neutral "outside" onto which "power" would inscribe itself, if "power" begins to function as the level of ontology itself. The question, then, is straightforward, and Butler's *Psychic Life of Power* grapples with it consistently: "Where does resistance to or in disciplinary formation take place?"<sup>28</sup> Or, in a more dialectical mode, if the interiority of the modern subject is intimately related, indeed an effect, of an exterior realm of techniques, tactics, and disciplinary apparatuses, "how are we to understand 'interiority' in Foucault?"<sup>29</sup>

As it must given Foucault's story, Butler's reading becomes oriented around questions of the "self-subversion" of power and sites of "resistance" that *are not* themselves power, moments of power's "failure" to interpellate subjects into its machinations.<sup>30</sup> Or, to spin the questions as an echo of Paulinism, Butler's reading becomes (necessarily) oriented around questions of tragic self-subversion or self-emptying, the (im)potential for weakness to affect or become a sort of power, and the capacity for such moments of inversion or short-circuit to hollow out within power relations a self-enclosed or invaginated space of communal subjectivity.

It is on these points, we might add, that Butler's reading of Foucault and subjectivating techniques becomes very similar to philosophical receptions of Paul by Giorgio Agamben or (for that matter) Stanislas Breton. In both philosophers, Paul's writings are of acute interest precisely because of the way they stage a community-founding identification with an event of crucifixion (and therefore effective suppression) of a messianic figure *as* something that subverts power.<sup>31</sup> Even more to the point, Paul's writings are

<sup>25</sup> Negri, *Labor of Job*, xix.

<sup>26</sup> Negri, *Labor of Job*, xxiii.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press), 91.

<sup>28</sup> Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 87.

<sup>29</sup> Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 89.

<sup>30</sup> See Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 93, 97.

<sup>31</sup> \*It is useful to play on the language of "event" here, as Badiou's Paul stands in stark contrast at just this point. For Badiou, the event is, rather, resurrection, a difference in focus that is mirrored, for example, in the way he chides Simon Critchley's story about *negativity* as a source or ground of new forms of political subjectivity. As Critchley introduces his political intervention: "Philosophy does not begin in an experience of wonder, as ancient tradition contends, but rather, I think, with the indeterminate but palpable sense that something desired has not been fulfilled, that a fantastic effort has failed" (*Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* [London: Verso, 2008], 1). Indeed, Critchley

worth thinking about inasmuch as they imagine this moment as one in which “nothings and non-beings” (see *ta mē onta*) miraculously emerge to “annihilate” the categories and self-understanding of the readymade world (1 Cor. 1:28). That philosopher Stanislas Breton in his remarkable study, *Saint Paul*, would describe—following Bultmann in important respects—aulinism as an example of “heroic meontology” (or heroic theory of non-being) fits well with Butler’s interest in a mute, weak resistance (and therefore a *form* of power) that nonetheless *is not* in itself a power capable of “dismantling the [interpellative] injunction or changing the terms of subject constitution.”<sup>32</sup> Butler wants to think, with Foucault, not the liberation of a “hidden or repressed” subject existing “outside” the “law” of power, but rather the capacity (of what? from where?) for “a refusal” of subject formations that cannot contest the dominant forms of social discipline that they only seem *not*

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explores the impetus for philosophy against the backdrop of a nihilating force that threatens to annihilate the highest values, thus gutting our motivations for community action. It is precisely at this point—the emptied (or “kenotic”) and ultimately gutted deity of, say, Philippians 2—that Paulinism returns as a significant interlocutor for Critchley’s project, precisely inasmuch as this return does *not* seem simply to repeat, say, the oppositions between meaning/non-sense, God/death-of-God, motivation/passive nihilism that tend to be assumed when Critchley names his project as a “secular” one. Indeed, if Paul now returns as this uncanniest of guests, he does so because he found himself scheming community formation and resistance at the moment of messianic failure, and this with no real guarantee of persuasive or social success. No wonder Paul made a great deal out of “proclamation” and the centrality of “trust”—obviously he had no other leg to stand on than such ephemera, if something like “life” and “freedom” (as he liked to say) were to be ripped out of a messianic corpse, or if the brutal reduction of a messianic movement to the “slave’s death” of Philippians 2 was, impossibly, to be resisted. No wonder Paul seems to feel, at the moment of finding in this community’s identification with the “slave’s death” a glimmer of a threat against the crucifying *archai* or rulers, simultaneously a sense that the entire movement is a kind of cosmic joke, all the more laughable for its weakness and exposure to extinction (see 1 Cor 1; 4:8-13). Here Critchley’s sense of the tragicomic is perhaps the best way back into the Pauline tableau. The Paulinists’ disavowal of death’s power, their allowing Jesus’ death to be “for” them (thus acting as if they were beyond death’s “dominion”) nevertheless *remains* a merely virtual community of people identifying with that death and the undeadness they discover in it, without a real sublation or overcoming of the originary trauma. The movement generally remains, in Paul (though not much longer), a “scandal” and a spectacular joke, as Paul sometimes acknowledged (see 1 Cor 1.23; 4.9f.). At any rate, and related, it is the strange link between catastrophe and freedom that marks the interest in Paulinism by Milan Machovec, *A Marxist Looks at Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976); or, earlier, Ernst Bloch, *Atheism in Christianity* (London/New York: Verso, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 88. See Stanislas Breton, *Saint Paul* (Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture), trans. Joseph Ballan with critical introduction by Ward Blanton, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). For Breton’s references to Paulinist meontology more generally, see Stanislas Breton, *Théorie des Idéologies* (Paris: Desclée, 1976), 47. Breton discerned Paulinist meontology above all in 1 Corinthians 1 and in the hymn of Christ’s kenotic self-emptying in Philippians 2. See also, Breton’s *The Word and the Cross*, trans. Jacquelyn Porter (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002).

to mirror.<sup>33</sup> How to think, as Timothy Mitchell describes in a different but significantly related field, the emergence of a "virtue of recalcitrance"?<sup>34</sup>

The point should be clear by now, and Butler's slippage in vocabulary between "power" and "law" (of subjectivation) may mark the occasion to push our conversation more decidedly in a Pauline direction, if only to prepare the way for that revelation of a Paulinist "scandal" the significance of which means a great deal for the projects both of Foucault and Pasolini. *How are we able to think, to be, transgression, sin, crime, once power becomes identified with normalizing bios, with life itself?* How are we able to think, or to act, as a transgressive force once power becomes another name for being itself? How are we able to articulate an effect of transgression *on* law that originates not from outside law but rather from law itself? How does "law" (of life, of being)—to repeat Paul's intriguing statements in Romans 7 or Galatians—*produce its own transgression?* (Or, in an ontological mode: how do we think prohibiting law and transgressive desire *as the same thing?*). As we will see, Pasolini's Paul provides a useful "machine with which to think" (as Deleuze used to say of the great books of philosophical history) in relation to these pressing Foucaultian problems.

**"What do you offer to me? A scandal like a social death:" Meontology and Pasolini's 'Sick' Paul**

In such a context, Pier Paolo Pasolini's screenplay of an unfinished film about Paul contains some very prescient ideas. Pasolini worked on this screenplay between 1968 and 1974, and the project constitutes—as one would expect—a remarkable aesthetic and political experiment. He planned, for example, to follow his *Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1964) in generally selecting verbatim quotations from the New Testament to use as the speech of his filmic apostle. As it does in the earlier film, this awkward and anachronistic literalism allows Pasolini to explore, in a filmic language of "heretical empiricism," the peculiar relevance Pasolini sensed in Paul for ongoing struggles to define the nature of human existence within contexts of "neo-capitalist" globalization and a shift in the constitution of power from centralized, repressive institutions to a more diffuse and ironic mode of "repressive tolerance."<sup>35</sup> In both cases, it is as if ancient apostolic monologue were perfectly adapted for modern struggles. By the same token, however, in staging modernity by way of an ancient apostolic monologue Pasolini was also inviting his audiences to experience reality in a highly mythical, symbolic mode. The Paul script is remarkable among Pasolini's works for its relentlessness in this simultaneous sacralization and profaning of filmic reality.

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<sup>33</sup> Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 100.

<sup>34</sup> To my knowledge, the lecture to which I refer, "The Virtues of Recalcitrance: Democracy from Foucault to Latour" (addressed to a conference at UCLA entitled Foucault and Middle East Studies, April 28, 2009), is not yet in print, though currently accessible in downloadable audio form at <http://www.international.ucla.edu/cnes/podcasts/>.

<sup>35</sup> The notion and terminology of a "tolerance" that is "false" and "repressive" is common within Pasolini's cultural writings (e.g., Pasolini, *Lutheran Letters*, trans. Stuart Hood [Exeter: Carcanet Press, 1983]; *Heretical Empiricism*, trans. Ben Lawton and Louise K. Barnett [Washington, D.C.: New Academic Publishing, 1988]).

Indeed, unlike the earlier film, Pasolini pushes the mystery of relevance even further by depicting Paul not in ancient Jerusalem, for example, but in a Paris under Nazi occupation. In that setting, followers of an executed messiah become a counter-imperial resistance movement. Similarly, Paul eventually travels not to the heart of empire in Rome, but to the seat of neo-capitalist power in New York City. To maintain the deliriously anachronistic ethos, Pasolini planned to include numerous montages whereby shots of Paul would appear next to disconcerting archival footage of Paris and oppressed Parisians during the German occupation. Elsewhere in the script, the New York City hotel in which the imprisoned Paul would be filmed was to be the hotel at which Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated.

Such intentional scrambling of temporalities and codes constitutes Pasolini's political and aesthetic encounter with Paulinism, an encounter in keeping with his search for a filmic, technical, and anachronistic "sacred," a "religiosity" he described also in his notes about *Accatone*, *Oedipus Rex*, *The Decameron*, and elsewhere. Not unlike Walter Benjamin's juxtapositions of decontextualized "images," Pasolini's construction of textual, visual, and auditory assemblages consistently produces in the Paul script phantasmagoric effects whereby *something else* is evoked by, without being reducible to, the discrete historical or temporal citations that gave rise to it. In the Paul screenplay, Pasolini describes this aesthetic conjuration repeatedly as an "excess" or "irony" of the matter presented, as if reality—alternately sacralized and profaned—were forever more and less than it appears.

As the intellectuals in the Village area of New York City suggest; however (in our opening quotation), Pasolini's Paul seems to be split into dual legacies. Pasolini's Paul is on the one hand the anarchic saint who inaugurates his ministry with the declaration that "It is for freedom that Christ has liberated us."<sup>36</sup> At the same time, however, Pasolini's Paul is always haunted by institutional desires that are indistinguishable from questions of power of even the most obviously repressive and paternalistic sort, a problematic legacy Pasolini highlights by portraying Paul's final moments as madly pontificating away all the misogynistic institutional niceties of the Pastoral Epistles, allowing Paul's voice to dominate visual scenes of a church in all its "terrible, idiotic, pompous and depressing *counter-reformist* violence."<sup>37</sup>

Elsewhere in the script, Pasolini describes the character of Luke—ostensible author of Acts, in which Paul and the central Christian movement appear in harmonious, even institutional accord—as occasionally overwhelmed by diabolical power or Satanic possession, as if realizing that a harmonious, institutional vision was the best way to appropriate and control the anarchic potential of apocalyptic saintliness. Armando Maggi unpacks the doubling or splitting of characterization here in a very helpful way in his study, *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade*. As he writes,

To synthesize this important point, we could say that, for Pasolini, falsity is distance from truth... In a new close-up with

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<sup>36</sup> Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, 45.

<sup>37</sup> Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, 194.

a blue sky in the background, Pasolini shows us the 'tormented, sweet and inexplicable' face of the 'author of Acts' who delivers a new message: 'Every new institution brings about diplomatic actions and euphemistic words. Every new institution brings about a pact with one's conscience. Every new institution brings about fear of one's companion. The institution of the Church was *only* a necessity.'<sup>38</sup>

Distancing here operates as a kind of reification, with truth no longer requiring immediate encounter. Just as importantly within Pasolini's script, however, distance is effected by way of the splitting up of roles and the parcelling out of institutional identities as a division of labor. This above all in the script seems to be the form of institution through which one comes to fear one's companions.

Significantly, however, and as Maggi points out, this splitting of the potential of the new institution is not *simply* about an appropriative or destructive cultural memory *about* Paul. Sometimes the "author" is presented as scribbling away, basically what Paul himself does, suggesting that the diabolic function of the "the author's" transcript does not need to be manufactured in its entirety. Rather, the apostle is himself an active agent in the production of his own diabolically doubled legacy. Interestingly, in addition to the counter-reformist final scenes of the film, Pasolini insinuates this umbilical link between diabolical legacy and potentially liberating Paulinism by way of direct divine speeches to Paul. In relating Acts' elaborate and magical call story of the apostle, in which Paul receives a mandate to be "set apart" for missionary work, Pasolini—as if hesitating at just this point of a division of labor—adds in a later draft that this divine speech in actuality should come from "Satan and his instigator" rather than from God.<sup>39</sup> Inasmuch as apocalyptic, saintly encounter becomes routinized and organized into differentiated roles and an accompanying sacralization of only *part* of the social order, then the institution must be renounced as an obstruction to liberation.

Indeed, the economy of power relations is no better when the message comes by way of secret, direct mystical encounter, so long as the message implies distinction. As Maggi points out in relation to the passage about which Pasolini seemed to hesitate, not sure whether to present the divine voice as emerging from God or a satanic impersonator:

Again Pasolini stresses that God's voice in Acts is a fraud. The Father's voice is the voice of the paternal law imposing a new conformity and thus a new form of violence. This "being set apart" is what Pasolini interprets as the birth of "priesthood," the metamorphosis of Christianity from a message of freedom and salvation to a declaration of repression.<sup>40</sup>

More radical and more productive than the juxtaposition of institutional inertia over against the freedom of the individual saint, however, seems to

<sup>38</sup> Armando Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 75.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Maggi, *The Resurrection of the Body*, 70.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

me the peculiarly tortured sexual opacity of Pasolini's apostle. To explain why, however, we need to take a brief detour into a forgotten appendix of Michel Foucault.

### *Paul, a Forgotten Appendix of Foucault's History of Sexuality*

At the end of Foucault's third volume in the unfinished *History of Sexuality*, the genealogist as cultural critic finds himself reflecting on a vexing "problematic" or driving question: how shall we understand early Christianity in relation to the philosophers and moralists of the Greco-Roman period?<sup>41</sup> Foucault highlights the importance of the question in light of his own narration of the way, compared with older Greek philosophical discussions of pleasure and sexuality, the "first two centuries of our era" were marked by a strengthening of the demand for austerity.<sup>42</sup> Physicians recommended abstinence, preferring "virginity over the use of pleasure," and philosophers of the period "condemn any sexual relation" outside monogamous marriage. In relation to this shift in moral exigency within discourses about sexuality, Foucault poses a critical, which is to say politically charged, question: should one see in this phenomenological shift in bodily comportment a proleptic "sketch of a moral future"? More specifically, "Must one suppose that certain thinkers, in the Greco-Roman world already had a presentiment of this model of sexual austerity which, in Christian societies, will be given a legal framework and an institutionalized support?"<sup>43</sup>

As Foucault understood very well, inasmuch as his genealogical distinction between forms of sexual existence was significant, it was so because of a long history of self-definition that constituted a massive cultural investment in the *differences* between the various figures on his genealogical stage at just this point (Classical Greek thought, Hellenistic culture, early Christianity, and the age of developed Christian governmental systems). Assuring his readers that the "question is important," what is particularly noteworthy for our purposes is the way Foucault grounds this significance by reference to "a long tradition" of thought leading up to (and obviously including) his own concluding thoughts about the history of sexuality: *the question about how one is to articulate Paul in relation to his philosophical contemporaries.*<sup>44</sup> Foucault refers here to late nineteenth century German scholarly debates within historical and theological biblical scholarship about the relationship between Paul and the philosopher Epictetus, well known at the time but later generally forgotten. Far from an unimportant moment of forgetfulness, this lost appendix urges itself onto what is in certain respects Foucault's standard tableau history of the West (with its Classical Greeks fading into Hellenistic culture, witnessing the origin and rise of Christian culture). Indeed, he writes, it "is hardly possible to let the matter remain there," where these turn of the century thinkers left off.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 3: *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House), 236.

<sup>42</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 3: *The Care of the Self*, 239.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 237.

Foucault's evident fascination is hardly carried through with real depth and seriousness, so perhaps now we must repeat the Foucaultian gesture once more: it is hardly possible to let the matter remain where it was earlier left off. In the immediate context of this assertion, the stakes of Foucault's interest were fairly obvious. On the one hand, he was concerned to assert that there certainly *were* distinct lines of demarcation separating, first, Greco-Roman moralism from classical philosophical reflections about sexuality and, second, Greco-Roman moralism from more developed institutional Christianity. In the first case, Foucault summarizes, the transformation in talk about self-governance was marked by a heightened anxiety about the body in the Greco-Roman period, something that led to an intensification of attention to the body itself as the privileged site by which to comprehend sexuality. There was also in the Greco-Roman period the emergence of a tendency to universalize the "form" of sexual embrace, thereby playing down the more local and contingent role of "status" in classical theorization of sexual liaison. This universalization or formalization of the pleasurable liaison emerged hand in hand with intensified *practices of reflective internalization* within the emerging subject of sexuality. As Foucault says with usual phenomenological verve: "Problematization and apprehension go hand in hand; inquiry is joined to vigilance."<sup>46</sup> When sexual encounter becomes a generic form of relationship, individuals, he suggests, increasingly become their own overseers, with the vigilant and conscious self appearing in order to maintain or guarantee adherence to the universal rule.

Such is Foucault's summary of the difference between classical and Greco-Roman ethics of the body. Secondly, he is particularly interested to point out as well that what he glosses as "Christianity" represented yet another qualitative shift along a longer trajectory of internalization and universalization. In this additional transformation, the excessive nature of sexual desire and the potential dangers such excesses bring with them become, yet again, increasingly universalized and therefore detached from the contingent local specifics of encounter. "Sexual activity is linked to evil" not only by its possible "form and effects, but in itself and substantially." Therefore, even more than with their Greco-Roman moralist contemporaries, in Christianity the mode of sexual individuation begins to appear *only by way of transgression of the universalized norm*, a phenomenological stance that demands new ideas of Fall or (transgressive) finitude. Constituting a qualitatively different category from the Greco-Roman moralists, Christianity thus affords a "mode of subjection in the form of obedience to a general law." Excluded from the sphere of the universal or generic norm, individuals are subjects only inasmuch as they engage in "a type of work on oneself that implies a decipherment of the soul and a purificatory hermeneutics of the desires", which is to say practices of internalization and a thinking of individuality as that which can only transgress the generic nature of the universal.<sup>47</sup> Foucault's conclusion is that Christianity, looking inward in order to become ever more completely split into masters of themselves, as a movement invents a qualitatively different "mode of ethical fulfilment that tends toward self-renunciation." This mode of comportment distinguishes Christianity also from Greco-Roman moralism.

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<sup>46</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 3: *The Care of the Self*, 239.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

Individuation via abjection, this splitting of the self into a Christian subject wanting to incarnate the universal norm but only able to do so through mechanisms of self-negation, is a mode of existence Foucault wants to keep separate from that Greco-Roman intensification of the austerity of classical Greek ethics. Its "arts of living" and its "care of the self" are of a qualitatively distinct order from the Greco-Roman moralists. Foucault even urges on the reader that "*one should not be misled by the analogy*" one might otherwise see between the two economies of pleasure, as if both were simply two more austere developments of the Classical Greek model.<sup>48</sup> In this respect, Foucault's story—with its discrete periodization of Classical, Hellenistic, and early Christian—is remarkably traditional, the only twist being that what sometimes functioned as a Christian apologetic device (i.e., "early Christianity" should be read as unique, exceptional in relation to the culture of its time) is here inverted (early Christianity represents a debilitating, qualitative step beyond the already-austere Greco-Roman moralists). But, simple reversal aside, the fundamental narrative categories are remarkably stable, and Foucault's efforts to maintain them here by making taboo the allure of "misleading analogy" constitutes Foucault as the latest (and one of the most interesting) exemplars in what Jonathan Z. Smith describes as a long history of the *politicized* refusal to fully process the "analogical enterprise" that is our understanding of the relationship between early Christianity and the Greco-Roman philosophies and religions of its time.<sup>49</sup>

That there is such a peculiar intensity with which Foucault asserts the need to remain faithful to these genealogical distinctions at just this point in his historico-philosophical diagnosis of "the West" is intriguing, and we need not simply confess ignorance of the Master author's intentions on this score, given that the projected fourth volume of the history of sexuality—about Christianity—was not published. Much more worthwhile is to allow this little appendix (as a forgotten appendix) to swell, as it were, so that Foucault's larger oeuvre becomes oriented by the pressure of these final references to the history of biblical research, and this in order to articulate further the genealogical stakes of the distinction between Paul, the philosophers, and the developed "moral systems" and institutions that would be Christianity in a later age. Indeed, as Foucault states without much ado, some of the late nineteenth century biblical scholars he mentions were hoping to find, in their own engagement with "Paul and the philosophers," a way of unearthing (again, in good genealogical fashion) a Paulinist "basis of

<sup>48</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 3: *The Care of the Self*, 239.

<sup>49</sup> See Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), esp. 115, but also 36ff. The periodization and comparative discreteness of identities in these narrations of 'Western culture' or the history of religion constitutes their political stakes, which is why calling them into question, rethinking them, tends to subvert the contemporary identities to which these stories provide their orientation. This is no doubt why a reworking of 'Paul and the philosophers' sometimes elicits fierce antagonism, though such refigurations may obviously be worked without reference to Paul, as (for example) in the critical works of Louis A. Ruprecht, Jr., who challenges recent influential Christian readings of culture by way of a genealogical subversion of their implicit periodization of the West (e.g., *Afterwords: Hellenism, Modernism, and the Myth of Decadence* [New York: State University of New York Press, 1996]).

the moral imperative" in such comparisons with philosophy, and this in order to see "whether it was possible to detach Christianity from a certain type of ethics that had long been associated with it."<sup>50</sup> They were relying on Paul, in other words, to serve as that readymade stumbling block within the identity of modern Christianity, a genealogical fulcrum by which to invert the value of institutional mechanisms and the ethics they demanded.

At one level, the seriality of such a gamble on the early Christian figure is what is most surprising., Jacques Derrida, for example, is acting most soberly when he reads the repetition of modern Europe's reliance on an ambiguously historico-philosophical vision of "originary Christianity" as repetitive enough to constitute a "little machine" whose automaticity is one of its most striking characteristics.<sup>51</sup> The little machine works inasmuch as this "originary Christianity"—in this case Paulinism—is looked to for a source of critical resistance against modern European Christianity itself, a form of immanent, genealogical critique if ever there is one.<sup>52</sup>

The significance of an agonistic reference to Paul as a mode of "outbidding," however, extends far beyond the obvious ecclesiastical orientation Foucault cites. Indeed, should we not broaden those earlier genealogical interests yet further to include all those common places in Foucault's own genealogical interventions into the forms of power constituting what even he sometimes periodized as "modern Western culture" up to and including his multiple efforts to unearth a "political spirituality" against what he imagined to be the failure of secular political thought?<sup>53</sup> By the time he wrote the *History of Sexuality*, of course, Foucault had already articulated psychological practices in Weberian terms as a more invasive and technically effective form of normalizing control over populations than were earlier confessional practices of "Christian society."

<sup>50</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 3: *The Care of the Self*, 236.

<sup>51</sup> See Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: the Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," in *Religion*, edited by Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 2, 12, 21.

<sup>52</sup> I have explored at length the role of this "little machine" and the starkly destabilizing effect it has on distinctions between religion and secular critique in Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament* (Religion and Postmodernism Series) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

<sup>53</sup> It is not simply that one must consider here the discursive relationship in Foucault's work between his observation of the Iranian revolution and 'Christian ritual,' as suggested in the illuminating collection of Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 38ff., though in this case it is certainly a matter of considering modes of subjective constitution through bodily practices. Apart from ready-made projections of where a "political spirituality"—or perhaps a politico-theology or materialist theology—must lead, in this case what is at stake would be a matter of patiently exploring the political and subjective territories that might yet be unleashed or invented with a patient reworking of the philosophico-Paulinist archive. Is it not the case, at levels both historical and philosophical, that we (literally) do not yet know, to borrow from what Nietzsche said of the body, what a *Paulinist* can do? Such an interrogative stance, at any rate, patiently attending to what might yet appear from the archive in question, returns us to the peculiar politico-apocalyptic dynamics sketched above.

It is perhaps worth pointing out such things as, at times, one might think the frequent self-descriptions of Foucault as *not* doing hermeneutical work might militate against this level of functioning within Foucault's texts. But the same person to express anxiety about Paul, the Hellenistic philosophers, and later Christian institutions was also the one to claim that Enlightenment critique was a subversive form of reading inherited from Medieval biblical interpretation, that the psychoanalyst's couch was an 'updated' monastic confessional, and that ongoing critical practice should distinguish genealogically between "prophetic" and philosophical modes of *parrhēsia* or bold critical speech in order to rightly judge "what we could call the 'critical' tradition in the West."<sup>54</sup> The latter example is particularly pressing in relation to Foucault's interest in the placement of Paul and early Christianity within his larger genealogy of sexuality. After all, the *parrhēsiast* is to later scientific truth-telling what the Greek lover is to later abstracted and formalized or generalized sexuality. In fact, Foucault's definition of bold speaking could be cut and pasted from his discussions of Classical discourses of sexuality: "the commitment involved in *parrhēsia* is linked to a certain social situation, to a difference of status between the speaker and his audience, to the fact that the *parrhēsiastēs* says something which is dangerous to himself and thus involves a risk, and so on."<sup>55</sup> Bold speaking, like the potentially dangerous or excessive eroticism of the Classical period, always occurred in relation to an outside, within a sphere of encounter that destabilized and opened up this encounter to an indeterminate, incalculable sphere. The alterity of such a sexual encounter, like the indeterminate effect of bold speech, was not susceptible to the *roman à clé* that was constituted, essentially, by those techniques of introspection that operated in the name of an implicit normalization or a theory of sexuality. And is this not an important genealogical link between "Classical" models of sexual encounter, *parrhēsia*, and the placement of Paulinism in relation to these? How is it that a kind of "outside" of power may be maintained in these cases? In the name of what would one resist the way techniques of introspection, from the confessor's chair to the psychoanalyst's couch, do not in the end serve only the grim task of normalization and routinization? How is it, to echo Foucault's favourite philosopher, Heidegger, sex and speech resist being forms of "standing reserve," that normalized, placed, and efficiently made available the form of energy Foucault designated as "docile body"?<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Inasmuch as *parrhēsia* represents, among other things, a "zero degree of those rhetorical figures which intensify the emotions of the audience," and this by way of pressing a risky demand for decision, the rhetorical form invites comparison with some characterizations of messianic "shortening" of time (as in Agamben) or Badiou's (related) "forcing" of an event (Foucault, *Fearless Speech* [New York: Semiotext(e), 2001] 22).

<sup>55</sup> Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 13.

<sup>56</sup> Without repeating comparisons that may be found elsewhere (e.g., in the work of Hubert Dreyfus), the way in which bodies, motions, and energies in Heidegger are *made available* to broader collective agencies and economies fits very well with the way, in Foucault, that docile bodies are precisely those bodies that, as it were, *respond* or allow themselves to be measured by the feedback mechanisms of economies and broad structures like collective "life". In both cases, the drama of the interpretation emerges from attention to the same basic "dialectical" movement, between generalizing tactics of measuring/framing and specific sites in which those measuring/framing devices find a purchase. The Foucaultian mechanisms productive of docile bodies mentioned above, for example, may be

Here we begin to catch a glimpse of how Foucault's own incapacity to "let the matter [of Paul and the philosophers] remain there" testifies to the way the topic could—as if a node within a network or an accidental knot within a skein of yarn—organize or subvert words and things of another epoch entirely.<sup>57</sup> In such a light, should we not say that, with the question about early Christianity's relation to a more general cultural shift in modes of bodily existence, Foucault's work also played out haunting questions about a projective "sketch" of the future that extend themselves, finally, into that epoch of political control Foucault described with the term bio-power? What is the place of Paul within Foucault's expansive genealogies of modernity that are replete with intriguing references to pre-modern Christian institutions, whether Foucault is describing Kant's critique of religion as a form of critique inherited from earlier exegetical debates, or the drive to talk oneself to a cure on the psychoanalytic couch as a variation of earlier pastoral practices of the confessional? Particularly here, how would Paul, as a comparative node within this genealogy, figure into the discursive analysis of those modern *dispositifs* whereby individuals are called not only to "confess to acts contravening the law" but pressured "to transform your desire...into discourse"?<sup>58</sup> Whatever Foucault's intentions in including these references, and whatever Foucault had or would continue to plan in relation to "Christianity" in his larger project, the loose end here invites haunting questions. Could one, for example, construe the Paulinist role in the genealogy as that site whereby power itself learns, as it were, that it can be liberated to live "without law," beyond its limitations, thereby all the more invasively producing those interior spaces of the modern bio-political form and the rationalized, docile bodies its demands might make transparent? As Foucault would put it earlier in the *History of Sexuality*:

We are informed that if repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge, and sexuality since the classical age, it stands to reason that we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost: nothing less than the transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an irruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality, and a whole new economy in the mechanisms of power will be required.<sup>59</sup>

And, if that economy and its modes of incarnating itself in the self-diagnoses of the individual would be more totalitarian than the earlier, "repressive"

usefully compared to the discussions of "standing reserve" and "enframing" in Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays* (San Francisco: Harper, 1977), 3-35.

<sup>57</sup> This is, of course, Foucault's own language, which also constituted his rationale for thinking that discursive and non-discursive environments of material practices, levied one another, not to mention why he continued to write genealogies of ancient people and distant places. Still very useful is Pamela Major-Poetzl's study, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Western Culture: Toward a New Science of History* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), particularly ch. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, volume 1: an Introduction, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House), 21.

<sup>59</sup> Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, volume 1: an Introduction, 5.

mode of legal power, then has, as Jacques Lacan always insinuated (with different language) the era of bio-power appeared only after finally discovering the Pauline proclamations about the "liberation" of spirit beyond the legal limits of law?

Such are some of the ways in which Paul might dangle there at the end of Foucault's history, a loose and only partially assimilated appendix to his story. Moreover, given the history of discussion about Paul, it is not a surprise that Foucault would express a wonder here about, precisely, Paul and the (Hellenistic) philosophers. Whatever the role of Paul in his history, would such a role be isolable from the role of philosophy? Will the apostolic, the religious, the visionary, or the apocalyptic have had a role detachable from the genealogical function of a Hellenistic philosophy that *also* appears more austere than its Greek classical predecessors?

#### *Paul with Pasolini: 'Sickness' and Un-worlding, Apocalyptic Sexuality*

One of the intriguing ways forward for Foucault's abortive appendix is made clear by Pasolini's aesthetic presentations of a properly apocalyptic sexuality, a kind of invention of a strange and unexpected name for *resistance* to the culture of diffusely panoptic unplaceable "biopower." As Pasolini's film script has it, Paul's self-abstraction from life in Acts (mixed with Galatians), his withdrawing to "a desert" of solitude, becomes a submersion into the daily life of the neo-capitalist city, where despite shopping in the same stores, standing shoulder to shoulder on the street, and reading the same newspapers, one is above all, alone.<sup>60</sup> In a peaceful world that is "dominated" by this type of "power," "one must protest by refusing to exist," a strangely creative act of abstraction from the abstractions of neo-capitalist economies of life.<sup>61</sup>

In Paul's case, the scripted apostle appears again after three years of this solitude, strangely "tormented and deformed" by a "mysterious sickness in his body."<sup>62</sup> Paul's act of resistance and protest against the desert of anonymous consumption will become intriguingly wrapped up with this malady. Pasolini's simple set directions for the shot of Paul's return from his self-imposed exile to the "desert" of everyday city life read simply: "Reappearance of Paul, 'sick'".<sup>63</sup> A body inhabited by a mystery whose symptoms bear all the hallmarks of a sickness, Pasolini's apostle is in this sense not *only* present to the film by way of an anachronistic string of quotations from the Bible. Paul is present as a body not seamlessly incorporated into the healthy, docile economies of neo-capitalist life. In (significantly) a dream sequence inserted later into the film, the viewer observes a delirious rendering of Paul's childhood in Tarsus, the young Paul seeing nude bodies of young athletes at the stadium, the desire for which sends him into convulsions which are to be repeated occasionally in the film to suggest that the "malady" remains with him. "Reappearance of Paul, 'sick'."

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<sup>60</sup> Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, 47.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, 49.

<sup>63</sup> Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, 48.

As a filmic exploration of Pauline "scandal," to which Pasolini refers repeatedly in the script, it is a Paul wracked, convulsed by an unavowable same-sex desire that seems to me to be among Pasolini's most effective contributions to a reflection on any ongoing liberating potential within Paulinism. On other occasions, for example, Pasolini's script repeats the cliché that what constituted a Paulinist intervention as a scandal was its universalism that Paul would speak not only to Jews but also to Gentiles.<sup>64</sup> The move is exhausted and exhausting of the energy of the script. The gesture operates by way of misleading stereotypes about first century Judaism (which is, ostensibly, "scandalized" by this open outreach).<sup>65</sup> Worse for a film script, the *audience* of the film could hardly be affected directly by this "scandal," observing it as displaced, de-contextualized, or unmoving as an anonymous old bone under museum glass. Worst of all, how are we to imagine the production of multi-national linkages as an inherently scandalous act of "resistance" against power, whether "Fascist" or "neo-capitalist"?

Much better as an index of "scandal" is the image of Paul falling into fits of unavowable, almost unrepresentable desire that traumatically unplugs the apostle from the world he imagines to be possible, the world he imagines to be possibly acceptable. And here it is important to remember that Pasolini at this stage continued to think homosexual desire was—perhaps necessarily—a form of social and sexual life that could not be tolerantly incorporated as "normal" behaviour. Far from imagining a quick fix—or even a distant one—by way of an expanded functioning of representational mechanisms of identity politics, for Pasolini, and his film script about the apostle, same-sex desire indicated a furious and even debilitating pressure the "mysterious" nature of which was not of the order of something that was, or could be, avowable.<sup>66</sup> On the contrary, one of the things that is so nice about the script is that it never suggests to the reader that Paul's legacy could somehow be resolved, fixed, saved by some sort of representational incorporation or avowal of his longing for men. Indeed, the script is not even organized negatively around the possibility, as if Paul were either a tragic or farcical *failure* to avow and incorporate his same-sex desire. Rather, the unavowable trauma of the desire traverses the film and all its narrative structures without ever becoming a central structure itself. In casting Paul's desire this way, laterally, anamorphically, I think Pasolini uncovers a mode of remaining

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<sup>64</sup> Pasolini, *Saint Paul*, 17, 66.

<sup>65</sup> To make a film about Paul is not the same thing as to construct an interesting historical picture of the ancient figure. Still, there is a great deal that could be appropriated from historical scholarship to make the script more stunningly contemporary, and this is one example of the way the scripted traditionalism of Pasolini's reading of Paul sometimes affects its brilliance as a film script. Purveying this little cliché is not the worst gaff, incidentally. The worst? Having Paul in prison in New York City awaiting his inevitable death at the hands of neo-capitalist powers—and starting to write the Pastoral Epistles!

<sup>66</sup> I am primarily interested here in the horizon of possibility constituting the diegetic space of the plan for the Paul film. However, the question of Pasolini's understanding of homosexual desire, and the place of this understanding in his work, is worth at least mentioning. For relevant discussion, see Colleen Ryan-Scheutz, *Sex, the Self, and the Sacred: Women in the Cinema of Pier Paolo Pasolini* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), esp. ch. 1; Maggi, *Resurrection of the Body*, 82-85.

faithful to a thought of Paulinist scandal worthy of the name. A streak of opacity crossing and distending the screen of the visible, Paul's desire remains withdrawn from—and therefore perpetually mysterious to—the diegetic reality of Pasolini's constructions. Unnamed, unengaged, and therefore without any pre-established hope for future incorporation, it is in the aleatory sequences of "Paul, 'sick'" that the film stumbles on what may be most alive in the Pauline legacy.

It is in this respect that I admire very much Maggi's, *The Resurrection of the Body: Pier Paolo Pasolini from Saint Paul to Sade*. Maggi argues that the apostle's un-assimilable same sex desire in the script for the Paul film should be read against the backdrop of the father figure's desire in Pasolini's *Theorem*. In that film, a youthful stranger, visiting an upstanding bourgeois household, provokes deeply transformative sexual desires from all its inhabitants. Rather than remain in this rather delicate erotic scenario (the youth had slept with all members of the family and the maid to boot), the youthful visitor is called away suddenly and leaves abruptly. Bereft of the object of their desires (and all those spontaneous and unscripted liaisons afforded by his presence in the household), the newly desiring bodies of the bourgeois family are left, traumatically, alone. In this specific sense, the dynamic is comparable to the traumatic symbolic violence inflicted by Bobby Peru (Willem Dafoe) on Lula (Laura Dern) in David Lynch's *Wild at Heart* (1990). There Bobby both extorts and elicits from Lula (in that wonderfully awkward mixture of eroticism, general creepiness, and violence of which Lynch films are capable) a profoundly transgressive affirmation of her own desire. And at just the moment in which Lula avows this desire, effectively subverting her (previous) place in the symbolic economy, Peru laughs, dismisses her with a joke, and exits. Part of the violence of Bobby Peru's action involves the way it deprives Lula of any object, however temporary, of her identification with the transgressive desire he evoked or extorted.<sup>67</sup>

And just here is an idea that seems of significance for Pasolini, for Foucault, and for a thinking of the potential legacies of Paul. Desire deprived of an object, this volatile form of relation without relation, is effectively one of the things with which the Paul script, just as Pasolini's *Theorem*, confronts us. Without narrative hope of teleological reconciliation, this form of phenomenological linkage appears as a pure—if violent—withdrawal, a refusal of all calculations, all efficiencies, and all the ready-made (or even future oriented) availabilities that constitute Heidegger's "standing reserve" or Foucault's "docile bodies." The violent refusal emerges, in this respect, as an *exodus* from all those rhythms and transfers of those economies that invest us with sense and significance, all those economies in other words in which we live, move, and have our being. In respect of his own unavowable same-sex desire, then, there is a trajectory of the Paul film that ends at the same (non)place of the desiring patriarch figure at the end of *Theorem*. There a dispossessed patriarch running in "the desert" constituted an explicit echo of the wilderness wanderings of the biblically imagined Israelites after their exodus from slavery. It is a harsh image of freedom: freed but homeless; liberated to desire but not afforded an object of that desire. No wonder the

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<sup>67</sup> After writing these lines I notice that Slavoj Zizek has made a similar point (and several others) about this scene in *The Parallax View*, 69f.

patriarch approaches the camera to conclude the film only with a scream of hysteria.

"Reappearance of Paul, 'sick'".

*Postscript: Apocalyptic and Aleatory Encounters of Truth*

Now we can begin to see why there are intriguing links between Pauline apocalypticism and the larger project of Foucault. How is it that one is able to think, in that favorite word of Foucault, "outside" the relations of power (on the one hand) and the relations of knowledge (on the other)? How is one able to "encounter" thought in the interstice, the space and time (Foucault's "non-place" and relation "without relation")? The question is essential for Foucault, and my suggestion is that Pasolini's collapse into indistinction of the categories "sexuality" and "apocalyptic" is here very useful. As Gilles Deleuze summarizes, Foucault's obsession with the "outside" that is the space of thought emerges from the fact that, for Foucault, thought must cope with its own (originary) exile from stable, given, naturalized forms. We must, as Deleuze would explore in multiple ways within *The Logic of Sense*, experience the structural "perversity" of "modern" thought:

This [third space between "power" and "knowledge"] is 'the other thing,' already mentioned by *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. And if the two formal elements of knowledge, external and heterogeneous, find historical accords which provide solutions for the 'problem' of truth, this is, as we have seen, because forces operate in a different space to that of forms, the space of the Outside, where the relation is precisely a 'non-relation,' the place of a 'non-place,' and history an emergence.<sup>68</sup>

In Foucault's modernism, therefore, "thinking" must "address itself" to this "outside that has no form," this outside that is, as it were, a void of an "abstract storm." As Deleuze summarizes:

Thinking does not depend on a beautiful interiority that would reunite the visible and the articulable elements, but is carried under the intrusion of an outside that eats into the interval and forces or dismembers the internal. "When the outside collapses and attracts interiority," the interior presupposes a beginning and an end, an origin and destination that can coincide and incorporate "everything." But when there are only

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<sup>68</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 86-7. As for Deleuze himself, Clayton Crockett has recently developed very significant comparisons between the 'event' focus of recent philosophical readings of Paul and Deleuze's reliance on 'event' language to explore this space of the 'dice throw' between power and knowledge. Among other things, Crockett shows in this way a hidden Paulinism within Deleuze, who otherwise seemed convinced he was an anti-Paulinist. See, the chapter on Deleuze in Clayton Crockett, *Radical Political Theology: Religion and Politics After Liberalism* (Insurrections: Critical Studies in Religion, Politics, and Culture) (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); and "Radical Theology and the Event: St. Paul avec Deleuze", in Ward Blanton and Hent de Vries eds., *Paul and the Philosophers* (forthcoming, 2010).

environments and whatever lies between them, when words and things are opened up by the environment without ever coinciding, there is a liberation of forces which come from the outside and exist only in a mixed-up state of agitation, modification and mutation. In truth, they are dice-throws, for thinking involves throwing the dice.<sup>69</sup>

In short, a significant thing about Paul in this process of exchange of temporal and identitarian postcards between the apostle and contemporary critical theory is the way in which he can be read as articulating a discourse of sexuality in which categories of the human or even of (potentially 'animal') sexuality do not orient judgments about sexuality in the sense that they could constitute a general backdrop theory or ground for measurement. *In this precise respect*, or in relation to both modern and Christian discourses about sexuality Foucault wanted to subvert, Paulinist statements about sexuality are often interesting for the way they do not refer back to a standardized, generalizable theory of sexuality, but ground themselves in a thinking outward, outside the realm of sexuality *per se*. As I often say, it is always worth remembering that it is precisely the *subtractive* Paul, the "meontological" Paul, that has "reappeared" as an object of intense fascination for continental philosophy. Here is the Paul of "the nothings" of 1 Corinthians 1, or the *hōs mē*, the "as if not" of 1 Corinthians 7, and perhaps the kenotic self-emptying of the "form of God" in Philippians 2. An engagement with Foucault and Pasolini's "reappearance of Paul, 'sick'", invites us to wrestle with something Agamben, Badiou, Žižek, or Taubès never really ask us to see. Above all, why is it that the grand touchstone of Paulinist meontology, that basically Adornean "as if not" that haunts and opens up the world of the Corinthian believers—the *hōs mē* of 1 Corinthians 7—emerges by way of a consideration of sexual and social roles? The time that is "shortened," suspended, or remaindered (to repeat Agamben's engagement with 1 Corinthians 7) is otherwise than the time of social-sexual recognition with all its dispensable first-century and sage-like advice for wives, husbands, youths, and parents.

More pressingly still for a reflection on the (bio)political, does not Pasolini's Paul incite our reflection about why, in such a context, it is not the pop-liberationist, post-Elizabethan incitement to sexual discourse that is of ongoing significance for what has become a philosophico-Paulinist-meontological site of resistance, not only against metaphysical totalities but also of totalizing representational discourses of and about sex. As a sexual discourse that collapses into a discourse of the being-traversed by the crisis-producing "shortening" of time, the comparative reading of Paul with Pasolini's apostle invites us to see how Paulinism coheres with a thinking of sexuality in which the identity or substance of sexuality is not imagined to ground judgements about itself—whether imagined as unfolding itself in measurable, testable, realms of modern science or within divinely given norms of sexuality *per se*. Rather, sexual unions, such as they are imagined in 1 Corinthians 7, are traversed by a force from the outside, imagined as an apocalyptically intrusive shortening of time. Sexual liaison, such as it is imagined, is not—as most contemporary discussions of sexual identity *are*—

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<sup>69</sup> Deleuze, *Foucault*, 87.

delimitable, circumscribable, or susceptible of judgement because it is understood or known. Rather than *known*, recognizable roles become *adiaphora*, which is to say, traversed by a force that exceeds or overwhelms them, an excess and exteriority that does nothing but suspends usual judgments about these roles.

In light of Foucault's larger project to think of identities being haunted by their outsides and thus open to spheres and forces that are not circumscribable or normalized, Paul's "apocalyptic sexuality" opens up compelling forms of thought about sexuality and power alike. By the same token, the "apocalyptic sexuality" of this comparison also highlights another way in which Foucault could have read Paulinism as subtracting itself from more developed "systems" of an emerging Christian theogicolo-legal culture, above all one that would link truth to sexual disclosure so obsessively. The (apocalyptic) piquancy of Paul's suspension or distancing (see *hōs mē*) from recognizable roles and accompanying demands of family and procreative sexuality must necessarily have lost its sting as the memory of apocalyptically gripped Paulinists slipped ever further into the historical background. In fact, the more his successors realized that Paul did not, in the grinding actuality of everyday temporality, live near "the end" as he had imagined himself to do, one form of temporal distancing (from Paul) displaces and suppresses another (distancing from received, recognizable roles). In this process the sexual dimensions of the Pauline legacy become almost entirely dominated by those elements imagined to be systemic, natural, or perennial, precisely *not* the singularly, apocalyptically determinate forms of negation of these relationships.

Finally, Alain Badiou has produced beautiful work urging audiences to discover in Paulinist "anti-philosophy" a "new militant figure," particularly now that avant-gardist Leninism has run aground (and for essential reasons).<sup>70</sup> To the quest for a new militant figure, Pasolini's project for a film about Paul likewise issues a political call. Traversing the space of the visible as a kind of occlusion of vision, presenting itself to the sayable by withdrawing into the realm of the unavowable, Pasolini's "reappearance of Paul, 'sick'" places Badiou's quest within a very different frame. How would one remain faithful to such irruptive moments of the unavowable and the withdrawn, to a "scandal" that throws off all self-enclosed rhythms of recognition, even the rhythm of self-recognition? How would we commune with each other in such realms of exteriority, of bodies and speeches traversed by an outside that does not give itself to be recognized, owned, appropriated? Or is this unavowable and scandalous exteriority not already the opening onto the *common as such*, that which traverses us all even as it cannot be owned by anyone?

One thing is certain. If there is a remaining faithful to the profoundly scandalous "malady" in Paulinism that Pasolini sketched out in the late

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<sup>70</sup> I am thinking here not only of Badiou's *Saint Paul, the Foundation of Universalism* (which so brilliantly crystallizes crucial points of his larger philosophical project to construct a subtractive ontology), but also his earlier work of theatre, *Incident at Antioch*, translated into English by Susan Spitzer and performed and discussed at the Feb. 13-14, 2009 conference at the University of Glasgow, 'Paul, Political Fidelity, and the Philosophy of Alain Badiou: a Discussion of *Incident at Antioch*'.

1960's, this faithfulness cannot be discovered in repeating Pasolini's gesture today without a difference. The sexual desire of Pasolini's Paul was not what it would be today. For Pasolini, it would seem, and certainly for the Paul in his film script, the operation of the machine of identity politics had not yet groaned into operation to the degree that it has by now. So what should we say? Only that, to remain faithful to Paulinist scandal, and to Pasolini perhaps, one must discover not only a new militant figure but also a new way to name that "malady" which is not one and which is not exhausted in the traversal of Paul's diegetic body in the Pasolini script, trembling and wrecked with desire for those he felt so deeply to be out of bounds. Eschewing ready-made "sickness" and pre-scripted "maladies", perhaps—just maybe—Paul (and we with him) may yet reappear, "sick" for our time as well, and yet for all that, subtracted from those economies that would render our bodies docile and our energies already co-opted.

"Reappearance of Paul, 'sick'".

Yes. Come.

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