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FEMINISM AND EMPOWERMENT: A CRITICAL READING OF FOUCAULT

MONIQUE DEVEAUX

Few thinkers have influenced contemporary feminist scholarship on the themes of power, sexuality, and the subject to the extent that Michel Foucault has. Indeed, even scholars who dispute this thinker's claims are compelled to acknowledge the contribution represented by his work in these areas. The years since Foucault's death have been marked by intense interest in his writings, feminist and otherwise. Today, a decade after his death, it seems appropriate to reflect critically upon the central exchanges between feminist thought and Foucauldian theory.

This article looks at three "waves" of Foucauldian literature by feminist political theorists and philosophers. Although neither chronologically separate nor thematically discrete, these waves refer to bodies of work by feminist scholars in which different aspects of Foucault's work–all related primarily to the problematic of *power*–are used for distinctly feminist ends. These waves are first, literature that appropriates Foucault's analysis of the effects of power on bodies, or what is known as the "docile-bodies" thesis, as well as a related aspect of this, the notion of "biopower," which refers to state regulation of the population; second, analyses that take their cue from Foucault's later development of an agonistic model of power,[1] in which multiple, interweaving power relations are viewed as inherently contested, as best expressed by his adage, "where there is power, there is resistance"; and third, postmodern feminist writings on sexual and gender identity informed by Foucault's assertion that prevailing categories of sex identity are the result of the transition to a modern regime of power and a proliferation of subjectifying discourses on sexuality. These three waves are taken up in turn in the first three sections of this article.

In reviewing the three waves of Foucauldian feminist literature, I argue that both the paradigms of power and the treatment of the subject[2] which emerge from Foucault's work are inadequate for feminist projects that take the delineation of women's oppression and the concrete transforma-

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tion of society as central aims. As such, my position stands in contrast to recent, influential feminist Foucauldian arguments, such as those of Susan Hekman and Judith Butler.[3] Although Foucault's writings on power have a certain heuristic value for feminists, I suggest that two major pitfalls recommend against uncritical appropriations of his thought: the tendency of a Foucauldian conceptualization of the subject to erase women's specific experiences with power; and the inability of the agonistic model of power to account for, much less articulate, processes of empowerment. Finally, as an antidote to these problems, section four of the article points to an emerging body of literature by feminist writers on the issue of empowerment which, I argue, serves as a more viable basis for feminist work on the themes of freedom, power, and empowerment.

THE FIRST WAVE: SURVEILLANCE AND BIOPOWER

Just So Many Docile Bodies? Feminism and Panopticonism. The transition from sovereign, or monarchical, power to modern regulatory power comprised of disciplinary regimes, systems of surveillance, and normalizing tactics provides the backdrop to Foucault's early "docile bodies" thesis. Modern power requires "minimum expenditure for the maximum return," and its central organizing principle is that of discipline.[4] Aspects of sovereign power are carried over into the modern period but function as ruses, disguising and legitimating the emerging discourse of disciplinary power. This new regime of control is minimalist in its approach (in the sense of lesser expenditures of force and finance) but more far reaching and localized in its effect on bodies.

For Foucault, sex is the pivotal factor in the proliferation of mechanisms of discipline and normalization; it is also at the center of a system of "dividing practices" that separate off the insane, the delinquent, the hysteric, and the homosexual. As the sovereign's rights over the life and death of subjects began to shift in the seventeenth century, two axes or poles emblematic of the modern power paradigm evolved. They were the "anatomo-politics of the human body," which emphasizes a disciplined, useful body (hence, "docile bodies"), and the model Foucault calls the "biopolitics of the population," in which the state's attention turns to the reproductive capacities of bodies, and to health, birth, and mortality.[5] The prime focus of the first axis of power is thus "the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission."[6] The body becomes a "political field," inscribed and constituted by power relations.

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Although the docile bodies thesis is later amended by Foucault in favor of a less reductionist, agonistic conception of the subject and power–and later still, by an emphasis on the "technologies of the self"[7]–his earlier paradigm has been used by feminists of this first wave of Foucauldian feminist literature to describe contemporary practices of femininity. Two specific areas of Foucault's work are drawn on in this project: the discussion of disciplinary measures in *Discipline and Punish*, encompassing the subthemes of docile bodies, surveillance, and the normalizing gaze; and, in the same text, the thesis on Panopticonism–referring to Bentham's design for a prison that would leave prisoners perpetually exposed to view and therefore likely to police themselves.[8]

In feminist literature that appropriates the docile bodies paradigm, the transition from sovereign authority to modern, disciplinary forms of power is seen to parallel the shift from more overt manifestations of the oppression of women to more insidious forms of control. This new method is disciplinary in nature and more subtle in its exercise; it involves women in the enterprise of surveillance. The following description of modern power by Foucault provides the basis for an analysis, by scholars of this first wave, of what they call the "techniques of femininity":

> There is no need for arms, physical violence, material constraints. Just a gaze. An inspecting gaze, a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorising to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be at minimal cost.[9]

Feminist scholars who take up this conceptualization of power treat the account of self-surveillance offered by the model of the Panopticon as a compelling explanatory paradigm for women's acquiescence to, and collusion with, patriarchal standards of femininity. However, it is an explanation which must be modified to fit feminist purposes. Sandra Bartky applauds Foucault's work on disciplinary practices in modernity and on the construction of docile bodies, but she cautions that his analysis "treats the body . . . as if bodily experiences of men and women did not differ and as if men and women bore the same relationship to the characteristic institutions of modern life." Thus, Bartky asks: "Where is the account of the disciplinary practices that engender the 'docile bodies' of women, bodies more docile than the bodies of men? . . . [Foucault] is blind to those disciplines that produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine."[10]

Bartky's two theses are, first, that femininity (unlike femaleness) is socially constructed, with this feminine mold taking hold most powerfully

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through the female body; and, second, that the disciplinary practices which produce the feminine subject must be viewed as peculiarly modern in character, symptoms of the "modernization of patriarchal domination." Bartky describes three kinds of practices that contribute to the construction of femininity: exercise and diet regimes aimed at attaining an "ideal" body size and configuration; an attention to comportment and a range of "gestures, postures and movements"; and techniques that display the feminine body as an "ornamental surface," such as the use of cosmetics. These three areas combine to "produce a body which in gesture and appearance is recognizably feminine" and reinforce a "disciplinary project of bodily perfection."[11]

But just *who*, Bartky asks, is the disciplinarian in all this? Her response is that we need to look at the dual nature of feminine bodily discipline, encompassing its socially "imposed" and "voluntary" (or self-disciplining) characteristics. The imposed aspects of feminine bodily discipline are not restricted to messages from the beauty industry and society that women should look a certain way but also include negative repercussions in terms of personal relationships and job opportunities. Bartky accounts for the voluntary, self-disciplining dimension of these techniques of femininity in two ways. Women internalize the feminine ideal so profoundly that they lack the critical distance necessary to contest it and are even fearful of the consequences of "noncompliance," and ideals of femininity are so powerful that to reject their supporting practices is to reject one's own identity.[12]

Bartky's use of the docile bodies and Panopticon theses is problematic for at least two reasons. First, it is not clear why Bartky argues that more subtle and insidious forms of domination characterize the modern era or what she calls the "modernization of patriarchal power." In fact, current examples abound of overt control of women's choices and bodies, like lack of accessible abortions and frighteningly high rates of rape and assault. This is not to suggest that glaring barriers to women's freedom should preclude reflection on less tangible obstacles but, rather, to point out the danger of taking up the latter in isolation from a broader discussion of women's social, economic, and political subordination.

Furthermore, the way Bartky conceives of women's interaction with their bodies seems needlessly reductionist. Women's choices and differences are lost altogether in Bartky's description of the feminine body and its attendant practices:

> To subject oneself to the new disciplinary power is to be up-to-date . . . it represents a saving in the economy of enforcement: since it is women themselves who practice this discipline on and against their own bodies, men get off scot-free. . . . The woman who checks her makeup half a dozen times a day to see if her foundation has caked or

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her mascara has run, who worries that the wind or the rain may spoil her hairdo, who looks frequently to see if her stockings have bagged at the ankle or who, feeling fat, monitors everything she eats, has become, just as surely as the inmate of the Panopticon, a self-policing subject, a self committed to a relentless self-surveillance.[13]

This description may draw attention to the pernicious effects of cultural standards of attractiveness, but it blocks meaningful discussion of how women feel about their bodies, their appearance, and social norms. It obscures the complex ways in which gender is constructed, and the fact that differences among women–age, race, culture, sexual orientation, and class–translate into myriad variations in responses to ideals of femininity and their attendant practices. Bartky's use of the docile bodies thesis has the effect of diminishing and delimiting women's subjectivity, at times treating women as robotic receptacles of culture rather than as active agents who are both constituted by, and reflective of, their social and cultural contexts.

Susan Bordo, in "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," also takes up Foucault's docile bodies thesis to show the ways in which women's bodies serve as a locus for the social construction of femininity. Bordo argues that anorexia nervosa and bulimia are located on a continuum with feminine normalizing phenomena such as the use of makeup, fashion, and dieting, all of which contribute to the construction of docile, feminine bodies. Thus, "anorexia begins, emerges out of . . . conventional feminine practice"[14]; the docile feminine body becomes, in the case of the anorectic, the ultimate expression of the self-disciplining female caught up in an insane culture.

There are similarities between Bordo's and Bartky's appropriation of Foucault's model of disciplining power, but the two treatments are disanalogous in significant ways. Bordo's thesis that cultural practices are inscribed onto bodies is not so extreme as Bartky's "woman-as-Panopticon" picture. In contrast to the thesis that women's bodies and psyches are molded by a patriarchal culture, Bordo focuses on anorectics' and bulimics' relationships to social practices and the ways in which they mediate the demands of a contradictory culture. For instance, she describes a teenage girl's growing awareness of social expectations and values and her impulse to both suppress feminine bodily development and resist the influence of her family by restricting her eating.[15] This does not indicate that it is appropriate to borrow the docile bodies thesis from Foucault unamended; instead, it seems that Bordo is able to steer clear of the totalizing picture of the self-disciplining Panopticon by modifying the paradigm to include accounts of women's understandings of their experi-

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ences. The modification is insufficient, however, for Bordo, like Bartky, loosely employs such concepts as "disciplinary techniques" and "normalization" to explain the forms and effects of feminine cultural practices.

This unhelpful account of subjectivity derives from problems inherent in the docile bodies paradigm. Foucault's extreme reluctance to attribute explicit agency to subjects in this early account of power results in a portrayal of individuals as passive bodies, constituted by power and immobilized in a society of discipline. Significantly, this analysis gives way, in Foucault's later works, to a more complex understanding of power as a field of relationships between free subjects. Yet feminists have clearly found this first power paradigm's emphasis on the body a useful analytic tool with which to examine women's subjectification. However, the limitations of Foucault's account of the modernization of power give us reason to take a critical distance from this aspect of his work. The appropriations discussed above indicate that there is a danger in employing the notion of self-policing, disciplined subjects in an ahistorical, *metaphorical* sense. Bartky–and to a lesser extent, Bordo–uses the docile body and the Panopticon as if these describe a wide range of subjectivities and practices, and this leads her to conflate women's myriad experiences of femininity. Lost are the historical context of Foucault's account of the modernization of power and the subtleties of his usage of "normalization" and bodily discipline by institutions and discourses.[16] Moreover, by treating the metaphor of docile bodies as a paradigm for women's experiences of femininity, Bartky and Bordo foreclose the integration of Foucault's later work, including his admission that resistance is inherent to the strategic model of disciplined bodies. Indeed, given Foucault's subsequent revisions and his preference for a more constitutive understanding of power in his later writings, we should ask whether any version of the "docile bodies" paradigm is useful for feminists.

Feminism and the Rise of Biopower. The second axis of modern power is what Foucault calls the "biopolitics of the population," or simply "biopower." The account of the rise of biopower in the West in the modern period, signaling a whole new politics of population control and management, is used by some Foucauldian feminists of this first wave to cast light on those "discourses"–such as fetal protection laws and new reproductive and genetic technologies (NRGTs)–that directly affect women's control of their bodies and reproductive choices.[17]

Foucault uses the term "biopower" to denote a transformation in the nature of the sovereign's power over its subjects, in which the state's focus on prohibition and juridical authority is replaced by new interests in the

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birth rate, education, discipline, health, and longevity of its population. Thus, what Foucault calls a "normalizing society" replaces the juridical authority of the sovereign. There is a concurrent shift from struggles for political rights to "life rights"–that is, a right to one's body, health, and the fulfillment of basic needs. As with the "docile bodies" aspect of modern power, sexuality is key to the exercise of biopower: both axes of power–the body and biopower–revolve around sexuality, which in turn becomes "a crucial target of a power organized around the management of life rather than the menace of death." This focus is manifested in the sciences of the "new technology of sex" starting from the end of the eighteenth century–namely, pedagogy, medicine, and demography.[18] Of particular interest to feminists who employ the biopower analysis are the accounts of discourses and innovations which facilitate increased state control of reproduction or what Foucault calls the "socialization of procreation." These developments are used by feminists to theorize about current reproductive practices, ranging from birth control and abortion to new reproductive and genetic technologies.

Jennifer Terry uses Foucault's account of modern power to examine such issues as "prenatal surveillance," fetal rights discourse, and surrogacy. These practices stem from increased state concern for issues of population–birth, longevity, eugenics, health–and the focus for intervention is, not surprisingly, the domain of reproduction and prenatal care. Terry situates fetal rights discourses and "natal Panopticonism" against the backdrop of regulatory prenatal technologies, including "amniocentesis, sonograms, electronic fetal monitoring . . . sonar-produced video images," and "life-style monitoring" of pregnant women, which can include regular Breathalizer tests for women suspected of alcohol abuse.[19] She also points to legislative proposals in the United States that advocate mandatory HIV antibody testing for any woman who becomes pregnant and wishes to have a child, and notes that there are several states that require HIV testing to obtain a marriage license. This ominous form of medical interference holds particularly serious implications for childbearing women, because it implies that the state should be permitted to override their choices on the grounds that they are potential transmitters of disease.

Similarly, Terry views fetal rights discourse as a new, legitimating ideology whose deeper aspiration is the control of reproduction and the lives of pregnant women. The new prenatal screening technologies are instrumental in allowing both state and medical authorities to view the fetus as separate from the mother, who is then subject to a range of sus-

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picions concerning her behavior during pregnancy. Furthermore, the articulation of distinct fetal rights has been the outcome of a series of civil court cases throughout the 1980s in which mothers were sued for allegedly damaging their fetuses through irresponsible behavior.[20] Terry relates these developments to Foucault's biopower paradigm so as to situate them within the overall context of increased state interest in population regulation.

Although part of Terry's argument falls back on the docile bodies thesis, the biopower paradigm nevertheless seems appropriate to describe the dramatic character of medical and state intervention. Yet like the docile bodies thesis, Foucault's biopower model deemphasizes agents' capacities to resist regulatory and disciplinary technologies. Terry is able to avoid the worst excesses of the paradigm by inserting descriptions of various resistances, both individual and collective, into her account. She points, for instance, to the Women's AIDS Network, an international group of women in law, health, and education who are concerned with HIV and AIDS and advocate women's rights to freedom from medical surveillance. Without such correctives, readers would be left with a profound sense of disempowerment in the face of ubiquitous state and medical surveillance of our reproductive lives. More importantly, failing to point out women's responses to this intervention would give a false picture of feminist politics: women's health issues have been a constant focus for feminist activism–more so today than ever, as evidenced by the renewed prochoice movement, groups demanding increased funding for breast cancer research and treatment, grassroots initiatives to establish women's community health clinics, and so forth.

Foucault's biopower analysis helps to reveal the implications of the mechanisms for the control and regulation of our bodies discussed by Terry. However, taken unamended, the paradigm obscures both individual women's and collective struggles against coercive medical and social practices. As Terry's work shows, feminist appropriation of Foucault's biopower framework must include discussions of strategies employed by women to mediate and resist encroachments on their bodies and lives.

THE SECOND WAVE: "WHERE THERE IS POWER, THERE IS RESISTANCE"

A second wave of feminist literature has taken up Foucault's work on power in a different way, stressing the possibilities of resistance over the fact of domination. Here the focus is on Foucault's later development of

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an agonistic model of power–the notion that "where there is power, there is resistance"–as well as on the assertion that individuals contest fixed identities and relations in ongoing and sometimes subtle ways. This power paradigm has proven particularly helpful for feminists who want to show the diverse sources of women's subordination as well as to demonstrate that we engage in resistance in our everyday lives. Drawing upon Foucault's treatment of power and resistance in his *Power/Knowledge, History of Sexuality* (vol. 1), and "The Subject and Power," this literature illustrates how he challenges the assumption that power is located exclusively or even primarily in state apparatuses or in prohibition. By demanding that we look to the productive character of power and to the existence of multiple power relations– rather than to dualistic, top-down force–Foucault helps us move from a "state of subordination" explanation of gender relations, which emphasizes domination and victimization, to a more textured understanding of the role of power in women's lives. Viewing power as *constitutive* has helped many of us to grasp the interweaving nature of our social, political, and personal relationships.

Jana Sawicki points out that Foucault both reminds us of the importance of looking to subjugated knowledges and makes us circumspect about theories or movements that claim to offer a transcendence of power, or a power-free context. Sawicki argues that Foucault's account of power complements feminist concerns in that he "proposes that we think of power outside the confines of State, law or class. . . . Thus, Foucault frees power from the political domain in much the same way as radical feminists did."[21] Similarly, Susan Hekman argues that feminists have much to learn from Foucault's antitotalizing conception of power, because it cautions us against invoking universalisms and quick-fix solutions for complex social and political relations. Moreover, she asserts that a Foucauldian view of power necessarily reveals resistance to discourses and practices that subordinate women, a conclusion she reaches by highlighting–and I would argue, embellishing–accounts of resistance and political action in Foucault's work.[22]

A more critical body of work by feminist scholars takes issue with precisely those aspects of the agonistic model of power that this second wave finds so useful–the notion that power circulates and is *exercised* rather than possessed. However, this criticism stems in part from wrongly reading Foucault as a certain kind of postmodernist thinker, reflected in the allegation that he is a relativist (because antihumanist) and consequently guilty of overlooking the political aspects of power and resistance. Foucault's antimodernist rejection of truth is invoked to corrobo-

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rate this analysis, as is his reluctance in his middle and later works to speak of social systems of domination. This position is best represented by Nancy Fraser, who contends that Foucault's agonistic notion of power posits that "power is productive, ineliminable, and therefore normatively neutral." By contrast, Fraser asserts that feminism needs to be able to distinguish between social practices which are "good" (less coercive) and "bad" (very coercive) and expresses nostalgia for Weberian distinctions between violence, domination, and authority.[23] Integral to this charge is Fraser's reading of Foucault as an antihumanist thinker who refuses to engage in normative discussions. Nancy Hartsock concurs with the conclusion that feminists cannot find adequate normative grounding in Foucault's work and goes so far as to state that his theory undermines attempts at social change, because his conception of power obscures the systematic nature of gender oppression. Echoing Fraser's criticism, she states that for Foucault, "power is everywhere and ultimately nowhere" and that "domination, viewed from above, is more likely to appear as equality." As an antidote to this distortion, she suggests that feminists need to "develop an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of the real world."[24]

Hartsock's claim that Foucault's model of power does not allow for an understanding of systematic injustice seems, at first glance, credible. Indeed, his account of power renders murky and less tangible numerous social relations, relations which feminists have argued constitute concrete oppression. Yet it is misleading to suggest that for Foucault such a condition does not exist: to the contrary, domination is by his account a frequent and at times inescapable reality.[25] Nor does it seem fair to impute to Foucault, as both Fraser and Hartsock do, a normatively neutral world view, because his work consistently reflects what are manifestly–if not always polemically–political concerns.

Staking out a middle ground between the criticisms of Fraser and Hartsock and the generosity of Sawicki and Hekman, I would like to argue that Foucault's agonistic model of power is double-edged. It is useful for feminists to the extent that it disengages us from simplistic, dualistic accounts of power; at the same time, however, it obscures many important experiences of power specific to women and fails to provide a sustainable notion of agency. This is not an easily negotiated tension for feminists; as one critic comments, Foucault's "lack of a rounded theory of subjectivity or agency conflicts with a fundamental aim of the feminist project to rediscover and reevaluate the experiences of women."[26] More-

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over, feminists in particular should be wary of Foucault's assertion that *all* social interactions are defined and thoroughly permeated by the exercise of power, as expressed in his view that "in human relations, whatever they are—whether it be a question of communicating verbally . . . or a question of a love relationship, an institutional or economic relationship—power is always present: I mean the relationship in which one wishes to direct the behavior of another."[27] If we agree with Hartsock's suggestion that feminists need to envisage a nondominated world, we should not slip into fatalistic views about the omnipresence of power. This means rejecting Foucault's assertion that absolutely *no* social or personal relations escape permeation by power.[28]

To illustrate the ramifications of Foucault's approach, it is useful to consider some specific ways in which this model tends to obscure women's experiences of power. This entails a discussion of Foucault's treatment of the subject, first with respect to freedom, then as concerns the issue of violence. In his later work, Foucault emphasizes that in order for a power relationship to exist, the subject on whom that "conduct" or governance is exercised must be a *free* subject. This appears at times as an essentialist freedom and at others as a qualified liberty where "individual or collective subjects . . . are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions and diverse comportments may be realized." Thus, power is separated off from force, violence, and domination, which do not involve any freedom on the part of the subject.

> A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it forces, it bends, it breaks on the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities. Its opposite pole can only be passivity, and if it comes up against any resistance it has no other option but to try to minimize it.

In order for a relationship of power to exist, a subject must be capable of action or resistance and be recognized as a person on whom force or "conduct" is exercised: thus, agonistic power is "a set of actions upon other actions."[29] This does not mean that domination is altogether antithetical to power. Rather, domination is the result of trajectories of force and power relations, culminating in a greater or lesser state of subordination, and correspondingly, with fewer or greater possibilities for resistance by subjects.[30] Yet power and domination remain different phenomena for Foucault.

It is important to ask whether this treatment of the subject enables us to recognize women's experiences of freedom and unfreedom. It would be difficult to argue that Foucault's account of the subject's capacity to resist power is simply untrue. Indeed, much feminist literature now

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stresses the importance of seeing women not as passive victims uniformly dominated but as active agents mediating their experiences. Nor does it seem accurate to claim that Foucault's reworking of the subject somehow compromises the political claim that women are indeed subordinated–for domination is a state that Foucault is quick to acknowledge.[31] Yet what feminist theory does, and what Foucault does *not* do, is look closely and critically at the issue of freedom where it concerns women's responses to structural inequality and male violence.

To understand the workings of power and the responses that power elicits, it is necessary to ask how women experience freedom and barriers to freedom. This might involve, for instance, looking at what Virginia Held has referred to as internal impediments to women's freedom or empowerment.[32] Held points to Sandra Bartky's work on shame: "The heightened self-consciousness that comes with emotions of self-assessment may become, in the shame of the oppressed, a stagnant self-obsession. Or shame may generate a rage whose expression is unconstructive, even self-destructive. In all these ways, shame is profoundly disempowering."[33] Unlike her earlier "woman-as-Panopticon" analysis, Bartky's theorizing on shame posits women as active subjects capable of a range of responses to social power. Bartky also discusses sources of disempowerment for women often omitted from accounts of power and powerlessness: unreciprocated emotional labor, nurturing, and caregiving. This kind of disempowerment, because it "is more subtle and oblique, one that is rooted in the subjective and deeply interiorized effects upon women ourselves both of the emotional care we give and of the care we fail to get in return,"[34] is, I think, easily obscured by Foucault's agonistic model of power, because it reflects neither outright domination nor the intersubjective play of power between two free agents.

Feminists need to look at the *inner* processes that condition women's sense of freedom or choice in addition to external manifestations of power and dominance–and Foucault's understanding of power is decidedly inadequate to this task. Women's "freedom" does not simply refer to objective possibilities for maneuvering or resisting within a power dynamic but concerns whether a woman *feels* empowered in her specific context. Because Foucault's account of the freedom of the subject determines the presence of power or "conduct"–as well as its opposite pole, violence or domination–based on the existence of objective points of resistance, it obscures the subjective aspects of power. As Lois McNay points out, in Foucault's theory, "power relations are only examined from the perspective of how they are installed in institutions and not

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from the point of view of those subject to power."[35] A feminist response to this failing might borrow from Held's objection to classical liberals and contemporary libertarians' views of freedom as largely determined by the absence of "external impediments": feminists must emphasize, against this account, that "the self-development of women involves changing the affective tastes, the emotional coloration, with which we experience the world, not only the outer obstacles in that experience." Addressing women's freedom requires that we reflect upon internal impediments to exercising choice as well as the tangible obstacles to its realization–and this means considering practices and conventions that may have disempowering effects not easily discernible to theorists who focus exclusively on political power. Finally, it involves recognizing certain experiences as ongoing expressions of resistance to power–"the power to give voice to one's aspiration to be heard is not so much the removal of an external impediment as the beginning of an internal empowerment."[36]

Foucault's agonistic model of power, skewed as it is towards a dynamic of *acting upon,* cannot provide feminists with the conceptual tools needed to understand empowerment and disempowerment, freedom and non-freedom. To illustrate the inability of this framework to consider women's experiences of power, let us next consider the issue of male violence. First, recall Foucault's claim that violence and power are inherently different or separable, the former presupposing a situation of physical determination and the latter connoting a relation of "conduct," a dichotomy expressed by his claim that "where the determining factors saturate the whole there is no relationship of power; slavery is not a power relationship when a man is in chains."[37] Foucault's metaphoric slave in chains has no possibility of movement or resistance and is, in his view, situated in a context of violence and domination, not power. What does this mean for feminists grappling with the question of women's experiences of rape, battery, and psychological abuse? To define male power as an inherently separable phenomenon from male force and domination, as Foucault would have us do, is to disregard the ways in which this power is frequently transformed into violence. A woman living in an abusive relationship feels the continuum of her partner's anger and force, sees that the day-to-day exercise of power is the stuff out of which explosions of abuse and violence are made. Foucault's distinction between power and violence, freedom and domination, do not allow us to ask whether this woman feels complicit or victimized, powerless or empowered to leave the situation of abuse.

The issues of women's relation to violence and power are raised in a

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response by Monique Plaza to Foucault's position on rape. Foucault's view, expressed during a roundtable discussion, is that "when rape is punished, it is exclusively the physical violence that should be punished," and that one should consider rape "nothing but an assault." Foucault concludes that to treat rape as a sexual offense is to shore up the apparatus of repression, infusing sex with repressive power; thus, he comments that sexuality should not "under any circumstances be the object of punishment."[38]

Plaza's response to Foucault is that he is setting up a false dichotomy between violence and sex. Rape, which is violent, forced sex, thus represents an imbroglio for Foucault, leading him to assert that the sexual part of rape should be exempted from punishment, leaving only force as deserving of sanction–a preposterous distinction. Women's unfreedom (as victims of rape) is thus superseded by the need to maintain men's freedom, that is, their freedom not to be punished for sex or to have their sex repressed. As Plaza writes, "what do they say except that *they want to defend the freedom that men have at the present time to repress us by rape?* What do they say except that *what they call (their) freedom is the repression of our bodies?*"[39]

I have brought up the issues of male violence and rape not to show that Foucault is a bad person or a bad philosopher but rather to illustrate that feminist theorists should approach his notions of the free subject and agonistic power with great caution. To summarize, this caveat is necessary for three reasons: first, because his analysis does not consider women's internal barriers to agency and choice, as with the example of shame; second, because it sets up a false dichotomy between power and violence, as illustrated by the continuum of anger and physical abuse experienced by a battered woman; and third, because it does not question the fact that in many societies, men's freedom (privilege, etc.) is contingent upon women's unfreedom, as in the case of rape, rather than on the presence of a freely maneuvering subject. This does not mean feminists must jettison Foucault's framework of power relations altogether but suggests that if we *do* wish to employ this part of the tool kit,[40] we must amend the thesis drastically to include inquiry into subjective aspects of power and, in particular, to reconceptualize the relationship between social and personal power and privilege, on one hand, and violence, on the other. This requires that we recognize that there are significant connections between the two, connections that are not always immediately obvious to us. However, certain distinctions between power and force are warranted and are crucial for feminists–there are real differences, for instance, be-

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tween not being considered for a promotion on sexually discriminatory grounds, and being raped. It does not help feminists to insist on the existence of one single, global form of oppression that admits only of degree.[41]

Finally, as the discussion of lesbian and gay identity politics in the next section will show, the omission of an account of empowerment from Foucault's analysis of power should alert us to the limitations of his theory for feminist theory and praxis.

THE THIRD WAVE: SEXUAL IDENTITY AND REGIMES OF TRUTH/POWER

Following the intense interest in recent years in the themes of identity and difference, numerous scholars have used Foucault's work to suggest new ways of thinking about gender and sexual orientation. I will use the example of lesbian and gay politics to show that, despite their initial appeal, Foucault's accounts of the subject and power may contradict the aspirations of those who would mobilize around common, if contingent, identities.

Judith Butler is at the center of the third wave of Foucauldian feminist theory. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,* Butler builds on Foucault's account of the proliferation of discourses on sex in the modern era. What we see today, she argues, is the constant *re*production of sexual identities via "an exclusionary apparatus of production" in which the meanings of these practices are curtailed, restricted, and reinforced. Whereas Foucault is most interested in the way regimes of power produce discourses on sexual perversion, pathology, delinquency and criminality, and new subjects emerging from these categories, Butler is equally interested in the construction of gender and sexual minority identities. For feminists, her most controversial move is to use Foucault's thesis on modern power to deconstruct the very notion of woman. Butler proposes that we view gender as discursively and materially constructed through repetitive "performances" of "words, acts, gestures and desire." Foucault's influence on Butler's formulation is clear in her claim: "If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, bur are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity." Rather than clinging to fixed notions of femaleness as necessary for feminist praxis, Butler suggests that we reconceptualize identity as "an effect" in order to desta-

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bilize gender and open up new, unforeseen possibilities for agency.[42]

A full discussion of Butler's work is not possible here, but I would like to address those aspects of Foucault's analysis of modern power that Butler invokes in her call for a notion of sexuality as a site of contestation and subversion and to consider such a strategy's implications for lesbian and gay politics. Like Foucault, Butler suggests that sexual identities are constituted by regulatory practices and draws our attention to the instability of sexual categories. The backdrop to this thesis is found in Foucault's discussion of the rise of pastoral power in the West in the modern period; this power is salvation-oriented, individualizing (and at the same time totalizing), and "linked with the production of truth–the truth of the individual himself."[43] This combination of tactics culminates in dividing practices and "true discourses" that tie the individual back onto her or his own identity, producing the modern category of the "homosexual" as well as other subject categories.

It is because minority sexual identities are so deeply couched in the dividing practices which first gave them meaning–established "through the isolation, intensification, and consolidation of peripheral sexualities[44]–that Foucault discourages us from embracing these self-understandings in an uncritical way or as part of a political strategy. Not surprisingly, Foucault is dismissive of struggles that make sex the "rallying point" for resistance to the deployment of sexuality;[45] he contrasts "the homosexual liberation movements" with "the creative and interesting elements in the women's movements" and praises the latter for attempting to overcome their particular form of individualization, promoting "a displacement effected in relation to the sexual centering of the problem, formulating the demand for new forms of culture, discourse, language . . . which are no longer part of that rigid assignation and pinning down to their sex which they had initially . . . been politically obliged to accept in order to make themselves heard." Gay men have not yet tried to desexualize their political platform as much as the feminist movement and instead have unwittingly overemphasized their sexual orientation.[46] Foucault believes there is a need to "desex" struggles, by which he means that the focus of a project of "liberation"–a concept he views with much suspicion–must change in order to prompt a more radical questioning of discourses that have made the categorization and persecution of individuals possible.

> It is the *agency* of sex that we must break away from, if we aim–through a tactical reversal of the various mechanisms of sexuality–to counter the grips of power with the claims of bodies, pleasures, and knowledges, in their multiplicity and their possibility of resistance. The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures.[47]

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Butler concurs with Foucault's view that a politics placed squarely on fixed categories of gender and sexual orientation has the effect of reifying those identities. As an antidote to the production and reinforcement of prevailing notions of sexual identity, Butler argues that homosexuality and heterosexuality–like gender–exist as enactments of cultural and aesthetic performances; even as these identities are performed and repeated, they are (in true Foucauldian form) being contested and unraveled. In an analysis that also borrows from Jacques Derrida, Butler claims that emancipatory discourses on sexuality ironically set up heterosexuality as *origin,* in the sense that homosexuality is viewed as a "copy" of the "original," or authentic, sexual identity.[48] To counteract this reification, Butler proposes to disrupt the logic that makes this dualistic formulation possible by underlining the contingency of the "sign" of sexual identity.

It is considerably less clear how a strategy of displacement translates into effective political action. Butler endorses Foucault's strategy and argues for a concept of politics as the constant undoing of the categories and gender norms that derive from, and are perpetuated by, sexual "performances." Crucially, however, she avoids the topic of how we go about employing for political purposes those same provisional identities. Indeed, it is not at all clear that Butler thinks this can be done successfully– that is, without reifying those subjectivities. Butler's ambivalence points to the sheer difficulty of such a project, as evidenced by her comment: "There is a political necessity to use some sign now, and we do, but how to use it in such a way that its futural significations are not foreclosed? How to use the sign and avow its temporal contingency at once?"[49] Similarly, Jana Sawicki incorporates Foucauldian premises in her assertions that we need to discover new ways of understanding ourselves and new ways of resisting how we have been socially defined and constructed. Unfortunately, as with Butler, Sawicki leaves us with little sense of how feminist politics can proceed if gender is to be displaced.[50]

The political ambivalence of a position stressing the contingency of common self-understandings–or for Butler, the illusory nature of gender and sexual identities–is echoed in Foucault's own work. Foucault's view that subjects must resist the particular forms of subjectification that have oppressed them is linked to his claim that these struggles must expand and critically reflect upon both their definitions of shared identity and their domain of activism. This is as close as Foucault comes to suggesting what political resistance to oppression might look like, and the vagueness of his vision is reproduced by third-wave Foucauldian feminists. If, by the suggestion: "Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are," Foucault is advising that one take up a

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critical stance toward identities that have been constructed and reinforced by coercive discourses, the point is well taken.[51] This circumspection is also helpful as a caution against the sometimes homogenizing effect of identity politics–the tendency for a particular self-understanding to supersede others by setting up norms for what it means to be, and to live as, a lesbian or gay man. Yet several troubling questions remain. For example, *are* sexual identities strictly "constructed" via dividing practices that set homosexual off from heterosexual? Aren't a range of issues regarding sexual choice and the conscious appropriation of an identity simply being overlooked? Isn't it necessary, both for reasons of personal affirmation and political efficacy–in order to make rights-based claims, for instance–to assert the existence of the "categories" of women, lesbians, and gay men? And how does a group or an individual simultaneously resist an identity and mobilize around it for the purposes of empowerment and political action? These are questions which the arguments of third-wave Foucauldian feminists, like those of Foucault himself, necessarily raise. The fact that the questions go unaddressed speaks to the difficulties inherent in Foucauldian conceptions of identity and power.

Despite the initial usefulness of a deconstruction of sexual identity, then, Foucault's position leaves feminist theorists in something of a quandary. In particular, there are three concrete political problems raised by this approach that require attention. The first, perhaps most obvious, problem is that Foucault's treatment of sexual identities gives insufficient attention to struggles by particular social movements and to the ways in which their participants perceive and creatively inhabit their own identities. Most lesbian and gay activists today place sexual orientation at the center of their struggles, which range from retrieving accounts of their historical communities to resisting homophobic violence and discrimination as concerns employment, health and pension benefits, and so forth. For Foucault, such activity constitutes a dubious if not illogical strategy, because it casts these sexual identities as essential or biological rather than socially constructed. The end result is, as one critic notes of unmitigated social-constructionist theories in general, a tendency to treat lesbians and gay men who understand themselves in identity-bound terms as "victims of 'false consciousness,' unaware of the constructedness of their identities."[52]

Foucault's analysis also negates the importance of personal and group definition and affirmation, resources not easily replaced by the vague notion of identity contestation. Shane Phelan, for instance, has looked at the ways in which the construction of a positive lesbian identity and a

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community to support it, while rife with difficulties, has provided a base of emotional and political support for many lesbians. She cautions against the pitfalls of fixing a static description of lesbianism–since "every new definition . . . shades another, and this is a choice with political consequences"–agreeing with Foucault insofar as she argues that lesbian feminists fall into "the trap of counterreification" in taking back the task of defining themselves. Yet in the final instance, Phelan shows it is possible and desirable to forge a critical, strategic politics that keeps identity at the center of its project.

> Identity politics does mean building our public action on who we are and how that identity fits into and does not fit into our society. This is and must be the basis for political action that addresses nonjuridical, nonstate-centered power. . . . Identity politics must be based, not only on identity, but on an appreciation for politics as the art of living together. *Politics that ignores our identities, that makes them "private," is useless; but nonnegotiable identities will enslave us whether they are imposed from within or without.*[53]

A second, related problem with a Foucauldian analysis of identity is that it needlessly dichotomizes the debate on strategies for sexual minority politics, offering two disparate alternatives: on the one hand, the decision to keep sexuality and sexual choice at the center of a movement, to reappropriate these experiences as a departure point for political activism; and, on the other, Foucault's preferred option, that of "desexualizing" struggles and exploring new forms of pleasure and discourse that do not feed back into the "pinning down" to one's sex. This ignores the possibility, illustrated by lesbian and gay communities over the past several decades, that these two political methods may be complementary tools of empowerment and political activism, pursued simultaneously. In particular, the idea of strategic essentialism–reappropriating and subverting an identity while maintaining an understanding of its historical contingency–is overlooked by Foucault and is treated rather suspiciously by this third-wave feminist literature.[54]

A final criticism both of Foucault's position on sexual identity and of third-wave feminist appropriations of his thesis is that they leave untouched the subject's understanding of her conditions of oppression, and by implication, tend to foreclose discussions of agency and empowerment. This omission is crucially related to the criticisms of Foucault's agonistic model of power and his position on sexual identities. Many forms of resistance may go unnoticed if we begin from Foucault's call to desexualize struggles and so shun the minority identities which have been constructed by discourses on sex. For instance, it is unlikely that this approach to sexual identities can comprehend lesbian feminist poli-

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tics of the past two decades, Stonewall, ACT UP, or even the institution of Gay Pride Day. Moreover, Foucault's treatment of power obscures the personal experiences behind such activism: these *may* contain elements of power relations in which the "acting upon" dynamic is appropriate, as, for example, in the case of specific demands directed at decision makers. Yet struggles such as these are also about personal empowerment and acting collectively to set an agenda for change. In effect, Foucault's power analysis prevents us from seeing or conceptualizing relationships in which the object is *neither* to *act upon* another in a power relation or to *resist* the attempts of governing conduct or a local manifestation of power; it is a framework that seems inappropriate for describing cooperative efforts aimed both at political transformation and personal empowerment or consciousness raising.[55]

Foucault's theory allows little room for an account of the processes involved in developing personal and collective capacities for political activism; empowerment is not simply about actions upon agents in a relationship of power and so cannot be understood within the confines of this analysis. A richer resource of alternative approaches to theorizing agency are to be found in works by such writers as Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, and bell hooks.

CONCLUSION: FEMINISM, POWER, AND EMPOWERMENT

> Feminist ideology should not encourage (as sexism has done) women to believe they are powerless. It should clarify for women the powers they exercise daily and show them ways these powers can be used to resist sexist domination and exploitation.
>
> –bell hooks, "Changing Perspectives on Power," in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center,* 1984

If empowerment is much more than a relationship of power, or an attempt to direct the behavior of others, what is the most useful conceptualization of this phenomenon for feminists? Rather than offering a single definition, I would like to hint at an array of useful accounts in feminist literature.

Audre Lorde writes of the importance of erotic power in our lives and the connections between agency and self-understanding: "Our acts against oppression become integral with self, motivated and empowered from within."[56] The relationship between personal experiences of disempowerment and oppression, on the one hand, and broader political ac-

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tion, on the other, has numerous illustrations in contemporary North American feminist politics. For instance, the advent of the direct-action Women's Action Coalition (WAC) in the United States in early 1992 (and soon after, in Canada) was motivated by a surge of frustration and anger in the wake of such events as the Kennedy rape trial and the Supreme Court's disbelief in the testimony of Anita Hill, both of which resonated with the experiences of untold numbers of women.[57] WAC has been successful precisely because it galvanizes this discontent and recognizes the importance of empowerment: the women involved do not expect immediate political changes but know that their dramatic, vocal protests register their anger and convey the message that specific injustices will not be tolerated.

On a similar note, Patricia Hill Collins writes about the empowerment of Black American women as an outcome of changed consciousness, resulting from both internal transformations and the effects of these transformations on the broader community.

> [C]hange can also occur in the private, personal space of an individual woman's consciousness. Equally fundamental, this type of change is also empowering. If a Black woman is forced to remain "motionless on the outside," she can always develop the "inside" of a changed consciousness as a sphere of freedom. Becoming empowered through self-knowledge, even within conditions that severely limit one's ability to act, is essential.

Collins writes of the importance of an alternative vision of power. In her view, "Black women have not conceptualized our quest for empowerment as one of replacing elite white male authorities with ourselves as benevolent Black female ones. Instead, African-American women have overtly rejected theories of power based on domination in order to embrace an alternative vision of power based on a humanist vision of self-actualization, self-definition, and self-determination."[58] bell hooks also believes it is important to consider the possibilities for political transformation which arise from our daily lives. Her notion of a "politics of location" as a revisioning exercise to counter the effects of hegemonic practices, as well as her concept of the dual nature of marginality–as a "site of deprivation" and a "space of resistance"–are useful analytic tools with which to examine Black American struggles as well as women's specific empowerment.[59]

These feminist writings on empowerment suggest the need to place the subject's interpretation and mediation of her experiences at the center of our inquiries into the how and why of power. Such an analysis might ask: what do relationships of power feel like from the inside,

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where are the possibilities for resistance, and what personal and collective processes will take us there? A feminist analysis of power would avoid the omissions and problems of Foucault's understanding of power in four key ways. First, by conceptualizing women's relationships to their bodies as both a reflection of social construction *and* of their own responses to (and mediation of) the cultural ideals of femininity, it would avoid the pitfalls of a static, "docile bodies" paradigm of subjectivity. Second, it would reject aspects of Foucault's agonistic model of power–including his assertion that *all* relations are permeated by power, and the simplistic, false dichotomy of power versus violence or domination–and instead attend to the myriad sources of disempowerment and oppression experienced by women. Third, it would take seriously the issue of women's empowerment, their capacities for self-determination and freedom, and the conditions in which these flourish. And fourth, a feminist analysis of power would dispute both Foucault's view that sexual identities should not form the basis for lesbian and gay struggles and third-wave Foucauldian feminists' assertion that the category of "women" should be displaced from the center of feminist politics. This last point need not prevent those engaged in feminist theory and queer theory–nor, indeed, social movements themselves–from appreciating the significance of Foucault's discussion of the historical construction of marginalized identities.

Although the overall tone of this article conveys more criticisms of Foucault than suggestions for feminist uses of his thought, this is not necessarily bad news. I think that feminist theorists have learned, and can learn still more, from Foucault. Although it is disappointing that his work does not engage directly with feminism, this does not diminish the heuristic usefulness of certain of Foucault's insights on power, resistance, and sexuality. It is vital, however, to keep a critical edge when attempting to appropriate Foucauldian concepts for feminist ends. In the process, we may discover that there are resources within feminist theory better suited to the task of developing an alternative vision of power and empowerment than are attempts to make Foucault fit feminist purposes.

NOTES

An earlier version of this paper was given at the annual conference of the "Canadian Society for Women in Philosophy," 20-22 September 1991 at the University of Winnipeg. I am grateful to James Tully and Peta Bowden for invaluable help with an earlier draft as well as for providing a stimulating seminar series on the feminist implications of Foucault's thought during the spring of 1990 in the Department of Political Science, McGill University, for which this paper was originally written. I am also indebted to David Kahane for helping me to clarify and sharpen my arguments by suggesting numerous improvements to subsequent versions.

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1. Foucault's reference to power as agonic, or agonistic, denotes his assertion that power circulates, is never fixed, and is really a network of relationships of power among subjects who are at least in some minimal sense free to act and to resist. This is the concept of power developed in his *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977,* ed. Colin Gordon, trans. Colin Gordon et al. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), and in "The Subject and Power," afterword to *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics,* ed. Paul Rabinow and Hubert Dreyfus (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983). Agonistic comes from the Greek, *agon,* or combat, and connotes both the exercise of power and struggle (see Foucault's account of the agonic metaphor in "The Subject and Power," 222.)

2. I refer to the subject in the singular throughout the essay for simplicity's sake but do not mean to imply that Foucault asserts the existence of a homogenous kind of subject or subjectivity. Indeed, in response to this suggestion, Foucault comments:

> (The subject) is not a substance; it is a form and this form is not above all or always identical to itself. You do not have towards yourself the same kind of relationship when you constitute yourself as a political subject who goes and votes or speaks up in a meeting, and when you try to fulfill your desires in a sexual relationship. . . . In each case, we play, we establish with one's self some different form of relationship. And it is precisely the historical constitution of these different forms of subject relating to games of truth that interest me.

See "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom: An Interview with Michel Foucault," interview by Raul Fornet-Betancourt et al., trans. Joseph D. Gauthier, in *The Final Foucault,* ed. James Bernauer and David Rasmussen (Boston: MIT Press, 1988), 10.

3. See Susan Hekman, *Gender and Knowledge: Elements of a Postmodern Feminism* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1990); and Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

4. Michel Foucault, "Two Lectures," in *Power/Knowledge,* 105.

5. Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality,* vol. 1, *Introduction,* trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 139.

6. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 25.

7. For example, Foucault, in his 1982 lecture on "Technologies of the Self," stated: "Perhaps I've insisted too much on the technology of domination and power. I am more and more interested in the interaction between oneself and others and in the technologies of individual domination, the history of how an individual acts upon himself, in the technology of the self." Also important here is his emphasis on "governmentality," which is the "contact between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self." See Luther H. Martin et al., *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 19.

8. See also Foucault, "The Eye of Power," in *Power/Knowledge.*

9. Ibid., 155.

10. Sandra Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Feminism and Foucault: Reflections on Resistance,* ed. Irene Diamond and Lee Quinby (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 63, 63-64.

11. Ibid., 64 and 66. Unfortunately, "femininity" as a construct is at no point historicized or contextualized in Bartky's analysis.

12. Ibid., 77-78.

13. Ibid., 81.

14. Susan Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," in *Gender, Body, Knowledge,* ed. Alison Jaggar and Susan Bordo (London and New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1989), 23.

15. Ibid. See also Bordo's "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as Crystallization of Culture," in *Feminism and Foucault.*

16. Foucault–in *Discipline and Punish* and "Two Lectures"–traces the emergence of specific disciplinary mechanisms such as prisons, hospitals, and schools to account for the formation of a "disciplinary society" beginning in the late seventeenth century and emphasizes that the transition from sovereign to disciplinary power is a historically specific phenomenon.

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17. Although I have chosen to distinguish between Foucault's "docile bodies" and "biopower" theses, they are frequently run together in the literature. I treat them separately in order to show that the "biopower" analysis, if amended, is much more useful for feminists than is the docile bodies thesis.
18. *History of Sexuality,* 1: 142-43, 145, 147, 116.
19. Jennifer Terry, "The Body Invaded: Medical Surveillance of Women as Reproducers," *Socialist Review* 19 (July-September 1989): 13-43, 20.
20. Terry points out (p. 23) that, since 1984, it has become possible in the United States to charge a vehicle driver, including a pregnant woman, with manslaughter causing the death of a fetus. Additionally, legal theorist Patricia Williams cites one case among many in which a pregnant woman who was a known drug user was ordered put in jail by a judge in order to protect the fetus (Women and the Law lecture series, Law Faculty, McGill University, Montreal, 4 Apr. 1990).
21. Jana Sawicki, "Identity Politics and Sexual Freedom," in *Feminism and Foucault,* 185 and 189, and her "Foucault and Feminism: Toward a Politics of Difference," *Hypatia* 1 (fall 1986): 32, 26.
22. Hekman, 182-86.
23. Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions," in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 31, 32.
24. Nancy Hartsock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in *Feminism/Postmodernism,* ed. Linda Nicholson (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 170, 168, 171.
25. Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," 12.
26. Lois McNay, "The Foucauldian Body and the Exclusion of Experience," *Hypatia* 6 (fall 1991): 125.
27. Foucault, "The Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," 11.
28. Peta Bowden suggests that Foucault's conception of power precludes a range of emotions and interpersonal experiences, because it insists that all relations are characterized by adversarial agonistic power (seminar presentation, Department of Political Science, McGill University, Montreal, April 1990).
29. To "conduct" in this Foucauldian sense can mean to direct others or even to coerce; Foucault also uses conduct as a noun to denote a way of behaving in an "open field of possibilities." See Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 220-21.
30. Foucault, "Power and Strategies," in *Power/Knowledge,* 42.
31. Ibid. Despite Foucault's references to domination, he is often taken to purport the absence of domination per se. For instance, Biddy Martin argues that "there is the danger that Foucault's challenges to traditional categories, if taken to a 'logical' conclusion . . . could make the question of women's oppression obsolete." See her "Feminism, Criticism, and Foucault," in *Feminism and Foucault,* 17.
32. Virginia Held, "Freedom and Feminism" (paper presented to the conference on "The Intellectual Legacy of C.B. Macpherson," University of Toronto, 4-6 Oct. 1989). For a revised version, see her *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society, and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), chap. 9.
33. Sandra Bartky, "Shame and Gender," in *Feminism and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 97. Held quotes an earlier version of this work on p. 8 of her essay.
34. Sandra Bartky, "Feeding Egos and Tending Wounds: Deference and Disaffection in Women's Emotional Labor," ibid., 111.
35. McNay, 134.
36. Held, 8, 12.
37. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 221.
38. Monique Plaza, "Our Damages and Their Compensation–Rape: The 'Will Not to Know' of Michel Foucault," *Feminist Issues* 1 (summer 1981): 25-35. Plaza quotes Foucault from a roundtable discussion published in *La Folie Encerclée* (Paris: Seghers/Lafont, 1977), 99. See Plaza, 27, 26.

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39. Plaza, 31.
40. Foucault suggests using theory as a "tool kit"–in the sense of "instrument"–rather than as a total "system," in "Power and Strategies," *Power/Knowledge,* 145.
41. I am indebted to Virginia Held for pointing out how important distinctions between power and violence are for feminists. Held draws a number of useful distinctions between power, force, coercion, and violence. (Personal communication, 5 June 1993.)
42. Butler, *Gender Trouble,* 31-32, 136, 147. Butler's clearest definition of gender is found early (p. 33) on in her text: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being."
43. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 214.
44. Foucault, *History of Sexuality,* 1: 48.
45. Foucault, "Confessions of the Flesh," *Power/Knowledge,* 219-20; see also interview entitled "The End of the Monarchy of Sex," trans. John Johnson, in *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1966-1984,* ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989).
46. Foucault, "Confessions of the Flesh," 220. Foucault appears to be referring to gay men, and not to lesbians, when he speaks of "homosexual movements"; moreover, he contrasts this movement with "women," a distinction which is both misleading and ill-informed.
47. Foucault, *History of Sexuality,* 1: 157.
48. Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," in *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories,* ed. Diana Fuss (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), 18, 19, 29.
49. Ibid., 19.
50. Sawicki, "Identity Politics and Sexual Freedom," 189.
51. Foucault, "The Subject and Power," 216.
52. Stephen Epstein, "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Constructionism," *Socialist Review* 7 (May/August 1987): 22.
53. Shane Phelan, *Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 79, 156, 170. (Emphasis added.)
54. See, for instance, Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," 19-20.
55. Of the three types of relationships identified by Foucault–those of "objective capacities," relationships of communication, and power relations–none come close to describing what we understand as empowerment. The first refers to the *effects* of power, and the others identify the ways in which individuals or groups are brought together in a play of power, acting upon one another. See Foucault's "The Subject and Power," 217-18. Foucault considers even personal communication and love to be constituted by a dynamic of "acting upon." See his "Ethic of Care for the Self as a Practice of Freedom," 11.
56. Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," in Audre Lorde's *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1984), 58.
57. See Karen Houppert, "WAC," *Village Voice* 37 (9 June 1992): 33-38.
58. Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York and London: Routledge, 1991), 111, 224.
59. bell hooks, "Choosing the Margin as a Space of Radical Openness," in bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 145, 149.

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