jana sawicki

Foucault and Feminism: Toward a Politics of Difference

This paper begins with the assumption that the differences among women pose a threat to building a unified feminist theory and practice Utilizing the work and methods of Michel Foucault, I explore theoretical and practical implications of taking difference seriously I claim that a politics of difference puts into question the concept of a revolutionary subject and the idea of a social totality In the final section a brief Foucauldian analysis of the feminist sexuality debates is given

> The beginning of wisdom is in the discovery that there exist contradictions of permanent tension with which it is necessary to live and that it is above all not necessary to seek to resolve (Gorz 1980, in Hirsh 1981, 2)
>
> It is not difference which immobilizes us, but silence And there are so many silences to be broken (Lorde 1984, 44)

The question of difference is at the forefront of discussions among feminists today (cf Moraga and Anzaldua, eds 1981, Dill 1983 and Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983) Of course, theories of difference are certainly not new to the women's movement There has been much discussion concerning the nature and status of women's differences from men (e g , biological, psychological, cultural) Theories of sexual difference have emphasized the shared experiences of women across the divisions of race, class, age or culture In such theories the diversity of women's experiences is often lumped into the category "women's experience," or women's caste, presumably in an effort to provide the basis for a collective feminist subject

More recently, however, as a result of experiencing conflicts at the level of practice, it is the differences among women (e g differences of race, class, sexual practice) that are becoming the focus of theoretical discussion To be sure, Marxist feminists have consistently recognized the significance of class differences between women, but other important differences cry out for recognition The question arises Do the differences and potential separations between women

Hypatia vol 1, no 2 (Fall 1986)

pose a serious threat to effective political action and to the possibility of theory?

Perhaps the most influential and provocative ideas on the issue of difference in feminism are to be found in the writings of black, lesbian feminist poet and essayist Audre Lorde In her work, Lorde describes the ways in which the differences among women have been "misnamed and misused in the service of separation and confusion" (Lorde 1984) As a lesbian mother and partner in an inter-racial couple, she has a unique insight into the conflicts and divided allegiances which put into question the possibility of a unified women's movement She has experienced the way in which power utilizes difference to fragment opposition Indeed this fragmentation can occur not only within groups but also within the individual Hence, Lorde remarks "I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self" (Lorde 1984, 120)

Lorde claims that it is not the differences among women which are the source of separation but rather our "refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation" (Lorde 1984, 115) Thus, she appears to be saying that difference is not necessarily counter-revolutionary She suggests that feminists devise ways of discovering and utilizing their differences as a source for creative change Learning to live and struggle with many of our differences may be one of the keys to disarming the power of the white, male, middle class norm which we have all internalized to varying degrees

In what follows I shall elaborate on the notion of difference as resource and offer a sketch of some of the implications that what I call a "politics of difference" might have for "revolutionary" feminist theory [1] In order to elucidate these implications I shall turn to the writings of the social philosopher and historian Michel Foucault It is my contention that despite the androcentrism in his own writings he too has recognized the ambiguous power of difference in modern society, that is, he recognizes that difference can be the source of fragmentation and disunity as well as a creative source of resistance and change

My aim in this paper is two-fold (1) to turn to Foucault's work and method in order to lay out the basic features of a politics of difference and (2) to show how such a politics might be applied in the feminist debate concerning sexuality In order to accomplish these aims I shall begin by contrasting Foucault's politics with two existing versions of Revolutionary feminism, namely, Marxist and radical feminism I have

selected these two feminist frameworks becuse they contain the elements of traditional revolutionary theory which Foucault is rejecting [2] Other Foucauldian feminisms are developed by Morris (1979) and Martin (1982)

I Foucault's Critique of Revolutionary Theory

It will be helpful to contrast Foucault's approach with Marxism, on the one hand, and radical feminism, on the other Both Marxism and radical feminism conceive of historical process as a dialectical struggle for human liberation Both have turned to history to locate the origins of oppression, and to identify a revolutionary subject Yet radical feminists have criticized Marxism for its inability to give an adequate account of the persistence of male domination They identify patriarchy as the origin of all forms of oppression Hence, they view the struggles of women as a sex/class as the key to human liberation

The recent intensification of feminist attention to the differences among women might be understood as a reaction to the emergence of a body of feminist theory which attempts to represent women as a whole on the basis of little information about the diversity of women's experiences, to develop universal categories for analyzing women's oppression, and, on the basis of such analysis, to identify the most important struggles When Audre Lorde and others speak of the importance of preserving and redefining difference, of discovering more inclusive strategies for building theory, and of the need for a broad based, diverse struggle, they are calling for an alternative to a traditional revolutionary theory in which forms of oppression are either overlooked or ranked and the divisions separating women exacerbated The question is are there radical alternatives to traditional revolutionary theory? As I have indicated, it is in the writings of Foucault that we find an attempt to articulate an alternative approach to understanding radical social transformation

Foucault's is a radical philosophy without a theory of history He does not utilize history as a means of locating a single revolutionary subject, nor does he locate power in a single material base Nevertheless, historical research is the central component of his politics and struggle a key concept for understanding change Accordingly, in order to evaluate the usefulness of Foucault's methods for feminism we must first understand the historical basis for his critique of traditional revolutionary theory

Foucault's rejection of traditional revolutionary theory is rooted in his critique of the "juridico-discursive" model of power on which it is

based According to Foucault, this model of power underpins both Liberal theories of Sovereignty (i e legitimate authority often codified in law and accompanied by a theory of rights) and Marxist theories which locate power in the economy and the State as an arm of the bourgeoisie The juridico-discursive model of power involves three basic assumptions (1) power is possessed (e g by individuals in the state of nature, by a class, by the people), (2) power flows from a centralized source from top to bottom (e g law, the economy, the State), and (3) power is primarily repressive in its exercise (a prohibition backed by sanctions)

Foucault proposes that we think of power outside the confines of State, law or class This enables him to locate forms of power which are obscured in traditional theories Thus, Foucault frees power from the political domain in much the same way as radical feminists did Rather than engage in theoretical debate with political theorists, Foucault gives historical descriptions of the different forms of power operating in the Modern West He does not deny that the juridico-discursive model of power describes one form of power He merely thinks that it does not capture those forms of power which make centralized, repressive forms of power possible, namely, the myriad of power relations at the micro-level of society

Foucault's own model of power differs from the traditional model in three basic ways (1) power is exercised rather than possessed, (2) power is not primarily repressive, but productive, and (3) power is analyzed as coming from the bottom up In what follows I will give Foucault's reasons for substituting his own view of power for the traditional one

(1) Foucault claims that thinking of power as a possession has led to a preoccupation with questions of legitimacy, consent and rights (Who should possess power? When has power overstepped its limits?) Marxists have problematized consent by introducing a theory of ideology, but Foucault thinks this theory must ultimately rest on a humanistic notion of authentic consciousness as the legitimate basis of consent Furthermore, the Marxist emphasis on power as a possession has resulted in an effort to locate those subjects in the historical field whose standpoint is potentially authentic, namely, the proletariat Foucault wants to suspend any reference to humanistic assumptions in his own account of power because he believes that humanism has served more as an ideology of domination than liberation

For the notion that power is a possession Foucault substitutes a relational model of power as exercised By focusing on the power relations themselves, rather than on the subjects related (Sovereign-subject, bourgeois-proletarian), he can give an account of how

subjects are constituted by power relations

(2) This brings us to the productive nature of power Foucault rejects the repressive model of power for two reasons First, he thinks that if power were merely repressive, then it would be difficult to explain how it has gotten such a grip on us Why would we continue to obey a purely repressive and coercive form of power? Indeed, repressive power represents power in its most frustrated and extreme form The need to resort to a show of force is more often evidence of a lack of power Second, as I have indicated, Foucault thinks that the most effective mechanisms of power are productive So, rather than develop a theory of history and power based upon the humanistic assumption of a pre-social individual endowed with inalienable rights (the Liberal's state of nature) or based on the identification of an authentic human interest (Marx's species being), Foucault gives accounts of the ways in which certain institutional and cultural practices have produced individuals These are the practices of a disciplinary power which he associates with the rise of the human sciences in the nineteenth century

Disciplinary power is exercised on the body and soul of individuals It increases the power of individuals at the same time as it renders them more docile (e g basic training in the military) In modern society disciplinary power has spread through the production of certain forms of knowledge (the positivistic and hermeneutic human sciences) and through the emergence of disciplinary techniques which facilitate the process of obtaining knowledge about individuals (techniques of surveillance, examination, discipline) Thus, ways of knowing are equated with ways of exercising power over individuals Foucault also isolates techniques of individualization such as the dividing practices found in medicine, psychiatry, criminology and their corresponding institutions, i e the hospital, asylum and prison Disciplinary practices create the divisions healthy/ill, sane/mad, and legal/delinquent, which, by virtue of their authoritative status, can be used as effective means of normalization and social control They may involve the literal dividing off of segments of the population through incarceration or institutionalization Usually the divisions are experienced in the society at large in more subtle ways, i e in the practice of labeling one another or ourselves as different or abnormal

For example, in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault gives an historical account of the process through which the modern individual has come to see herself as a sexual subject Some discourses (e g psychoanalysis) view sexuality as the key to self-understanding and lead us to believe that in order to liberate ourselves from personality "disorders," we must uncover the truth of our sexuality In this way

dimensions of personal life are psychologized, i e rendered problematic, and thus become a target for the intervention of experts Again, Foucault attempts to show how these discourses, and the practices based upon them, have played more of a role in the normalization of the modern individual than they have in any liberatory processes He calls for a liberation from this "government of individualization," for the discovery of new ways of understanding ourselves, new forms of subjectivity

(3) Finally, Foucault thinks that focusing on power as a possession has led to the location of power in a centralized source For example, the Marxist location of power in a class has obscured an entire network of power relations "that invests the body, sexuality, family, kinship, knowledge, technology " (Foucault 1980a, 122) Foucault's alternative model is designed to facilitate the description of the many forms of power found outside these centralized loci He does not deny the phenomenon of class (or State) power, he simply denies that understanding it is more important for resistance As I have indicated, Foucault expands the domain of the political to include a heterogeneous ensemble of power relations operating at the micro-level of society The practical implication of his model is that resistance must be carried out in local struggles against the many forms of power exercised at the everyday level of social relations

Foucault's "bottom-up" analysis of power is an attempt to show how power relations at the micro-level of society make possible certain global effects of domination (e g , class power, patriarchy) He avoids using universals as explanatory concepts at the start of historical inquiry in order to prevent theoretical overreach He states

> One must rather conduct an ascending analysis of power starting, that is, from its infinitesimal mechanisms, which each have their own history, their own trajectory, their own tactics, and then see how these mechanisms of power have been—and continue to be—invested, colonized, utilized, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended, etc , by even more general mechanisms and by forms of global domination It is not that this global domination extends itself right to the base in a plurality of repercussions (Foucault 1980a, 99)

In other words, by utilizing an ascending analysis Foucault shows how mechanisms of power at the micro-level of society have become part of dominant networks of power relations Disciplinary power was not invented by the dominant class and then extended down into the micro-level of society It originated outside this class and was

appropriated by it once it revealed its utility Foucault is suggesting that the connection between power and the economy must be determined on the basis of specific historical analyses, i e it cannot be deduced from a general theory He rejects both reductionism and functionalism insofar as the latter involves locating forms of power within a structure or institution which is self-regulating He does not offer causal or functional explanations but rather historical descriptions of the conditions which make certain forms of domination possible, i e the necessary but not sufficient conditions for domination

In short, Foucault's histories put into question the idea of a universal binary division of struggle To be sure, such divisions do exist, but as particular and not universal historical phenomena Of course, the corollary of his rejection of the binary model is that the notion of a subject of history, a single locus of resistance, is put into question

Resistance Despite Foucault's neglect of resistance in *Discipline and Punish,* in *The History of Sexuality* he defines power as dependent on resistance [3] Moreover, emphasis on resistance is particularly evident in his more recent discussions of power and sexuality [4]

In recent writings Foucault speaks of power and resistance in the following terms

> Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power (Foucault 1978, 95)
>
> I'm not positing a substance of resistance facing a substance of power I'm simply saying as soon as there's a relation of power there's a possibility of resistance We're never trapped by power, it's always possible to modify its hold, in determined conditions and following a precise strategy (Foucault 1980b, 13)

There are two claims in the above remarks The first is the weaker claim that power relations are only implemented in cases where there is resistance In other words, power relations only arise in cases where there is conflict, where one individual or group wants to affect the action of another individual or group In addition, sometimes power enlists the resistant forces into its own service One of the ways it does this is by labeling them, by establishing norms and defining differences

The second claim implied in Foucault's description of power is the stronger claim that wherever there is a relation of power it is possible to modify its hold He states "Power is exercised only over free subjects and only insofar as they are free" (Foucault 1983, 221) Free subjects are subjects who face a field of possibilities Their action is struc-

tured but not forced Thus, Foucault does not define power as the overcoming of resistance According to Foucault, when resistant forces are overcome, power relations collape into force relations The limits of power have been reached

So, while Foucault has been accused of describing a totalitarian power from which there is no escape, he denies that "there is a primary and fundamental principle of power which dominates society down to the smallest detail (Foucault 1983, 224) At the same time he claims that power is everywhere He describes the social field as a myriad of unstable and heterogeneous relations of power It is an open system which contains possibilities of domination as well as resistance

For Foucault, the social and historical field is a battle field, a field of struggle Power circulates in this field and is exercised on and by individuals over others as well as themselves When speaking of struggle, Foucault refuses to identify the subjects of struggle When asked the question "Who is struggling against whom?," he responds

> This is just a hypothesis, but I would say it's all against all There aren't immediately given subjects of the struggle, one the proletariat, the other the bourgeoisie Who fights against whom? We all fight against each other And there is always within each of us something that fights something else " (Foucault 1980a, 208)

Depending upon where one is and in what role (e g mother, lover, teacher, anti-racist, anti-sexist) one's allegiances and interests will shift There are no privileged or fundamental coalitions in history, but rather a series of unstable and shifting ones

In his theory of resistant subjectivity Foucault opens up the possibility of something more than a history of constructions or of victimization That is, he opens the way for a historical knowledge of struggles His genealogical method is designed to facilitate an "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (Foucault 1980a, 82) These are forms of knowledge or experience which "have been disqualified as inadequate to their task, or insufficiently elaborated naive knowledges, located low down in the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity" (Foucault 1980a, 82) They include the low ranking knowledge ("popular knowledge") of the psychiatric patient, the hysteric, the imprisoned criminal, the housewife, the indigent Popular knowledge is not shared by all people, "but it is, on the contrary, a particular, local, regional knowledge, a *differential* knowledge incapable of unanimity" (Foucault 1980a, 82, emphasis added)

According to Foucault, the question whether some forms of resistance are more effective than others is a matter for historical investigation and not for theoretical pronouncement He would endorse feminist efforts to resist the elision of difference in the name of some abstract principle of unity—with those who resist the attempt to define a priori measures of effective resistance (For a similar argument against a-historical criteria of effective resistance see Addelson 1982)

Genealogy as a Form of Resistance

> "Freedom does not basically lie in discovering or being able to determine who we are, but in rebelling against those ways in which we are already defined, categorized and classified " (Rajchman 1984, 15)

The view that knowledge is power, i e that the purpose of a theory of history is to enable us to control history is part of the Enlightenment legacy from which Foucault is attempting to "free" us For him, there is no theory of global transformation to formulate, no revolutionary subject whose interest the intellectual or theoretician can represent He recommends an alternative to the traditional role for the intellectual in modern political struggles He speaks of the "specific intellectual" in contrast to the "universal intellectual," i e the "bearer of universal values" who is the enlightened consciousness of a revolutionary subject

The specific intellectual operates with a different conception of the relation between theory and practice

> Intellectuals have gotten used to working, not in the modality of the 'universal,' the 'exemplary,' the 'just-and-true-for all,' but within specific sectors, at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them (housing, the hospital, the asylum, the laboratory, the university, family and social relations) (Foucault 1980a, 126)

Focusing attention on specific situations may lead to more concrete analyses of particular struggles and thus to a better understanding of social change For example, Foucault was involved in certain conflicts within medicine, psychiatry and the penal system He facilitated ways for prisoners to participate in discussions of prison reform and wrote a history of punishment in order to alter our perspectives on the assumptions which inform penal practices

In part, Foucault's refusal to make any universal political, or moral, judgements is based upon the historical evidence that what

looks like a change for the better may have undesirable consequences Since struggle is continual and the idea of a power-free society is an abstraction, those who struggle must never grow complacent Victories are often overturned, changes may take on different faces over time Discourses and institutions are ambiguous and may be utilized for different ends

So Foucault is in fact pessimistic about the possibility of controlling history But this pessimism need not lead to despair Only a disappointed traditional revolutionary would lapse into fatalism at the thought that much of history is out of our control Foucault's emphasis on resistance is evidence that he is not fatalistic himself, but merely skeptical about the possibilities of global transformation He has no particular utopian vision Yet, one need not have an idea of utopia in order to take seriously the injustices in the present Furthermore, the past has provided enough examples of theoretical inadequacy to make Foucault's emphasis on provisional theoretical reflection reasonable

In short, genealogy as resistance involves using history to give voice to the marginal and submerged voices which lie "a little beneath history," i e the mad, the delinquent, the abnormal, the disempowered It locates many discontinuous and regional struggles against power both in the past and present These voices are the sources of resistance, the creative subjects of history [5]

II Foucault and Feminism: Toward a Politics of Difference

What are the implications of Foucault's critique of traditional revolutionary theory, his use of history and his analysis of power for feminism? I have called Foucault's politics a politics of difference because it does not search for a unity in difference, i e does not assume that all differences can be bridged Neither does it assume that difference must be an obstacle to effective resistance Indeed, in a politics of difference, difference can be a resource insofar as it enables us to multiply the sources of resistance to particular forms of domination and to discover distortions in our understandings of each other and the world In a politics of difference, as Audre Lorde suggests, redefining our differences, learning from them, becomes the central task

Of course, it may be that Lorde does envision the possibility of some underlying commonality, some universal humanity, which will provide the foundation for an ultimate reconciliation of our differences Her own use of the concept of the "erotic" might be understood as an implicit appeal to humanism (Lorde 1984, 53-59) As

we have seen, Foucault's method requires a suspension of humanistic assumptions Indeed, feminists have recognized the dangers of what Adrienne Rich (1979, 134) refers to as "the urge to leap across feminism to 'human liberation ' " What Foucault offers to feminism is not a humanist theory, but rather a critical method which is thoroughly historical and a set of recommendations about how to look at our theories The motivation for a politics of difference is the desire to avoid dogmatism in our categories and politics as well as the elision of difference to which such dogmatism can lead

In conclusion, I want to illustrate the value and limitations of Foucault's politics of difference by bringing it to bear on a recent discussion of difference within feminism, namely, the sexuality debate This debate has polarized American feminists into two groups, radical and libertarian feminists (Ferguson 1984, 106-112) The differences being discussed threaten to destroy communications between them Hence, an understanding of their differences is crucial at this conjuncture in American feminism

Radical feminists condemn any sexual practices involving the "male" ideology of sexual objectification which, in their view, underlies both male sexual violence and the institutionalization of masculine and feminine roles in the patriarchal family They call for an elimination of all patriarchal institutions in which sexual objectification occurs, e g pornography, prostitution, compulsory heterosexuality, sadomasochism, cruising, adult/child and butch /femme relations They substitute an emphasis on intimacy and affection for the "male" preoccupation with sexual pleasure

In contrast, libertarian feminists attack radicals for having succumbed to sexual repression Since radicals believe that sex as we know it is male, they are suspicious of any sexual relations whatsoever Libertarians stress the dangers of censoring any sexual practices between consenting partners and recommend the transgression of socially acceptable sexual norms as a strategy of liberation

What is remarkable about these debates from the perspective of a politics of difference is the extent to which the two camps share similar views of power and freedom In both camps, power is represented as centralized in key institutions which dictate the acceptable terms of sexual expression, namely, male-dominated heterosexual institutions whose elements are crystallized in the phenomenon of pornography on the one hand, and all discourses and institutions which distinguish legitimate from illegitimate sexual practice (including radical feminism) thereby creating a hierarchy of sexual expression, on the other Moreover, both seem to regard sexuality as a key arena in the struggle for human liberation Thus, for both, understanding the

truth about sexuality is central for liberation

In addition, both operate with repressive models of power Radical feminists are in fact suspicious of all sexual practices insofar as they view sexual desire as a male construct They think male sexuality has completely repressed female sexuality and that we must eliminate the source of this repression, namely, all heterosexual male institutions, before we can begin to construct our own Libertarians explicitly operate with a repressive model of power borrowed from the Freudo-Marxist discourses of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse They recognize that women's sexual expression has been particularly repressed in our society and advocate women's right to experiment with their sexuality They resist drawing any lines between safe and dangerous, politically correct and politically incorrect, sex Radical feminists accuse libertarians of being male identified because they have not problematized sexual desire, libertarians accuse radicals of being traditional female sex-prudes

There are other similarities between the two camps In the first place, as Ann Ferguson (1984, 110) has pointed out, both involve universalist theories of sexuality, that is, they both reify "male" and "female" sexuality and thus fail to appreciate the way in which sexuality is an historically culturally specific construct This is problematic insofar as it assumes that there is some essential connection between gender and sexual practice An historical understanding of sexuality would attempt to disarticulate gender and sexuality and thereby reveal the diversity of sexual experiences across gender as well as other divisions For example, Rennie Simpson (1983, 229-235) suggests, Afro-American women's sexuality has been constructed differently from white women's They have a strong tradition of self-reliance and sexual self-determination Thus, for American black women, the significance of the sexuality debates may be different Indeed, the relationship between violence and sexuality takes on another dimension when viewed in the light of past uses of lynching to control black male sexuality And consider the significance of black women's emphasis on issues such as forced sterilization or dumping Depo Provera on third world countries over that of white American feminists on abortion on demand (Amos and Parmar 1984, 1-19) Yet, radical feminists still tend to focus on dominant culture and the victimization of women Ann Snitow and Carol Vance (1984, 132) clearly identify the problem with this approach when they remark

> To ignore the potential for variations (in women's sexual expression) is inadvertently to place women outside the culture except as passive recipients of official

> systems of symbols It continues to deny what mainstream culture has always tried to make invisible—the complex struggles of disenfranchised groups to grapple with oppression using symbolic as well as economic and political resistance

Rather than generalize on the basis of the stereotypes provided by "dominant culture," feminists must begin to explore the meaning of the diversity of sexual practices to those who practice them, to resurrect the "subjugated knowledge" of sexuality elided by the dominance disclosure

Secondly, both radicals and libertarians tend to isolate sexuality as the key cause of women's oppression Therefore, they locate power in a central source and identify a universal strategy for seizing control of sexuality (e g eliminate pornography, transgress sexual taboos by giving expression to sexual desire) Both of these analyses are simplistic and reductionist While it is important, sexuality is simply one of the many areas of everyday life in which power operates

In sum, the critique of the sexuality debates developed out of a politics of difference amounts to (1) a call for more detailed research into the diverse range of women's sexual experiences, and (2) avoiding analyses which invoke universal explanatory categories or a binary model of oppression and thereby overlook the many differences in women's experience of sexuality Although a politics of difference does not offer feminists a morality derived from a universal theory of oppression, it need not lapse into a form of pluralism in which anything goes On the basis of specific theoretical analyses of particular struggles, one can make generalizations, identify patterns in relations of power and thereby identify the relative effectiveness or ineffectiveness, safety or danger of particular practices For example, a series of links have been established between the radical feminist strategy of anti-pornography legislation and the New Right's efforts to censor any sexual practices which pose a threat to the family This is not to suggest that the anti-pornography movement is essentially reactionary, but rather that at this time it may be dangerous Similarly, one ought not to assume that there is any necessary connection between transgression of sexual taboos and human liberation Denying that censorship is the answer is not tantamount to endorsing any particular form of transgression as liberatory

In a feminist politics of difference, theory and moral judgments would be geared to specific contexts This need not preclude systematic analysis of the present, but would require that our categories be provisional As Snitow and Vance (1984, 133) point out

"We need to live with the uncertainties that arise along with the change we desire." What is certain is that our differences are ambiguous, they may be used either to divide us or to enrich our politics. And if we are not the ones to give voice to them, then history suggests that they will continue to be either misnamed and distorted, or simply reduced to silence.

Notes

1 "Revolutionary" feminisms are those which appeal to the notion of a "subject of history" and to the category of a "social totality" in their analyses of the theory and practice of social transformation.

2 Socialist feminism is an obvious alternative to the ones that I have chosen. It represents a theoretical development in feminism which is closest to embodying the basic insights of a politics of difference. See the work of Linda Nicholson (1986) for example.

3 One feminist critic, Jacqueline Zita (1982, 173) charges that Foucault's institutionalist theory of sexuality results in a picture of the "one-dimensional" containment of sexuality by objective forces beyond our control. She claims that it obscures the 'continuous struggles of women against patriarchy.'" Yet Zita's criticism begs the question since it assumes that an emancipatory theory must rest on the notion of a continuous revolutionary subject. Foucault, after all, is attempting to displace the problem of the subject altogether.

4 See Foucault's reproduction of the memoirs of a hermaphrodite for an example of his effort to resurrect a knowledge of resistance (Foucault 1980c). This memoir is an account of the despair experienced by Herculine (formerly Alexina) once a male sexual identity is imposed upon her in her "happy limbo of non-identity." This occurs at a time when the legal and medical profession has become interested in the question of sexual identity and has decided that every individual must be either male or female.

5 Linda Nicholson (1986) describes an explicitly historical feminism in which the search for origins (genealogy) involves an attempt to deconstruct (give an account of the process of construction of) our present categories (e.g. "personal," "public") and thereby free us from a rigid adherence to them. Foucault's genealogies serve the same function.