

Michel Foucault

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class, of resistance in an oppressed class, and of the possibility of revolutionary change. Here power relations have become a "dense web" and resistance seems not to produce change but the repetition of the same (HS 96). One result of this conception of power that Foucault seems to admit is cynicism and pessimism. While Foucault argues that we need to take Machiavelli's cynicism one step further and continue his investigation of the strategies of power now in the absence of the prince, it is not clear what that might produce as a social or political practice. Foucault argues that he favors local struggles, but he is seldom if ever clear about which struggles he would endorse. As will be suggested in the conclusion to this volume, Foucault does not offer us a politics.

In "The Subject and Power" Foucault seems to step back from the extremes of this conception of power when he says that: "if we speak of the structures or the mechanisms of power, it is only insofar as we suppose certain persons exercise power over others" and that "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only in so far as they are free."⁷ As Merquior implies, these pronouncements are dangerously close to the most banal liberalism.⁸ They may reflect his shift in focus to the problem of the subject, a change to which his difficulties in conceptualizing power may have contributed. We will see the first step in that change in volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality*.

Chapter Seven

Sexuality and the Will to Knowledge

About halfway through the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault asks rhetorically about the aim of the series he was beginning. He answers that it is "to transcribe into history the fable of *Les Bijoux indiscrets*." *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, a novel by the eighteenth-century French writer Diderot, tells of a sultan who receives from a genie a ring that can cause women's sexual organs to speak. The talking sex, Foucault claims, is one of our society's emblems. The value of the sultan's ring was that the sexes it made to speak did not lie; our society, too, has sought, albeit by more prosaic means, to extract the truth of sex. And yet Foucault says that our problem is not only "to know what marvelous ring confers a similar power on us," but also to know "on which master's finger it has been placed; what game of power it makes possible or presupposes, and how it is that each one of us has become a sort of attentive and imprudent sultan with respect to his own sex and that of others. . . . We must write the history of this will to truth" (HS 79).

I begin by mentioning an illustration from the middle of the book under discussion here because it is the kind of illustration Foucault typically uses to begin his books. Why does he deviate from his pattern this time? One reason may be that the book as a whole was intended as an introduction to a planned six-volume work. Another might be, however, that Foucault found a more effective opening by narrating the history of sexuality that we most often tell ourselves. In a chapter entitled "We 'Other Victorians,'" Foucault describes the familiar story of the repression of sexuality that begins to develop sometime after the start of the seventeenth century and reaches its full weight during the nineteenth. This repression is the work of a bourgeois morality that restricted sex to the home and to the conjugal family. It imposed silence on sex and established the procreative married couple as the norm for all sexuality. Except for the clandestine world of brothels and pornogra-

phers—those whom Steven Marcus called the "other Victorians"—modern puritanism has imposed a triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence. For example, everyone knew "that children had no sex, which was why they were forbidden to talk about it, why one closed one's eyes and stopped one's ears whenever they came to show evidence to the contrary, and why a general and studied silence was imposed" (*HS* 4). Even today, despite Freud, we have escaped this repression only to a slight degree.

Foucault points out that this narrative about how we have arrived at our present state of repression coincides with another historical narrative, the story of the rise of capitalism. The repression, it is alleged, results from the needs of capitalism for work. Sex distracts workers from their activities in producing the commodities capitalism needs and is, moreover, especially wasteful if it does not end in the reproduction of more workers and consumers. But there is another, hidden reason for this narrative being so often repeated: "If sex is repressed, that is, condemned to prohibition, nonexistence, and silence, then the mere fact that one is speaking about it has the appearance of a deliberate transgression. . . . What sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures; to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervor of knowledge, the determination to change the laws, and the longing for the garden of earthly delights" (*HS* 6-7). Thus Foucault suggests that we have reasons for believing in and repeating this narrative that have nothing to do with its truth. Our belief that sex is repressed coincides with our notions of capitalism and acts as an enticement to speak about sex.

The notion that since the seventeenth century we have lived with silenced sexuality Foucault calls the "repressive hypothesis." In one of his most startling reversals, he proceeds to argue not only that the repressive hypothesis is wrong, but that the period it describes has experienced an enormous proliferation of discourse about sex. Far from being silenced, sex has been spoken about more than ever before. This is not to say that Foucault denies changes in the discourse about sexuality, or that these changes involved some prohibitions. For example, the sexuality of children, which prior to the seventeenth century could provide an occasion for humor to people of all social classes, afterward becomes the subject only of

serious discourse. Because the repressive hypothesis entails a certain characterization of power, it provides Foucault with the opportunity to extend the discussion of *Discipline and Punish* in which power is shown to operate in positive as well as negative ways.

The Deployment of Sexuality

To say that sexuality is deployed is already to challenge one of the most tenacious assumptions of modern culture: the identification of sexuality with nature. Certainly this assumption owes much to Freud who treated sex as a drive, the psychological representation of an instinct. Culture was depicted by Freud as demanding the repression of this drive. Like Freud, we tend to identify sex as an element of human nature, and not as something culturally specific. Foucault is obviously not about to deny that there are biological similarities in the human species, among them the sexual form of reproduction. What he is denying, however, is that what we in Europe and North America call sexuality is synonymous with this form of reproduction. Sexuality is both a discourse and a practice that can be shown to have a particular point of emergence in Western culture.

Part of this emergence entails the expanded use of the confession in the Catholic Church. The confession, as an elaborate recollection and description of one's sinful deeds, words, and thoughts, was developed in the monastery both as a spiritual exercise and as a means of control. Monks were taught to master their sinful desires by turning them into discourse. During the Middle Ages, confession was rather infrequent among the general population. Confession manuals from this period, however, prescribe questions that demand explicit answers about the details of sexual acts. By the seventeenth century, however, greater discretion is advised. While this change might seem to support the repressive hypothesis, Foucault notes that this greater discretion is accompanied by an increase in the frequency of confession, in the rigor of self-examination, and in the relative importance of sins of impurity. Thus, instead of restricting itself to describing the details of overt acts, the confession must now include everything that sex might have produced or even merely touched in one's imaginative or mental life. The locus of transgression shifts from one's acts to one's desires, and the whole Church is taught to confess in the manner of monks. Foucault sees a con-

tinuation of this process of turning sex into discourse in the quite unpenitential writings of the Marquis de Sade and the anonymous Victorian author of *My Secret Life*. What is important here is not whether the sex is described for purposes of absolution or of pleasure, but that in both cases the speaker is responding to an injunction to tell all. DeSade and the anonymous Victorian author are marginalized by society, but their act of turning sex into discourse reflects a mainstream phenomenon.

Power in bourgeois society did not act mainly to repress or to silence a sexuality which nonetheless expresses itself as all instincts must. Rather, such power resulted in the "multiplication of singular sexualities" (HS 47). Such multiplication begins with the creation of the category of "unnatural" sexuality. Through the end of the eighteenth century, marriage was the focus of laws, rules, and recommendations pertaining to sex. "The marriage relation was . . . under constant surveillance: if it was found to be lacking, it had to come forward and plead its case before a witness" (HS 37). Thus, for example, the inability to fulfill the sexual duties of marriage could be judged as a violation of the law just as adultery was so judged. The law made only relative distinctions between sins such as debauchery, rape, adultery, incest, and sodomy. It is true that the category of "sins against nature" had long existed in Christian theology, but it included crimes such as usury that had nothing to do with sex. Sexual acts contrary to nature may have been punished more severely, but they were still, in a fundamental sense, violations of the law. There was such an identity between nature and the law that physically deformed individuals, hermaphrodites, for example, could be classified as criminals. In the nineteenth century, however, marriage ceased to be the focus of sexual control. The legitimate couple now became the norm against which all other sexuality was to be compared. The sex of children, of the mad, of those who were attracted to the same sex, now became the focus of scrutiny. Thus various kinds of sexuality were distinguished, and those that were unnatural were set apart. "This kind of activity assumed an autonomy with regard to the other condemned forms such as adultery or rape (and the latter were condemned less and less)" (HS 39). Now adultery, sodomy, sadism, and incest were all regarded as essentially different.

Foucault's point is that we tend to identify prohibition and control, and therefore neglect the other ways in which control may be

exerted. Children's sexuality, for example, was not in the nineteenth century dealt with by simple prohibition, as adultery had been. For one thing, a child's masturbation was not regarded as a violation of law, but as a matter that needed medical treatment or parental discipline. Thus childhood onanism was treated as if it were an epidemic for which a cause must be found so that it could be eliminated. But the effect of this effort was to drive masturbation into hiding where it could then be "discovered." Where the sex of children had once been taken for granted by society, in becoming the object of intense scrutiny it became an even larger threat.

The medicalization of sex helped to create other sexual specializations. Previously, homosexual acts were condemned as sodomy, but they were treated as isolated acts. But just as the penal system had transformed the one who had committed a crime into a delinquent with a biography, so nineteenth-century medicine created the homosexual, who was also a case history and a life form. His entire being was affected by his sexuality. Thus homosexuality stopped being the mere practice of sodomy, and became "a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphroditism of the soul. The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species" (HS 43). But many other species were also "discovered." Thus aberrant sexualities were not excluded from discourse; rather, discourse gave each a local habitation and a name.

The dominant form taken by sexual discourse Foucault calls *scientia sexualis* (sexual science). He contrasts *scientia sexualis* with the *ars erotica* of societies such as China, Japan, India, and ancient Rome. In *ars erotica*, "truth is drawn from pleasure itself, understood as a practice and accumulated as experience" (HS 57). *Ars erotica* is thus the erotic art, and it consists not of rules, laws, or norms, but of methods. Instead of forbidding or permitting, or distinguishing and naming, it evaluates pleasure, its intensity, its duration, and its qualities. This erotic art is not attained by surveillance or inquiry, but by initiation into a body of lore that leads to a mastery of its secrets; in this the erotic arts might be considered as parallel to the martial arts. The Indian *Kama Sutra* is perhaps the best-known example of *ars erotica* in the West.

According to Foucault, the Western societies are the only ones where sexual truth takes the form of a discourse diametrically opposed to *ars erotica*: the confession. It is not surprising that Foucault should find the confession to be central to the deployment of sex-

uality, for the confession fuses the two forms of subjectivity that Foucault first described in his account of the human sciences in *The Order of Things*. "The confession is a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession" (HS 61). In *Discipline and Punish* we saw how the disciplinary techniques could constitute the individual as an object to be judged, measured, and examined. In *The History of Sexuality*, we see how the individual is constituted as a speaking and desiring subject with an inner realm of experience that the confession reveals. But we also see that in this moment of self-expression, the individual remains the subject (that is, one who is ruled) of the priest, or, later, of the human scientist (doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, etc.) who requires the confession. Both *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* involve a power relation. In the former it is the relation of the teacher who passes down his wisdom to the pupil, or of the master who initiates the novice; but in the latter, the truth comes from below, handed up to the authority who demands it.

Thus when the confession stops being exclusively the rite of penance and becomes a standard technique for authorities of all kinds, it also becomes the basis for an archive, a body of recorded knowledge. The confessions of the Christian ritual were secret; as unrecorded discourse they did not yield such an archive. But the sciences of medicine, psychiatry, and pedagogy in the nineteenth century compiled and classified the pleasures, especially the deviant pleasures, that were described to them. This was an odd sort of science since it relied not on observation and experimentation, but on the questionable evidence of introspection and lived experience. Nevertheless, a science of sexuality was produced by a fusion of the traditional procedures of the confession and the more recent techniques of the scientific disciplines. Foucault lists five ways in which the confession was transformed into science. First, the confession was combined with the examination. What the individual reported was treated as a set of signs or symptoms to be deciphered. Instead of merely asking for a recollection of deeds and desires, the scientist used manifold techniques: questionnaires, interrogation, hypnosis, free association, etc. Second, sex was posited as having vast causal powers. The most minor event in one's sexual history could have

enormous consequences in any area of one's life. This justified the injunction to tell all. Third, the sexual causes for things not only were hidden, but there were forces that tended to keep them hidden. Because of this latency, the truth of sex needed to be extracted rather than merely observed. Fourth, the meaning of one's sexual report was not self-evident to the speaker, but needed to be interpreted. The one who listened to the report validated its truth by subjecting it to methods of deciphering. Fifth, the act of confession was treated as a medical procedure of diagnosis and therapy. Thus sex was no longer understood in terms merely of sin or transgression, but increasingly in those of the normal or the pathological. Who were the scientists who created and used these procedures? Foucault mentions such figures as Havelock Ellis and Kraft-Ebing who compiled descriptions of thoughts and behavior. But the procedures themselves are today most associated with another scientist, Sigmund Freud. Psychoanalysis for Foucault is not the revolutionary method Freud claimed it to be, but rather the combination of procedures developed earlier. Foucault therefore describes his history of sexuality as "an archaeology of psychoanalysis" (HS 130).

The discourse that is produced by the confession in both its religious and scientific forms is the sexuality that is deployed in Western societies beginning in the eighteenth century. Thus sexuality, as Foucault argued of man himself in *The Order of Things*, is a relatively recent invention. Previously, relations between the sexes were governed by the deployment of alliance, "a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties, of transmission of names and possessions" (HS 106). To understand what Foucault means by alliance, we might take the arranged marriages of the European aristocracy as a representative instance. These marriages were alliances of power and property. Their end was to preserve both of these for the families that the marriages allied. The whole system of alliance was intended to reproduce existing relations of power, property, and the sexes. Therefore it produced a system of rules defining the permitted and the forbidden, the licit and the illicit. It was concerned with the legal relations of partners; their physical relations were only an aspect of this larger field. Adultery was forbidden because it threatened the legal alliance, while reproductive sex between married partners was encouraged because it produced heirs that strengthened the alliance.

Sexuality differs on all of these points. Its effect is not to reproduce

existing relationships, but to proliferate power by expanding the areas and forms of control. Thus it creates new relations of bodies to each other. Instead of the legal bonds between individuals, sexuality "is concerned with the sensations of the body, the quality of pleasures, and the nature of impressions" (HS 106). Economically speaking, sexuality treats the body as a site of production and consumption, and it seeks not to preserve wealth, but to increase and control it by controlling populations. Thus in describing sexuality as a historical construct, Foucault shows a connection between an intensification of the most private sensations and the increasing management of the behavior of large groups. The sexual individual seeks to increase his or her own pleasure through relations with the partner, while at the same time the individual is controlled by the system of knowledge based on what individuals themselves have uttered. The effect of creating a species, the homosexual, is not to repress homosexual activity—although homosexuals themselves may be persecuted—but to incite it. Paradoxically, increased control comes not from prohibition, but from proliferation.

The deployment of sexuality did not replace the deployment of alliance; sexuality was deployed on top of the already existing system of alliance. Thus the family, the institution on which alliance was founded, became the locus of sexuality. But it did so at the expense of losing its privileged status as the locus of economic, political, and social power. It became instead a cell that contained the relations of husband and wife, and parent and child, through which sexuality was deployed. Here again, psychoanalysis, with its assumption that an individual's personality takes shape as a result of the actual and imagined sexual relations of members of the family cell, provides a strong example. "The family is the interchange of sexuality and alliance: it conveys the law and the juridical dimension in the deployment of sexuality; and it conveys the economy of pleasure and the intensity of sensations in the regime of alliance" (HS 108). Under the increasing deployment of sexuality, then, the family has become less a locus of power and more a locus of feelings and love, a haven in a heartless world. But the family also is the point of conflict between alliance and sexuality, a conflict that Foucault finds illustrated in the modern preoccupation with the incest taboo. The locus of sexuality in the family makes sexuality always already incestuous. The system of alliance prohibits incest because in incest there is no alliance with another family. But in the sexualized family, the

prohibition of incest represents merely the continued power of the system of alliance itself. By claiming that the incest taboo is foundational to all cultures, the system of alliance is preserved under the guise of natural law. Characteristically, Foucault ascribes one of the great intellectual "discoveries" of the human sciences to needs produced by those sciences themselves.

To speak of the "deployment" of sexuality is to suggest that sexuality was, like a tool or weapons system, put into service or action in someone's interest. Foucault does not mean that it could have been formulated in advance, as most tools are, but he does argue that like many other systems, its development served the interests of those in political and economic power. But, while sexuality is deployed by the bourgeoisie in their own interest, it is deployed not against the lower classes, but by the bourgeoisie to themselves. Instead of serving to control the laboring classes—as the repressive hypothesis had asserted—the deployment of sexuality was part of a general effort to assure the health and prolong the life of the ruling class. Thus the central event in the deployment of sexuality is the transformation of the confession from a religious discourse to a medical one: "instead of the question of death and everlasting punishment—the problem of life and illness. The flesh was brought down to the level of the organism" (HS 117). As a matter of health, sexuality was applied to those whom it was most important to keep healthy: the bourgeoisie. The laboring classes became subject to sexuality only gradually after its deployment had been completed in the ranks of their rulers.

Thus it was the bourgeois family that was first saturated with sex, and it was the bourgeois woman who, made idle by her prohibition from the economic world, was first sexualized by being charged with conjugal and parental obligations. The sexualized woman is not the same as the woman as sex object, although these two phenomena are related. Prior to the development of capitalism and the industrial system of production, women were important contributors to economic production. A large percentage of goods were produced in the home, usually for use there. But as production of products such as fabric and clothing became industrialized, more and more women found themselves idled. These women were sexualized in the sense that their sole mission in life was to produce and rear children.

In this enforced idleness, many women developed nervous dis-

orders that were called by a variety of names but which can all be described as part of the hysterization of women's bodies. These disorders were attributed to women's sexual organs; the word *hysteria* derives from the Greek word for "uterus." Thus a pathology was believed to be intrinsic to women's bodies and women became increasingly dominated by a medicine that, in effect, nurtured and spread this pathology.¹ Since the disease was rooted in female anatomy, it could not be eliminated: all the more reason for it to be rigorously controlled. This medical intervention inscribed its discipline in the bodies it treated as a kind of internal surveillance. The mother and the nervous woman are the double that this hysterization produced.

The hysterical woman was not the only product of the nineteenth-century regime of sexuality. The masturbating child was born of a paradox: although children regularly engage in sexual activity, this activity is not capable of reproduction, and therefore must be unnatural. Thus children's sexuality becomes for the first time a pedagogical problem. The figure of the adult pervert results from the psychiatrization of deviant pleasures that were cataloged, evaluated on a scale of normality and pathology, and subjected to corrective technologies. Even the lawful sex of the conjugal couple became the subject of socialization. Fertility became a domain of incitements and restrictions, and couples were made to feel responsible to their society or race. Birth control practices were medically controlled under the claim that they, too, were pathological. Each of these figures is, like the delinquent, an object of knowledge and an object of power, but unlike the delinquent, each is at least just as likely to be bourgeois as not.

We recognize that these human products of sexuality have been produced by means of the disciplinary techniques Foucault described in *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault argues that the deployment of sexuality is part of the same shift in the character of political power, which he earlier illustrated with the transformation of juridical punishment from public torture to the prison. The sovereign was understood to have power over life and death, which was exercised by deciding to take a life or to let it live. The subject's life in this instance is a form of property. But under the regime of discipline, the "anatomo-politics of the human body," power no longer constituted itself as the will of the sovereign, but as a positive force that could "foster life or disallow it to the point of death" (HS 138–

39). But discipline is only one half of this new power over life; the other is a bio-politics of populations. It constitutes the body not as a machine but as an organism, the domain of biological processes, and it led to regulation designed to control public health, longevity, and propagation. Together the regimes of discipline and population control are labeled bio-power. "This bio-power was without question an indispensable element in the development of capitalism; the latter would not have been possible without the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomenon of population to economic processes" (HS 140–41).

But sexuality is implicated by Foucault in the rise of a much more overt and familiar form of domination, modern racism and its expression as a political system in fascism. He discusses this change in terms of the symbolic opposition of blood and the law. The nobility understood its caste identity in terms of blood, a history of ancestry and alliances, but "the bourgeoisie's 'blood' was its sex" (HS 124). Its concern for its own self-preservation focused on heredity rather than mere genealogy. This concern produced eugenics, the attempt to eliminate inferior traits through selective breeding, and a racism that would describe whole races as sources of inferior heredity. The results of the combination of eugenics and racism are to be found in Hitler's attempt to murder all of those deemed inferior. But this eugenic racism remains an expression of the symbolics of blood even as it made use of the devices of sexuality. The justification for regulating the body, health, private conduct—all aspects of everyday life—was "the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race" (HS 149).

Thus the transition from one regime to another does not occur without overlapping, without mixed forms of power. A second combination of the old sovereignty with the new sexuality leads not to eugenics and racism but to psychoanalysis. Foucault argues that in the late eighteenth century when eugenics and modern racism emerge, de Sade is describing sex as a force without any of its own norms or rules, save only an unrestricted power. Psychoanalysis begins with this same conception of sex but attempts to reinscribe it in the law. While fascism used the techniques of disciplinary power in the service of the lawless force of blood, psychoanalysis attempts to contain the unrestricted force of sex in the law of sovereignty. Psychoanalysis was thus capable of understanding fascism

and its dangers. But psychoanalysis is also on the same grounds a backward-looking theory. It cannot conceptualize sexuality in terms of the formation of power contemporary with it.

The Sadian notion of sex as a lawless force, which in Freud becomes the only slightly more lawful "instinct," returns us to the issue of sex as a natural reality. Sex understood in this way could be taken as a historical constant against which cultural changes occur. But Foucault will not allow sex as an extradiscursive reality anymore than he will accept sexuality as such: "it is precisely this idea of sex *in itself* that we cannot accept without examination" (HS 152, italics in original). Sex, Foucault suggests, is the creation of sexuality, not the reverse. Sex conceived as a power that dominates us and as a secret that is fundamental to our being turns out to be "the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations, and pleasures" (HS 155). Sex turns out to be yet another illusion of depth. It is thus the ironic triumph of this power for our liberation to be understood in terms of this sex. If the deployment of sexuality is to be resisted it cannot be by the act of freeing sex to take its natural course, but rather by championing the multiplicity of pleasures and the body as the site of those pleasures.

The History of Sexuality, then, does not finally assert that the desires, the acts, and the pleasures that we call sexual have been undominated. Foucault is arguing rather that the notion of repression is misleading on at least two counts. One is that it suggests that sex has become silenced or prohibited, when the true effects of sexuality have been to turn desire into discourse and to incite sexual acts. The second is that sex should not be understood as a natural force that, having been bottled up by taboos and restrictions, needs to be liberated. Rather our pleasures have been dominated by a power that seeks to manipulate them for its own ends. While Foucault is not proposing a program or movement, he does argue that this domination cannot be resisted unless sex and sexuality are understood as cultural constructions of the modern *episteme*, and that the domain they cover has been constituted in different terms in other areas and cultures.

The Later Volumes

The subsequent volumes in *The History of Sexuality* were intended to demonstrate this historical and cultural diversity. Originally,

however, the series was to cover the same historical terrain with which Foucault was concerned in his other major works: the period from the Renaissance through the beginnings of the twentieth century. The volumes were to be distributed over this terrain topically, their proposed titles being: *The Flesh and the Body*; *The Children's Crusade*; *Woman, the Mother and the Hysteric*; *The Perverts*; and *Population and Races*.² As these titles indicate, the volumes in this plan would have developed in historical detail the central concepts of volume 1. But these volumes never got written. The project as a whole remained unfinished at Foucault's death. Two additional volumes were published just before he died, however, but these volumes take the project and Foucault's work in surprising new directions that, to many, are not particularly satisfying. Volume 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, discusses sexual practices in Greek antiquity, while volume 3, *The Care of the Self*, covers the Roman world of the first two centuries A.D. Thus the first major change is the vastly increased historical scope of the project. Foucault was not a specialist in ancient history, and in dealing with Greek materials he was forced to rely on translations. Perhaps because he was not a specialist, his discussions of these earlier periods have deviated far less from the standard accounts than much of his other work.³

During the period he was working on these later volumes, Foucault both understood himself to be entering a new area of study and revised his conception of his life's work: "I have sought to study—it is my current work—the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject. For example, I have chosen the domain of sexuality—how men have learned to recognize themselves as subjects of 'sexuality.' Thus, it is not power, but the subject, which is the general theme of my research."⁴ We have, of course, seen that the subject has been a significant preoccupation in Foucault's work since *The Order of Things*. But we should also note that Foucault said several years earlier that power was the major focus of his work. What we find in volumes 2 and 3 of *The History of Sexuality* is a broadening of the conception of the subject to the point where it can be called a self. In *The Order of Things* the subject was mainly an epistemic fiction, one of man's doubles, although Foucault correctly points out that the human sciences with which the book deals "objectivize" the subject in different ways.⁵ In *Discipline and Punish*, the subject is understood as the product of a relation of dominance either to a sovereign or to the disciplinary regime. To be a subject in this sense is to be subjected. This view of the subject remains

present in volume 1 of *The History of Sexuality*, but in the later volumes, the focus shifts to ethics. The materials that Foucault interprets in *The Use of Pleasure*, for example, are not depicted as imposed on the subject, but as providing him with options. In the later volumes, then, the subject begins to have agency, the power to make choices and set goals. But no theory of the subject or self emerges from these volumes either. In part this is because Foucault does continue to believe that human beings are different in different historical eras. Thus although subjects may make themselves, they must work with the materials their culture provides them.

There is also a change in Foucault's approach to the material. *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* exhibit few of the strategies that have characterized Foucault's writing. Although *The Use of Pleasure* does contain a reversal of the popular conception of antiquity as a period of dionysian sexual freedom, it is not a reversal of scholarly studies of the period. Furthermore, the correction of this misconception is presented as something that Foucault himself was surprised to learn. He went to Greek antiquity to find what he expected to be a radically different construction of sexuality, but found instead one that was indeed different but not in all of the ways he expected. For example, both volumes detail concerns with health and well-being which seem to undermine some of Foucault's claims in volume 1 where these concerns are depicted as emerging in the context of the modern regime of discipline. Most importantly, Foucault discovers that Greek and Roman writing deals with sexuality in ethical terms. Thus although sex is not a matter of sin in these cultures, it is not treated as something that should be enjoyed indiscriminately.

Perhaps the most noticeable change in approach is the new historical strategy that emerges in the later two volumes. Instead of focusing on ruptures, Foucault now depicts something like "epistemic drift."⁶ Thus he describes a slow mutation of attitudes and practices from paganism to Christianity. The Roman attitudes of the era covered by *The Care of the Self* already anticipate the Christian ones that will become dominant several hundred years later. These changes are endearing to more traditionally minded scholars—Merquior says almost nothing positive about Foucault until he takes up *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*—but they also mitigate the books' impact. Where volume 1 drew wide, and mostly positive, attention, the later volumes have been greeted in the English-speak-

ing world with generally negative reviews that suggest that the books' chief failing is their lack of intellectual excitement.

The generally negative reception of the late volumes of *The History of Sexuality* may lead us to reconsider the issue of authorship, with which this study began, by looking at the way Michel Foucault has been or is being constructed as an author. According to the rules Foucault himself borrows from Saint Jerome, the later volumes might be said to fall outside of his oeuvre, just as his early book on psychiatry is also generally excluded. But what are the major differences between these later volumes and the work that has been regarded as central? One difference is obviously the historical period with which they deal, but such a difference is probably not crucial since Foucault has usually been at odds with other authorities on Renaissance through nineteenth-century European history. The second difference I have noted is in the abandonment of many of the distinctive discursive strategies that characterized the other volumes. If this difference does in fact make *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* among the least read of Foucault's works over the long run, it will ironically confirm many of Foucault's own claims about the character of discursive regimes. Even Foucault's own discourse, which is contained by no single discipline or discursive formation, becomes understood as a discursive regime of its own. Thus for something to be in the Foucauldian truth it must be said using Foucauldian strategies. To put this another way, rhetoric rather than truth or ideology will be what identifies the central works of Foucault's corpus.