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INTRODUCTION

Guest Editors' Introduction¹

Shannon Winnubst, Ohio State University

Jana Sawicki, Williams College

Fueled partly by Act Up's AIDS activism and the exclusionary effects of what Lisa Duggan has called the *homonormative* "equality" agenda of gay and lesbian identity politics, queer theory emerged as a radical political alternative in the 1990s.² Historian of sexuality David Halperin half-jokingly dubbed Foucault the patron saint of this nascent critical project. If Foucault was its saint, *History of Sexuality, Volume I* became its bible. To put it inaptly, Foucault was a seminal figure in queer theory. His genealogy of the regime (*dispositif*) of sexuality, critique of the repressive hypothesis, analytics of power, and call for resisting normalization spurred queer theorists' critiques of established liberationist rhetorics, identity categories and strategies. Focused less on sexuality per se, queer theorists and activists opposed not just homophobia and heterosexism but also regimes of normalcy more generally by capitalizing on their "slantwise" and eccentric position within particular socio-cultural frames. Thus queer theoretical projects expanded to include a diverse constituency: trans people, postcolonial queers, and queers of color. Although the first generation of so-called "queer Foucauldians" were quite distinct in outlook and approach, this diversity seemed fitting given Foucault's assertions that his work constituted not a theory or ideology, but a set of tools that he hoped others might find useful in their struggles against unnecessary constraints on freedom.

Today, twenty years since its emergence, the heyday of queer theory as such may have past. Duke University Press recently announced the end of its Series Q. In their in-

¹ The editors of this issue on queer theory want to thank *Foucault Studies* for supporting this project especially insofar as much established Foucault scholarship rarely addresses the importance of Foucault's queerness for his eccentric approach to critique.

² Lisa Duggan, *Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2003). There are other genealogies of queer theory as well. The most obvious include the theoretical work of so-called queer Foucauldians Gayle Rubin, Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, and Leo Bersani. Jennifer Doyle gestures toward yet another possible genealogy that includes Simone de Beauvoir, Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldua. See "Queer Wallpaper" in Amelia Jones (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Contemporary Art Since 1945* (London: Blackwell, 2006), 343-355.

roduction to one of the last volumes in the series entitled, *After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory*, Janet Halley and Andrew Parker ask: "What has queer theory become now that it has past?"³ At the very least the discourse is transforming itself. And the papers collected in this issue suggest that the transformation, fueled by a return to Foucault's texts, has led to exciting and provocative queer thinking.

In this issue Lynne Huffer and Mark Jordan take up the quintessentially queer question of "style" suggesting that queer theorists have paid too little attention to Foucault's use of irony and other rhetorical strategies in *History of Sexuality, Volume I*. Doing so, they imply, could radically reorient queer thought in the more ethical direction prefigured by Foucault's appeal to an *ars erotica*. Linking Foucault to Eve Sedgwick, Huffer reads Foucault's use of free indirect discourse in that book as an exercise in non-dualistic thinking, a desubjectivating practice in which she locates the trace of an erotic ethic in his work. Jordan draws attention to the irony, the shifts in voice, the literary allusions and plays on words in *History of Sexuality, Volume I* to argue that, in this abstract and ironic "histoire," Foucault is not telling us how to theorize power or sexuality—rather, he is showing us something about the will to know sexuality as well as overcoming that will through writing. Jordan urges queer theorists to give up the pretense to develop a theory of sexuality and embrace the more Foucauldian dream of a heterotopic language of bodies, an *ars erotica* that refuses *scientia sexualis*.

If *History of Sexuality, Volume I* generated an early wave of queer thought, the translations of the subsequent volumes on sexuality as well as his course lecture on neoliberalism, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, has produced a new wave. While many in this first wave paid less attention to Foucault's discussion of biopower in *Volume I*, more recent queer thinking addresses global questions concerning populations, terror, genocide, and imperialism and their links to neoliberal policies and cultural transformations. Three of the five contributions to this issue represent this trend. Robert Nichols describes queerness itself as a *dispositif* situating his analysis in queer/left critiques of Jasbir Puar, Wendy Brown, and Jodi Melamed. Taking his cue from Puar's fascination with the conservative tendencies hidden within oppositional claims, he asks how queer thought functions within a global frame to support American and Anglo-European imperialism. Both Shannon Winnubst and Ladelle McWhorter use Foucault's course lectures on neoliberalism to identify a new terrain of struggle within a neoliberal frame. Thus McWhorter asks what happens when the regime of normalization gives way to new forms of power focused less on individual bodies and psychic interiors and more on apparatuses of security and managing populations. She particularly investigates how queer practices of resistance must adapt to neoliberal transformations in subjectivity, which is no longer grounded in the formation of a strict or firm identity. Winnubst argues that what is new about neoliberalism is its replacement of liberal

³ Cited in Michael Warner, "Queer and Then? The End of Queer Theory?," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, (January 1, 2012) at <http://chronicle.com/article/QueerThen-/130161/>

ideologies of contract and exchange with enterprise and fungibility, respectively. Insofar as neoliberalism supports the proliferation of difference (and markets) and commodifies pleasure, appeals to difference (queerness) and to pleasure seem less likely to destabilize it. In a striking move she turns to anti-sociality theory and the prospect that historicizing *jouissance* might serve to resist neoliberalism's disarming strategies.

Together the essays collected here embody the ongoing transformative effects of Foucault's work on queer thought and its renewed commitment to "thinking otherwise," to becoming rather than being homosexual.

Shannon Winnubst
Ohio State University
286 University Hall
Columbus, Ohio 43210
USA
winnubst.1@osu.edu

Jana Sawicki
Williams College
Schapiro Hall
24 Hopkins Hall Drive
Williamstown, MA 01267
USA
jana.l.sawicki@williams.edu