



Race and Racism in Foucault's Collège de France Lectures

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Abstract

While Michel Foucault's writings have been taken up extensively to explore gender and sexuality, until recently there was little work drawing on Foucault's writings to discuss race. In part, this was because Foucault seemed to have said almost nothing about race, aside from some comments on Nazism and eugenics in the final pages of Part V of *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1. With the 1997 and 1999 publication of two series of lectures that Foucault delivered at the Collège de France between 1974 and 1976, *Abnormal* and "*Society Must Be Defended*" (both appearing in English translation in 2003), Foucault scholars have, however, become aware that he made more extensive and provocative observations about race than had previously been believed. Both of these lecture series gives a genealogical account of the ways in which modern, biological forms of racism emerged at a certain point in history, stressing the contingency of this emergence and its enmeshment in power struggles and modern forms of power. This paper provides an account of what Foucault argues about race and racism in the Collège de France lectures, and, more briefly, presents two of the most extended treatments of race coming from Foucauldian perspectives that have appeared in the wake of these texts.

1. Introduction

While Michel Foucault's writings have been taken up extensively to explore gender and sexuality, until recently there was little work drawing on Foucault's writings to discuss race.¹ In part, this was because Foucault seemed to have said almost nothing about race himself, aside from some comments on Nazism and eugenics in the final pages of Part V of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. With the 1997 and 1999 publication of two series of lectures that Foucault delivered at the Collège de France between 1974 and 1976, *Abnormal* and "*Society Must Be Defended*" (both appearing in English translation in 2003), Foucault scholars have, however, become aware that he made more extensive and provocative observations about race than had previously been believed. Each of these lecture series gives a genealogical account of the ways in which modern, biological forms of racism emerged at a certain point in history, stressing the contingency of this emergence and its enmeshment in power struggles and modern forms of power.

Genealogies, for Foucault, are counter-histories. They are written in opposition to a dominant view of history that makes some aspect of the present seem inevitable or acceptable, either by positing a continuity with the past and thus naturalizing the present, or by presenting the present as a pinnacle of progress. Genealogies either resist *universalizing* histories – as in Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morality* – or *teleological* histories – as in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*. Although Foucault does not make his target explicit in his lectures on racism, *Abnormal* and "*Society Must Be Defended*" most likely resist a universalizing view of racism, or one that claims that racism, however loathsome, is

inevitable, has always existed and always will. Today we can find countless articles written by scientists arguing that racism is hard-wired, having served a useful purpose in our primitive past.² Foucault's genealogies of modern racism – whether connecting its emergence to the power plays of psychiatric science (*Abnormal*), or to biopower more generally (lecture 11 of “*Society Must Be Defended*”), or to a strange inversion of what were once liberatory discourses of race war (lectures 3 and 4 of “*Society Must Be Defended*”) – can be read as rebutting these ‘scientific’ claims to a natural racism.

In what follows, I will first provide an account of what Foucault argues about race and racism in the Collège de France lectures. Second, I will briefly discuss two of the most extended treatments of race coming from Foucauldian perspectives that have appeared in the wake of these texts: Ellen K. Feder's *Family Bonds: Genealogies of Race and Gender* (2007) and Ladelle McWhorter's *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy* (2009).

2. *Abnormal 11*

Abnormal is a series of lectures from 1974 to 1975, corresponding with the period during which Foucault began writing his *History of Sexuality*. Like the *History of Sexuality*, volume 1, *Abnormal* mentions race only briefly and in its final pages. Race is thus not an abiding theme of either work, but nevertheless seems significant to each of them in so far as it is what Foucault concludes with, or is the endpoint toward which the study tends.

Abnormal traces the emergence of the concept of abnormality in psychiatric discourse and practice. In particular, it examines the ways in which psychiatry transitioned from imitating medicine, or from treating mental *pathologies*, to managing *abnormalities*. Foucault considers the manners in which this transition from a psychiatry of mental illnesses to a psychiatry of abnormalities entailed a vast, and ultimately racist, expansion of psychiatry's power. In this sense, *Abnormal* continues along the lines of Foucault's Collège de France lectures from the previous year, *Psychiatric Power*. Foucault is consistently concerned to show, in *Abnormal* as elsewhere, that what is passed off as a medical activity is in fact a normalizing form of social control, with psychiatrists better perceived as self-appointed protectors of societal mores (and, in its racist version, of ‘the race’) than as scientists or medical practitioners.

According to Foucault, psychiatry first established its authority through a series of parallels with medicine, asserting its power to manage certain lives through the claims that *it too* had men in white coats who were treating pathologies in institutions called hospitals. While psychiatry's power over some lives was considerable, the strictly analogous model to medicine only gave psychiatrists access to the lives of subjects whose behavior was extravagant enough for them to be deemed pathological and institutionalized, or ‘the most embarrassing cases’.³ Once its medical authority was established, however, Foucault shows that psychiatry would dispense with both illness and cure, coming instead to be bearers of expertise on *abnormal conditions*, conditions which were often deemed hereditary or incurable. By the time heredity became caught up with psychiatric theory, psychiatry's inability to cure the hereditarily abnormal did not pose a threat to its power, since its role was quite overtly that of protecting society from perceived dangers, even if only by having the expertise to *identify* those dangers in order to decide who should be incapacitated (incarcerated, sterilized, lobotomized). Thus one no longer needs to be ill to become the object of psychiatric power, one can simply have a ‘condition’ or predisposition to an abnormal state against which, in the opinion of psychiatrists, society should defend itself. As Foucault writes, “The three well-known questions currently put to

psychiatrists who testify in court are: 'Is the individual dangerous? Is the accused indictable? Is the accused curable?' " (317) and not any longer, 'is the accused ill?' Psychiatrists are thus not best conceived as doctors, but as experts on danger and protectors of society from its abnormal members. Taking 'abnormality' and 'conditions' rather than pathology and illness as its objects, Foucault observes, greatly expanded psychiatry's domain.

The psychiatric theory of 'conditions' was, Foucault argues, one way in which psychiatry penetrated the family, bringing this central institution under its control. He writes:

What kind of body can produce a condition that definitively marks the whole of an individual's body? This gives rise to the need to discover the background-body, so to speak, that by its own causality confirms and explains the appearance of an individual who is the victim, subject, and bearer of this dysfunctional state [...] What is this background-body, this body behind the abnormal body? It is the parents' body, the ancestors' body, the body of the family, the body of heredity. (313)

The family, or heredity, would take on 'an indefinite causal permissiveness' or would become the explanation for everything that was abnormal about individuals. The family could create abnormal individuals both through environmental influences and through the transmission of hereditary traits. Foucault writes: "the theory of heredity allows psychiatry of the abnormal to be [...] a technology of the healthy and the unhealthy, useful or dangerous, profitable or harmful marriage." (315) This would give rise to a theory of degeneration and the eugenic management of populations, the regulation not only of who could marry and form families, but, more fundamentally, who should reproduce at all. Psychiatrists became involved in eugenic means of preventing people from reproducing whose offspring would supposedly be predisposed to conditions that were deemed by psychiatry to be dangerous to society or a drain on its resources.

This genealogy of psychiatry brings Foucault to conclude his lecture course by positing a new form of racism in the modern age, what he calls a 'racism against the abnormal'. As he writes:

With this notion of degeneration and these analyses of heredity, you can see how psychiatry could plug into, or rather give rise to, a racism that was very different in this period from what could be called traditional, historical racism, from "ethnic racism." The racism that psychiatry gave birth to in this period is racism against the abnormal, against individuals who, as carriers of a condition, a stigmata, or any defect whatsoever, may more or less randomly transmit to their heirs the unpredictable consequences of the evil, or rather of the non-normal, that they carry within them. It is a racism, therefore, whose function is not so much the prejudice or defense of one group against another as the detection of all those within a group who may be the carriers of a danger to it. It is an internal racism that permits the screening of every individual within a given society. (316–7)

Foucault goes on to make the connection between this internal and psychiatric racism against the abnormal and Nazism clear:

We should not be surprised that German psychiatry functioned so spontaneously within Nazism. The new racism specific to the twentieth century, this neoracism as the internal means of defense of a society against its abnormal individuals, is the child of psychiatry, and Nazism did no more than graft this new racism onto the ethnic racism that was endemic in the nineteenth century.

I think, then, that these new forms of racism, which took hold in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, should be linked historically to psychiatry. (317)

This internal racism, or racism against the abnormal, will, as in the Nazi case, interact with a more traditional, 'ethnic racism', but will not be limited to targeting ethnic groups:

Certainly, there were very quickly a series of interactions between this racism and traditional, Western, essentially anti-Semitic racism, without, however, the two forms ever being coherently or effectively organized prior to Nazism. (317)

So, for instance, the Nazis will manifest an 'ethnic racism' in their murder of Jews, but will also apply an internal racism to Aryans who are deemed a genetic danger to the race.

Foucault's use of the term 'racism' in these pages may seem metaphorical rather than literal: prejudice against any abnormal group or carrier of 'stigmata' (for instance non-heterosexuals, non-able-bodied people) is, we might think, *analogous* to racism, but it is not racism *per se* since race is not what is at stake. Indeed, the claim that racism, in the modern age, is 'racism against the abnormal', seems, oddly, to dispense with race. This need not be racism against a race, Foucault makes clear, but a racism that the White race (for instance) may turn against its own (undesirable) members. In fact, however, what Foucault is calling an 'internal racism' is concerned with race in so far as it is a racism that seeks to protect 'the race', even in cases where those it needs to protect itself against are *its own deviant members*.⁴ Although these members may be abnormal in terms of their sexuality or their cognitive and physical abilities rather than their race, they are still identified as a *racial* threat since the passing on of their genes undermines the future of the race. Thus, according to the logic of eugenics, while miscegenation may be *one* way that the race is threatened, another is the passing on of substandard Aryan or Nordic genes. Race remains central, therefore, even in the 'internal' form of racism that targets individuals who are bearers of abnormal conditions that are not themselves racial.

3. "Society Must Be Defended" 3–4

The following year, while concluding *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, Foucault would again provide a genealogical account of what, in *Abnormal*, he had called 'internal racism'. While in *Abnormal* Foucault sought to connect the emergence of a biological and internal racism to the history of the expansion of psychiatric power, in lectures 3 and 4 of "Society Must Be Defended" he situates this particularly modern form of racism within a much longer history, the history of race war discourses beginning in the 17th century in Europe.

Foucault starts his third lecture by noting early 19th-century Prussian military strategist Carl von Clausewitz's famous statement: "War is a continuation of politics by other means." While Clausewitz's phrase has often been inverted to say that it is politics that continues war by other means, Foucault suggests that Clausewitz's statement was *itself* an inversion. In other words, the idea that politics is war, and thus that war is perpetual, predated Clausewitz and resonated throughout the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Indeed, Foucault argues, this claim was the rallying cry of a counter-historical discourse that he will call 'race war discourse' and that he will spend the next two lectures examining.

Medieval European society was, Foucault reminds us, a bellicose culture characterized by private warfare. This was an age in which day-to-day wars were waged between families. We might think of the House of Capulet and the House of Montague, but also recall that the Prince of Verona has forbidden further warfare between

these two houses on pain of death. By the late Renaissance, private warfare was being prohibited by sovereigns, and war became something that occurred between states or at a state's frontiers rather than within its borders. From this time onwards, only the state can legitimately wage war, war is professionalized, and a standing army is formed. Paradoxically, at this moment when society ceases to be saturated with war, a discourse develops that says that societies are in fact in a *continual* state of war. War, according to these discourses, is "a permanent social relationship, the ineradicable basis of all relations and institutions of power." (49) Politics is war. Foucault's suggestion is that such 'perpetual war' discourses were a form of resistance to power, and to the monarch and his laws in particular. The aristocracy, the middle class, and the working classes at different times would each use 'perpetual war' discourse to challenge the ruling party's power or the power of law. While the monarch wanted to present his power as one of peace, continuity, inevitability, divine right, and heredity, the 'perpetual war' discourse undermined these claims and declared that this power was one of war, of oppression, in which a certain section of the population is enslaved, but planning to rise up; this law is not one of peace, is not inevitable, but is the result of temporary conquest and injustice. Race war discourse insists that the nation is not at peace even if it is not at war with other states: the monarch's power is not uncontested, but is violent and unstable.

Such was the language of English revolutionaries and later of the French revolutionaries. While the monarch presents an image of his power as unified or as tripartite pyramid – either as a Hobbesian Leviathan or the three estates of pre-revolutionary France – the 'perpetual war' discourse rejects these unified and tripartite ways of picturing power and declares that society is divided into *two* parts: them and us, oppressor and oppressed. Soon, these binary parts are theorized as races. This is a mythical, Biblical, messianic discourse, Foucault notes, one that claims that a new leader will come, that the vanquished will become the victors, that the decisive battle will be fought. This is a discourse that pitted Jerusalem against Rome, but, Foucault notes, will also be the language of the new Führer and the Third Reich.

While this binary mode of dividing apparently unified societies is a discourse of 'race war', Foucault stresses that 'races' in the 17th century did not refer to morphologically distinct groups but rather to cultures. A race was a people with its language, habits, and religion. The Normans and the Saxons were, for instance, two races in early race war discourse, as were the Gauls and the Franks. These groups did not look different, but they had different customs and spoke different tongues. These differences were understood to be bred rather than born, and a child born to Gauls but raised by Franks would be Frank. Also distinguishing the early notion of race from that of modern racism, one race was not deemed superior to the other. The problem with the other race was not that it was inferior, but that it had stolen one's land and conquered one's people.

By the 18th century, the idea of 'race' began to change into an anatomical category. By this time there were debates about how many races there were, and intellectuals such as Immanuel Kant weighed in on the number, counting people by anatomically distinct groups, such as yellow, red, white and black people. Now race had come to be about skin-color, bodies and morphologies, and not about customs or languages. A black person raised in a white society would still be black, and the problem with blacks, this racist discourse claimed, was not that they were conquerors but that they were anatomically and hence mentally and culturally inferior.

In the 19th century, Foucault notes, another development in discourses about race developed, and we find claims about racial divisions *within* races and not just between

racism. Not only are there hierarchical divisions between whites and blacks and whites and reds, but within the white population itself. There are the true representatives of the race and then there are the deviants, throw-backs and misfits: these are people who appear Aryan or Nordic but in fact represent an earlier evolutionary stage. At this point biological theories of degeneracy and eugenic arguments developed, suggesting that some people were sub-specimens of a race. As seen in *Abnormal*, we have here the emergence of an internal racism.

Having traced this history of changing discourses on race in Lecture 3, Foucault worries in Lecture 4 that he may have seemed to be praising this history of racist discourse. In fact, he clarifies, he is tracing the genealogy that led up to the biological racist discourses of the 19th and 20th centuries, and while the final forms of these discourses are obviously pernicious, Foucault finds much that is admirable about its earlier forms. The earliest versions of race war discourse were the first historical discourses of political resistance to sovereign power. Indeed, although Foucault does not state this, from the manner that he describes early race war discourses we can see that he sees them as having much in common with genealogies. Early race war discourses, like genealogies, are counter-histories, and the histories that they are countering are universalizing and teleological. Historical writings from the Roman histories up until the time of race war discourses had done nothing but glorify the current monarchs, all of whom were described as descendants of the Trojans. In this way, historians grounded the current sovereign's rule in an allegedly long and continuous history. They celebrated and reinforced royal power by recounting the hereditary power of these kings, their royal lineage, and the greatness of their laws. These histories suggest that the current rule and laws have existed since the days of ancient Rome and have culminated in the current glory, or have always been and should always be. They dazzle with the glory they describe, and thus intensify the luster of power. By dazzling, they defeat resistance before it can arise. These are precisely the kinds of history that genealogies refute, and 'race war' discourses thus appear as other historico-political discourses that rebut the universalizing and teleological histories of those in power. Early race war discourses stated that the histories of the kings were lies, that the power of these kings did not go back to Rome but to recent and unjust battles. They make clear that the laws of the kings are unstable and about to be overturned. They undermined the continuity of power and told the histories of the vanquished. Early race war discourses unearthed the voices of those silenced by history and prophesized a different future.

Thus Foucault is praising race war discourse in some of its forms, however he also traces the way it was transformed, inverted, wrested from the margins and taken up by those in power. First it was transformed from a race war discourse to a class war discourse in the early 19th century. Foucault cites Marx's 1882 letter to Engels, in which he says that "You know very well where we found our idea of class struggle; we found it in the work of the French historians who talked about the race struggle." (79) At this point, instead of Normans versus Saxons, we have the workers versus the property owners. Foucault generalizes from this point that

The history of the revolutionary project of revolutionary practice is, I think, indissociable from the counter-history that broke with the Indo-European form of historical practices, which were bound up with the exercise of sovereignty; it is indissociable from the appearance of the counter-history of races and of the role played in the West by clashes between races. (79)

First voiced by the revolutionary poor, this discourse was then inverted, taken up by the rich against the lower classes, and then against misfits of other kinds: the sexually deviant,

criminal, mad. 'Race' is reintroduced as the name for this war, but now it is 'race' defined not as a cultural category but as a biological group. The misfits, many of whom are simply poor, are now deemed a sub-race.

Race war discourse at this point has become an instrument wielded by the biopolitical state against its abnormal or marginalized members, and a discourse from the margins has become a discourse of the center. Race war discourse has become a normalizing discourse which justifies the exclusion and death of the abnormal as enemies of the state. In sum, race war discourse has been inverted by the late 19th century, and it is those at the center who wield the discourse against those at the margins, reintroducing the language of race, superimposing it upon class and other forms of social deviance, except now the language of race means something else: race no longer refers to different but qualitatively neutral cultures, but to hierarchically ranked biological groups.

When the discourse of race war is taken up from the center, there is first a racist discourse about other races, and then a racist discourse directed at members within a given race. We see both moves in Nazi Germany, which posited a superior race that excludes Jews and gypsies while simultaneously defending itself against the Aryan ill, deviant and disabled. This is no longer a politico-historical discourse, the kind of discourse that Foucault found laudable and comparable to genealogy; rather, it is a biological discourse that, in his previous lecture course, he had described as 'racism against the abnormal'. This discourse no longer makes claims about politics and history, insisting that a certain battle be remembered or that a new battle is coming, but is rather a discourse about human types, human physiology, biological ends, survival of the fittest and degeneration. While the earlier version of race war discourse was spoken by those at the margins who needed to defend themselves against society, later versions of race war discourse would declare that it was society that needed to be defended against the abnormal. Thus, Foucault stresses, race war discourse is metamorphosing and circulating, appearing in different forms with different political functions over hundreds of years, first spoken by the enslaved, defeated, and marginalized, and then used against them. Notably, for Foucault, it is only in its later forms that this discourse on race war is racist.

4. "Society Must Be Defended" 11

Lecture 11 of "*Society Must Be Defended*" will be summarized more briefly, since it is similar in content to Part V of *The History of Sexuality*, volume 1, and thus rehearses an argument that is already familiar to readers of Foucault. Like Part V of *The History of Sexuality*, this lecture provides an overview of the characteristics of biopower as it is opposed to sovereign power, while making the argument that the biopolitical state will inevitably be racist since it is racism that gives this state the power to kill. Sovereign power, Foucault tells us, is the power to seize life. Its symbol is the sword, and its ultimate expression is to kill. As Foucault clarifies, killing does

not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on. (256)

Not just killing the enemy in war, but ordering one's own citizens to risk their lives in battle, is an exercise of sovereign power. Although Foucault does not mention slavery in "*Society Must Be Defended*" – most likely because he has European fascism foremost in mind – he does describe the enslavement of peoples as another exercise of

sovereign right in *Psychiatric Power* (69). Slavery is, after all, a total seizure of life and a political death.

In contrast to sovereign power, biopower is not primarily a power to kill but one that fosters, regulates, and manages life, and it is this kind of power, Foucault argues, that is ‘on the advance’ (254). A problem arises, however, for the biopolitical state when it wishes to wage war, kill or expose to death. How can a biopolitical state engage in these typically sovereign actions? How can it justify war and murder when its function is to foster, manage, and optimize life? This, Foucault argues, is where racism comes in. Racism is “primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die.” (254) Racism allows the biopolitical state to divide the species into races, into ‘the race’ and sub-races, and into fit and unfit specimens of a race. This, in turn, allows the biopolitical state to designate certain populations or segments of its own population as a danger, and thus to warrant that population’s death or enslavement, political or otherwise, in the name of the protection and management of life. Racism, therefore, is what allows killing to be co-opted into a politics of life that characterizes societies such as ours, and is likely to exist so long as we have biopolitical states and these states feel the need to kill.

5. *American Genealogies of Race and Racism*

Without the space to survey the entirety of the literature that has grown out of these lectures in recent years, I will only mention two recently published, book-length and Foucault-inspired genealogies of race. These are Ellen K. Feder’s *Family Bonds: Genealogies of Race and Gender* and Ladelle McWhorter’s *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*. Feder’s and McWhorter’s books are among the most interesting studies to take up Foucault’s writings on race and are particularly interesting to consider in juxtaposition for at least three reasons. First, both aim not simply to provide commentaries on Foucault’s claims about race but to provide Foucauldian genealogies of race of their own. Most significantly, while Foucault’s comments on race concentrate on the European context and Nazism in particular, both McWhorter and Feder examine race in the United States. Second, both books focus on the institution of the family as a site of racial as well as sexual and gendered oppression. Third, following arguments about the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and sexuality that post-date Foucault’s writings on race, both Feder and McWhorter consider race in tandem with other forms of oppression and theorize the relation of these oppressions to each other.

This last point is particularly interesting because while both authors challenge the ‘intersectional’ approach to race, gender, and sexuality, they do so in very different and indeed opposed ways: while Feder suggests that thinking intersectionally is difficult and perhaps impossible due to the differences between oppressions, McWhorter argues that intersectional thinking *does not go far enough* in thinking the absolute inextricability of oppressions that we have tended to think apart. From the fact that Foucault’s few comments on race occur within the context of a discussion of (regulatory) biopower, and from the equally indisputable fact that feminist scholars have made great use of Foucault’s writings on disciplinary power to describe the workings of gender, Feder argues that race and gender are difficult to think together because they are produced through different forms of power: regulatory power or biopower in the case of race, and disciplinary power in the case of gender. The family is thus a disciplinary institution, Feder argues, which disciplines its members into gender roles. In contrast, the institution of regulatory power

is the state, and it is external, biopolitical state pressures that racialize the family. Feder's argument can be schematized as follows:

Gender	Race
Disciplinary Power	Regulatory Power (Biopower)
Internal to the Family	External to the Family

Although, if this were the case, it would be nice and tidy, it is in fact easy to come up with examples of how biopower regulates gender, and how race is produced and enforced through disciplinary power. It is also easy to come up with examples of how gender is enforced on the family from without, and of how race is inculcated from within the family. Indeed, Feder's own book is full of such examples, and the complex stories of race and gender that she tells are the strength of her study, even if they contradict her thesis. For instance, her story of Nathan, a little boy diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder, shows a family being disciplined from the outside (by school children, educators and medical professionals) into gender-conforming behavior. Her story of Levittown shows families being disciplined from without (by the state-funded Levitt organization, for instance, and by neighbors), and race being policed within post-war suburban families. Americans of Eastern and Southern European descent, unlike Blacks, were permitted to live in race-segregated suburbs such as Levittowns that were established for returning GIs; they were thus redefined as white, and they policed norms of whiteness on their own family members in order to maintain this status. These examples, and others in Feder's book, show that gender is imposed on the family from external disciplinary mechanisms, and race is deployed within the family through disciplinary measures, as well as through biopower. Examples such as state-funded breastfeeding advocacy campaigns and eugenic measures to enforce 'eugenically-fit' women to reproduce can be given as further examples of biopolitical tactics of gendering, further disturbing Feder's neat boxes.

In contrast to Feder, McWhorter's project works, far more convincingly, in the opposite direction, arguing that different forms of oppression – most notably racial, sexual, gender and ableist oppression – have each been inseparable aspects of what Foucault described as 'racism against the abnormal'. As a result of this shared history, we find that race has been deeply sexualized, sexuality has been racialized, and that the sexually and racially oppressed as well as gender non-conformists have been seen as developmentally disabled or arrested and oppressed as such. Far from wanting to separate out oppressions as characterized by different forms of power, McWhorter's aim is to show the *inseparability* of various forms of oppression, and thus the need for solidarity between liberation movements. It is not just a matter of political correctness to attend to racism in our attempts to resist sexual oppression, or to attend to sexual oppression in our battles against racism. On the contrary, it is a pragmatic necessity that we do so, as we cannot understand one form of oppression, or effectively resist it, if we do not understand the other forms of oppression with which it inextricably bound up and which are part of the same logic. This logic – racism against the abnormal – works at both regulatory and disciplinary levels. This is not only a far more Foucauldian position to take – since Foucault himself frequently noted that different forms of power are only analytically distinct and are characterized by 'overlappings, interactions, and echoes' (*History of Sexuality* 149) – but, I would suggest, it is also a far more politically productive position.

6. Conclusion

Genealogies of racism, as found in Foucault's Collège de France lectures and the works of Feder and McWhorter, are narratives of hope, political strategies against despair, especially when contrasted with arguments about racism being an inevitable aspect of human nature, or biological claims about the hard-wiring of racism in the brain. These genealogies show that racism as we know it emerged only late in history and as a result of contingencies and power struggles that could have been resolved – and could *still* be resolved – otherwise. Racism is not inevitable: just as it emerged, it could fade out of history. On the other hand, since Foucault, Feder and McWhorter each show that a biopolitical society is bound up with biological racism, this is also a pessimistic theory. Notably, getting rid of National Socialism and slavery has not eradicated the problem, or even gotten to the root of the problem. The problem is biopower, in both its regulatory and disciplinary forms, a normalizing power to which psychiatry and the other psychological sciences are deeply wedded, and which is the kind of power we live with today. To overcome racism, we will not simply need to interrogate ideologies, but to understand and resist technologies of power.

Short Biography

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Notes

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¹ An exception is Ann Laura Stoler's book, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Duke University Press, 1995. See also Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*. University of California Press, 2002.

² For instance, see: <http://www.caller.com/news/2008/sep/21/is-the-human-brain-hardwired-for-racism/> and <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1269561/Our-brains-make-empathise-people-race.html>.

³ Foucault, 'Psychiatry, Confinement, Prison', in *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984*: 180.

⁴ Ladelle McWhorter clarifies and supports this aspect of Foucault's argument in the first chapters of *Racism and Sexual Oppression in Anglo-America: A Genealogy*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009.

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