

group identity (as the development of a positive group attachment is intimately related to the experiences of negative stereotypes and social stigma); politicizing social networks (including the implementation of new programs and approaches to encouraging student political engagement in schools); and building community social capital (by creating institutions and programs that foment a participatory democracy). In essence, the political incorporation of Latinos, she tells us, depends upon a democratic society willing to change the borders that outline political participation and that grant power to certain groups/individuals at the expense of others.

This book teaches us that understanding Latino political participation/activism depends upon developing a nuanced analysis of political engagement beyond electoral politics. In the end, and without a doubt, the biggest contribution of *Fluid Borders* is its uncanny timing as we witness the massive mobilization of Latinos nationwide; Latinos who are engaging in non-electoral politics to cross the borders of a society that keeps them relegated to its political margins. Thus, anyone interested in understanding how or why Latinos are currently mobilizing in such big numbers, needs to read this book.

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*Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism*, by **Janet Afary** and **Kevin B. Anderson**. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005. 346 pp. \$24.00 paper. ISBN: 0226007863.

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Birth pangs of the Iranian revolution fascinated Foucault. Its “general will” surged in the streets, smothering political divisions and its timeless performative exuberance, audaciously confronting an imposing modern dictatorship. Of course, Foucault earned the criticism he received (and copiously receives in this volume) for failing to see the dark side of the force animating the Iranian Revolution. But he had good cause to be enthusiastic about what was unique in Iran’s defiance of modernity. The Revolution did not merely challenge the dominant capitalist global order; it also spurned the dominant Marxist

mode of protesting against it. It is true that the Iranian Revolution’s genetic pool contained the DNA of Islamist politics that was later expressed in Iran and elsewhere as “archaic fascism.” But it is also true that its generic methods and liberating spirit continued to inspire velvet revolutions that finished off many a lingering despotism, including that of the “actually existing socialism” in Central and Eastern Europe. The Iranian Revolution proved that all the armies and secret police of a modern state and its powers of surveillance and superpower backers in the wings are powerless when the “general will” of a people stirs. Foucault did not succeed as the Revolution’s “prophet of good fortune,” but he was hardly more deceived than those who portrayed the revolution as a reactionary hiccup. Foucault still stands as the philosopher of Iran’s revolutionary moment. He did not offer a satisfactory diagnosis of its ills, even when the symptoms must have been singularly obvious. But he did succeed at his more modest goal of being “present” as a new era of world history was ushered in.

Afary and Anderson’s choice of the Foucault moment of the Iranian Revolution is an inspired one. The reader will bond with this book for the same reasons that cathected Foucault to the Iranian Revolution. How should a Westerner laden with misgivings about the project of modernity evaluate the Iranian rejection of that project? The authors argue that this brand of rejecting modernity was not as novel as Foucault thought; that indeed it echoed one of the oldest forms of rejecting modernity prevalent in Eastern Europe: fascism with a religious patina. Rather than celebrating the revival of “political spirituality,” as Afary and Anderson imply, the Iranian Revolution should have filled Foucault with foreboding about a career of critiquing modernity. The philosopher had spent decades listening for false notes in modernity’s booming claims to liberate and actualize humanity in chambers of its political, cultural, and social institutions. And yet, he should have considered the anti-modern revolution in Iran with more skepticism and less rapt, slavish, attention.

Could Foucault have known that the modern panopticon that was being dismantled in Iran would soon be replaced and retrofitted with a new torture chamber? Could he have known that despite the proclamations of rev-

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olutionary intelligentsia a theocratic “Khomeini government” was indeed in the cards for Iran? Let’s just say that if he was deceived about this, he was in good company. The first prime minister of revolution, Mehdi Bazargan, to whom Foucault’s famous letter of protest is addressed to (pp. 260–63), complained in a private session (summer 1992) to the author of this review that Khomeini “deceived us all, that is, he deceived all but the devil himself.” Afary and Anderson don’t expect Foucault to have suddenly reversed a career of critiquing modernity at the threshold of this massive, anti-modern revolution. What they do fault him for is missing the dying canary in the mine—the trampling of women’s rights in Iran should have alarmed Foucault. It did not. The authors trace this failure to the blind spot that Foucault had allowed to grow in his privileged, male homosexual field of vision.

Maxim Rodnison (whose critical essays along with the compendium of Foucault’s writings on Iran are included in an informative appendix to the present book) lays the blame on Foucault’s lack of familiarity with the hidden authoritarianism of an Islamic state. For the sources of Foucault’s naiveté, however, one needs not to look even that far. In an interview conducted in 1978 in Tehran (p.186), Foucault called the liberal democratic industrial capitalism “the harshest, most savage, most selfish, most dishonest, oppressive society one could possibly imagine.” The poverty of imagination underlying such a statement is breathtaking. Without abandoning one line of Foucault’s voluminous critiques of modernity and with all the due respect to postmodernism, it would not be hard for non-Westerner intellectuals to imagine a harsher, more savage, more selfish, more dishonest and, more oppressive society. And once they got over their idealism, they too would choose boring, slightly oppressive, slightly mendacious leafy suburbs of Paris, London, New York or Los Angeles over a utopian “political spirituality” that “takes nothing from Western philosophy, from its juridical and revolutionary foundations” (pp. 186–7).