

Convulsing Bodies: Religion and Resistance in Foucault



By using religion to get at the core concepts of Michel Foucault's thinking, this book offers a strong alternative to the way that the philosopher's work is read across the humanities. Foucault was famously interested in Christianity as both the rival to ancient ethics and the parent of modern discipline and was always alert to the hypocrisy and the violence in churches. Yet many readers have ignored how central religion is to his thought, particularly with regard to human bodies and how they are shaped. The point is not to turn Foucault into some sort of believer or to extract from him a fixed thesis about religion as such. Rather, it is to see how Foucault engages religious rhetoric page after page even when religion is not his main topic. When readers follow his allusions, they can see why he finds in religion not only an object of critique, but a perennial provocation to think about how speech works on bodies and how bodies resist. Arguing that Foucault conducts experiments in writing to frustrate academic expectations about history and theory, Mark Jordan gives equal weight to the performative and theatrical aspects of Foucault's writing or lecturing. How does Foucault stage possibilities of self-transformation? How are his books or lectures akin to the rituals and liturgies that he dissects in them? *Convulsing Bodies* follows its own game of hide-and-seek with the agents of totalizing systems (not least in the academy) and gives us a Foucault who plays with his audiences as he plays for them or teaches them.

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