

Honours Dissertation

Blogging ourselves into subjection

A Foucauldian analysis of the dismissal of Heather Armstrong

Peter Fletcher

Student No. 0810 4984

Supervisors: Matthew Allen & Michele Willson

This dissertation is submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Media, Society and Culture)(Honours), majoring in Internet Studies at the School of Media, Culture and Creative Arts Curtin University of Technology, Perth.

October, 2008

Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is a true account of my own research and contains no work that has previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution, other than work which may have been produced by me in preparatory Honours coursework.

Peter Fletcher

I declare this work is now ready for submission

Matthew Allen

Abstract

In early 2002, Heather Armstrong (then Heather Hamilton) was fired from her job as a result of things she said about her work and colleagues on her personal website. Her firing sparked off considerable debate, particularly on the Internet, about the rights and wrongs of terminating employment on the basis of the contents of a personal blog. Much of this debate centred around the legality of the sacking counterposed against a blogger's rights to free speech and privacy.

This thesis will attempt to analyse the role of Armstrong's blogging in her dismissal but will do so by asking how it can be understood from the perspective of Michel Foucault's theories on power, subjectivity, and technologies of the self. By so doing I hope to step outside the constraints of legal and human rights discourses in an attempt to discover something about this dismissal that is more than just a compromise between polar opposites.

I hope to find that Armstrong's blogging was a form of resistance to individualising pastoral power playing a significant factor in her dismissal; but in turn her blogging can be thought of as the creation of life as a work of art (*techne tou biou*) that requires various ascetic practices (*askesis*) to help one achieve a level of mastery. I propose that Armstrong's blogging is an example of *parrhesia* (fearless speech) that, through the technology of her blogging, became resistance to power and served to create Armstrong as a *basanos*, or touchstone, who poses controversial questions about the priorities of our culture.

Acknowledgements

If education is about readying individuals for the workforce I confess to feeling somewhat at sea, for this honours thesis appears to be only distantly related to developing some new skill I can sell to an employer. And yet somehow I feel well pleased by this lack, as if in the missing out I have gained a thing of immensely greater value than a docile workforce ready body.

That thing gained is a knowledge of myself that an honours thesis both gives and expects. The writing demands introspection, but it also demands accountability, creativity, and a willingness to take risks. It is a journey without an end despite the interruption of a conclusion that comes with handing in a completed thesis; and it is a journey that would be difficult indeed without the support of some wonderful and very special people to whom I wish to express my deepest gratitude.

To Michele Willson; thanks for giving me the latitude to explore but for patiently bringing me back to the task of clearly defining a thesis statement. To Matthew Allen; for your trust and support and for keeping me focussed during the winter of discontent that comes in the middle of the end. To Helen Merrick, for encouraging me to undertake honours in the first place and Doug Russell for introducing me to the world of subjectivity and agency, terms that meant nought to me twelve months ago. To my honours friends, Shama, Rowena, Bec, and Erin for their never ending words of encouragement and support. Finally a special thanks to Rita; your support and unconditional love will never be forgotten - I only love you.

Contents

Introduction	1
Power and subjection on dooce	8
Blogging as fearless speech	28
Conclusion	38
References	41

Introduction

On February 25, 2002 Heather Armstrong¹ was working as a graphic designer for a firm in Los Angeles, California. On February 26 she was fired. Although being fired is not unusual, and rarely noteworthy, Armstrong's dismissal nevertheless made headlines in newspapers and journals across the USA and started a worldwide debate fueled by, and conducted on, the Internet where it all began.

In early 2001 she started a blog² at www.dooce.com and quickly gained a following from readers who enjoyed her witty and often sarcastic observations about life as a recovering Mormon and a bored, belligerent, and often constipated worker. With a style that contained more than a hint of aggression and resentment, particularly toward the Mormon church³ in which she was raised, she quickly upset members of her family who read one of her "an anti-Mormon diatribe[s]" (Armstrong, 2001a). This style of writing carried over to her reflections on her work and colleagues and it is evident that one or more of these work-related blog posts were brought to the attention of her boss and lead to her dismissal⁴.

It is important to note that at no time did she mention the name of her firm or identify any of her fellow workers. Even to this day, and despite repeated requests from reporters, Armstrong has refused to publicly reveal the identity of her employer⁵. Furthermore, Armstrong maintained her blog in her own time, using her own computer equipment and Internet connection. There appears to be no allegation

¹ Heather Hamilton married in 2002 changing her name to Heather Armstrong. For the sake of uniformity I refer to her throughout this thesis as Heather Armstrong.

² The word 'blog' is a contraction of the words 'web' and 'log'. Some still refer to blogs as weblogs.

³ In this thesis the term "Mormon church" is used to denote The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, a religious organisation founded on Christianity with headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, USA.

⁴ The term "dooiced" is now commonly used to describe a person being fired as a result of something they publish on the Internet.

⁵ Scoble (2006, p. 181) claims that Armstrong was blogging "about her colleagues at Yahoo!".

on the part of the company that Armstrong used their resources for the purpose of maintaining her blog.

Heather Armstrong is by no means the only person to be fired because of a personal blog. Jessica Cutler, on her blog the *Washingtonienne*, revealed the details of her sexual encounters with a number of individuals holding positions of power in Washington D.C.. Cutler was officially fired for the misuse of government computer equipment, but the sensitive nature of her revelations undoubtedly caused concern to her managers (Witt, 2004). Then there was Ellen Simonetti, who was fired for publishing “inappropriate” photos of herself wearing her Delta Airlines uniform (Simonetti, 2004). Each, in their own way, achieved a degree of notoriety as a result of their firing, and, like Armstrong, each sparked off considerable public comment and debate about the fairness of their dismissal.

The public comment about Armstrong’s sacking is generally shaped through legal and human rights discourses. Those who see the dismissal as arising from the legal rights and responsibilities provided by employment law refer to relevant legislation to justify their belief that her dismissal was fair or otherwise. In the United States the issue of dismissing an employee blogger is often couched in terms of the rights of employers to terminate employment based on broad powers granted them in “at will” employment contracts (Clineburg & Hall, 2005). Equally, human rights commentators, such as Bruce Barry (2007), argue that “at will” employment contracts provide employers with too much power and the resultant routine and systemic censorship has unnecessarily constrained and impeded free speech in the American workplace.

It is in the court of public opinion, though, that views about Armstrong’s dismissal become most polarised. A visit to the website Metafilter (2002) reveals a vigorous and often thought-provoking community debate about the merits of her firing. One after another, people express their opinions about the contents of Armstrong’s blog, about the wisdom of posting work-related material to her website,

about her rights to free speech, and about the rights of her employer to bring her employment to an end. Some support her actions:

If Heather was discreet in what she wrote (and I believe she was: she didn't mention the company or co-workers by name) then what she wrote is her business. If she completed her work, she fulfilled her end of the bargain -- the company pays her for the work she does. I don't see how they can think they have any say in what she thinks (Badmichelle);

while others are openly critical:

Not suprised (sic). I'd have fired her - she sounds like she hates the job (Spoon);

and still others reflect on the public nature of a personal blog:

As personal as her blog was (and man! was it personal), it was by no means private. And regardless of how careful she was not to mention her company, et cetera by name, her postings were still very much public... moreover, *_she_* is a very real person, and making the connection would hardly be difficult (silusGrok).

Although these comments are generally informed by popular ideology the fact they are published on a blog is noteworthy in itself, for it is this technology of self-publication that appealed to Armstrong and served as a key ingredient in her dismissal.

A blog is a web site consisting of a number of individual pages or 'posts', each having their own archival 'permalink'⁶, and usually displayed in reverse chronological order (Wibbels, 2006, p. 8). Posts most often contain a heading, content (text, photographs, videos), the time and date of the post, links to related blog posts,

⁶ A permalink is the permanent Internet address of an individual page. Permalinks allow other bloggers to link to a post with confidence that its address will not change.

tags⁷, and a facility for readers to post comments. Blogs provide a means for individuals to publish and share their thoughts quickly and easily and they serve to create a conversation of sorts between a blog author and their audience. The conversational quality of an individual blog is enhanced through links to and from other blogs, transforming local conversations into world-wide discussions occurring on the blogosphere⁸.

Often blogs allow readers to become a subscriber utilising Real Simple Syndication (RSS) 'feeds' that create an alert, via a feed reader, to the existence of a new post. RSS feeds also allow the contents of a blog to be syndicated (Scoble, 2006, p. 212). Although a post might be deleted from the original blog it may remain in existence in other locations across the Internet as a result of an RSS feed. Through these and other mechanisms the ephemeral nature of digital text is given permanency (Flynn, 2006, p. 128).

Although early blogs often took the form of basic pages of hyper-text markup language (HTML) containing links to Internet resources (Wright, 2006, p. 11), modern blogging software has revolutionised their production. Using freely available software⁹, almost anyone with Internet access can produce an attractive blog relatively easily. In a significant way, this abundance of free software has led to an explosion in the number of blogs.

Blog search specialist, Technorati (2008), claims to be actively tracking over 112.8 million blogs; a number they say is growing at the rate of 175 000 per day¹⁰. They further claim that the worldwide collection of bloggers create over 1.6 million posts

⁷ Heather Armstrong uses the tag "dooeed" to allow readers to quickly locate all the blog posts related to her dismissal.

⁸ The term blogosphere describes the world wide collection of blogs.

⁹ Free blogging software is available from WordPress, Movable Type, and Blogger to name just a few.

¹⁰ Technorati does not provide details on the number of blogs that become inactive or that are deleted each day. Further they provide no indication as to the types of blogs that are included within their tracking. For example, they do not clarify if micro-blogging platforms, such as Twitter, Jaiku, or Pownce, and blogs located within social networking sites, such as Facebook and My Space, are included in their statistics.

per day. Pew Internet Research, in a small but “nationally representative” sample of Internet users in the United States, found that 8 percent of users above the age of 18 years - about 12 million - maintained a blog (Lenhart & Fox, 2006 p. 1). However, numbers, on their own, tell only part of the story. Equally important is the motivation behind the popularity of blogs.

Whilst there are a variety of motivations for blogging a large number of bloggers do so for personal reasons. The Pew research mentioned above claims that 37 percent of the total US blogger population cite ““my life and experiences” as the primary topic of their blog” (Lenhart & Fox, 2006, p. 1). In a similar vein Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, and Swartz (2004), in an ethnographic study involving in-depth interviews of 23 bloggers located in and around Stanford University in the US, found the emergence of similar motivations. They note that reasons for blogging include the documentation of a person’s life, “commentary” on matters from technology to the Bible, as a cathartic outlet for “thoughts and feelings”, and the development of community. It is this ever growing number of personal blogs - focussed on life and its experiences - that have the potential to create tension between employers and employees.

Blogs about an employee’s personal life usually pose few challenges for employers. However, tensions arise between employers and employees when a personal blog begins to comment on an employee’s work, as was the case with Heather Armstrong's blog. These tensions include disputes over what constitutes acceptable free speech in the workplace, the degree to which a company has a right to protect the integrity of their brand and trade secrets, and the extent to which a company is entitled to impose its sovereignty over a person’s private life to protect their legitimate commercial interests.

Inevitably, commentators attempt to resolve to these tensions by urging employers to clearly articulate their policy on employee blogging, therefore proactively removing some of the legal ambiguities involved should an employee be

fired (Clineburg & Hall, 2005, Flynn, 2006). Others argue for stronger legal recognition of rights to free speech maintaining that, whilst legal and commercial legislation serves an important function in society, more workplace free speech would benefit society by creating a more politically and socially engaged citizenry (Barry, 2007a, Barry, 2007b).

These arguments rationally appeal to the maintenance of existing capitalist structures, to the assertion of fundamental human rights, and to the emancipatory potential of labour. However, they are constrained by the limits of the legal, capitalist, and human rights discourses in which they arise. Insofar as these arguments bring about improvements to individual and collective well-being they serve a worthwhile purpose, but their failure to interrogate discursive boundaries leads to the development of only marginal and incremental solutions. Therefore, in an attempt to understand the dynamics at play in Armstrong's dismissal, I intend performing a textual analysis of her blog through the lens provided by the theories of Michel Foucault.

Throughout his academic career Foucault produced a significant corpus of work on a diverse range of topics, but it is his work on the relationship between power and the subject, together with his thoughts on technologies of the self, that are of most import here. Although his work is criticised by some as failing to acknowledge that individuals who are subject to power are themselves knowledgeable agents capable of resistance and influence (Giddens, 1995), and of being overly reliant on an understanding of disciplinary practices as the negative operation of subjectifying power (McNay, 1994, p. 102), I contend that his concepts and theories provide a valuable framework for the analysis of power relations and, therefore, of the dismissal of Heather Armstrong. As McHoul and Grace (1993, p. viii) suggest, Foucault is "...first and foremost a philosopher who does philosophy as interrogative *practice* rather than as a search for essentials." His concepts, then, provide a way to think about problems rather than providing answers to them. It is not a matter of arguing between the black and white of legal and human rights positions and ending

up with an answer that is a shade of grey. Rather, my hope for this thesis is to allow Foucault's theories to say something new about Armstrong and the blogging that brought about her dismissal.

The body of this thesis will contain two chapters, each of which will analyse portions of the text on Armstrong's blog that in some way relates to her dismissal. In Chapter One I will analyse her blog through an understanding of Foucault's theories on the effects of power and the subject. In particular I will focus on the working of pastoral power as a form of individualising power which uses the revelation of truth as a strategy of subjectivation. It will be my assertion that Armstrong's dismissal was but a parenthetical moment in the shaping and reshaping of a subject position relative to the power of the Mormon church. I will also outline the centrality of resistance and insubordination to Foucault's thinking on the relationship between the subject and power and demonstrate how Armstrong's blog can be conceived of both as a strategy of resistance and as a means for the creation of a subject position temporarily free from the influence of power. Chapter Two will analyse Armstrong's blogging from the perspective of Foucault's writings on technologies of the self and his belief that life can be lived as a work of art. I hope to show that Armstrong's blogging can be thought of as a practice of the self and the creation and articulation of herself as a work of art. Finally, in the conclusion, I will propose that, through the creativity of her resistance, her frank and fearless speech, and the artistry of her living, Armstrong can be thought of as a *basanos*, a touchstone, whose telling of the truth forces others to consider their relationship to their own words and actions.

Power and subjection on dooce

Heather Armstrong's dismissal is directly connected to the working of power. Apparently her boss took umbrage at the contents of her blog and fired her claiming that her negativity was affecting the morale of younger staff members. He had the power to make and enforce the rules. Armstrong did not. End of story. However, this account of Armstrong's dismissal relies on a negative understanding of the operation of power, one that asserts power as law and taboo, proscription and prohibition. It is an understanding that explains Armstrong's dismissal simply and conveniently, but it is an understanding that disguises the working of power through and on Armstrong as a subject. In this chapter, therefore, I plan to interrogate the operations of power in Armstrong's dismissal through the lens of Foucault's theories on the relationship between power and the subject. By so doing I hope to show that, through her blogging, Armstrong struggled against a form of individualising power that led to her dismissal; and these struggles underscored an underlying freedom from which she developed a variety of inter-laced subject positions that were temporarily free from the influences of power.

In the first section of this chapter I will outline Foucault's theories making simultaneous reference both to the subject and to power. The circular interplay between power and the subject proposed by Foucault (1982) is amplified in Judith Butler's (1997, p. 15) work wherein she maintains that power is both constitutive of the subject and a condition of its becoming; but can only exist with the emergence of the subject. This temporal simultaneity of the emergence of power and the subject is critically distinct from the history-laden, thinking subject of René Descartes. For a thinking subject in a world of objects, power can only every be an external force; and it is this view of power that shapes many of the popular observations about Heather Armstrong and her dismissal. Equally this Cartesian view of the subject constrains

the potential for creative new perspectives on the role of blogging in the shaping of power and subjectivity.

The second section will be a textual analysis of Armstrong's blog focussing on those posts that reveal her in the process of creating a series of changing subject positions relative to the power of both her employer and the Mormon church. Through a critical application of Foucault's theories I will argue that Armstrong's dismissal, while itself the supposedly rational exercise of workplace power, was just one of the many subjectivating strategies against which Armstrong resisted. I will argue that, in Armstrong's experience and as evidenced on her blog, individualising strategies of power appeared to be at their most potent and effective in the form of "pastoral power" (Foucault, 1982). I hope to demonstrate that this form of power, through promising both eternal salvation of the soul and secular salvation through financial well-being, attempted to normalise and constrain Armstrong's behaviour; and it is this normalisation which Armstrong resisted through her blogging. Finally, I will propose, based on the works of Phillips, how the contents of Armstrong's blog can be thought of as a "rhetorical maneuver" (Phillips, 2006) which itself served to shape the workings of power.

What, then, does Foucault say about the workings of power on the subject? In explicating the link between power and subjectivity, Foucault emphasised that he was not attempting to outline a theory of power, which he believed would imply that power as an object pre-exists relations of power, but, rather, to establish the history and modes by which individuals became the subjects of power. He argued that power is a category that warranted critique to establish how it works productively in society rather than simply acting as law and taboo. Power, he maintained, is "...a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions...a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action...[a] set of actions upon other actions"; and it is government that structures, defines, and limits the field of these potential actions available to the other to achieve the desired strategic ends. The essential ingredient for the exercise of power is

freedom, from which emerges a mutual stimulation and antagonism leading to struggle: “At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom” (Foucault, 1982, p. 790).

To understand power and to develop what he termed a “new economy of power relations” (1982, p. 780) Foucault proposed analysing these strategies of resistance, antagonism, and struggle rather than analysing power from the perspective of its internal rationality. These struggles, he believed, were more than just a general struggle against authority. Rather, they were struggles against a form of power that pervaded everyday life and that created subjects from individuals. While he recognised that subject formation occurred as a consequence of “forces of production, class struggle, and ideological structures”, he maintained that these forces were not the final expression of power.

Rather, he posited the operation of power to be “complex and circular”, affecting and being affected by intertwined patterns of interrelated subject positions. For Foucault (1982, p. 793), power relations are diffuse, multivalent, and deeply “rooted in the system of social networks”, rather than only acting as a structure *supra* to, and acting on, the social body. Society without diverse and complex relations of power is simply an abstraction. Therefore, any analysis of power relationships must account for their pervasiveness amongst “individuals, within families, in pedagogical relationships, [and] political life” (Foucault, 1997, p. 283). Foucault believed that the subject should not be thought of as the individual: to do so would be to assign priority to a Cartesian view of the individual as a rational, thinking machine in a world of preexistent objects. Such a move reifies power as a fundamentally negative pre-existent force and denies the productive possibilities of power and discourse in and through which the subject emerges.

Importantly, Foucault believed that the subject is always emerging from discourse in an iterative, creative becoming. He maintained that objects emerge

through discursive relations which operate at the limits of discourse and which “determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object, in order to deal with them, name them, explain them, etc.” (Foucault, 1969, p. 51). In other words, “discourse creates subjects by first creating subject *positions* from which to speak” (Vivian, 2000, p. 313). Rather than understanding the subject as an interiorised, thinking machine counterposed against a world of exterior objects, Vivian contends that the subject is “a position or location from which to speak that has been created from the social...a formalization of expression...The subject, then, is a form of expression, but a form of expression that relies upon the conditions engendered by a particular discursive regime.” For Foucault (1969, p. 47), objects do not exist anterior to a discourse: “it would be quite wrong to see discourse as a place where previously established objects are laid one after another like words on a page.” Nor are they in some way hidden, awaiting someone to discover their presence. Rather, objects emerge at the very margins of discourse, at the point of the interconnection of interrelated planes of discursive practice that are governed by the rules of their discursive creation. It is here that both the subject and resistance to subjectivity arises.

It is through discourse that individuals¹¹ are provided with a subject position from which to assert a coherent social existence; but simultaneously, it is discourse that provides them with the means to resist this subject position. Both the subject and power are immanent in one another and rely on each other for their ongoing and repetitive creation and emergence. According to Poster (1995, p. 79-84) the constitution of the subject through discourse as a “rational, autonomous individual” is directly imbricated with the exercise of power. In creating this connection he established that power works within discourse to “position the subject in relation to structures of domination in such a way that those structures may *then* act upon him or her.” However, the subject thus iteratively created is never fully closed and complete but “always open, excessive, multiple” and open to “reconfiguration and

¹¹ I use the term “individual” as a placeholder for the subject following the lead of Butler

resistance". In Foucault, this beginning-less, iterative process of subject creation and resistance can, in places, be dense and difficult to imagine; and, therefore, I turn to the work of Louis Althusser to provide another perspective on the circular interplay between the subject and power.

Whereas Foucault proposed the discursive creation of the subject, Althusser advanced the doctrine of interpellation to explain the way subjects are created through being hailed, through language, into a position subject to power (Butler, 1997, p. 107-131). The interpellation of the individual-as-subject occurs through linguistic performance and can be understood through the allegorical example of a student and teacher. When asked a question by a teacher, the student must "stand into" the position of a rational human agent in order to stand into the position of a student and thence to provide an answer: "the subject [is] addressed in a position and/or provoked to an enunciative stance in a manner that obscures the position or the stance" (Poster 1995, p. 80). The response to the call from authority requires of the hearer a prior readiness to turn toward the voice of authority based on the "self-ascription of guilt" or "movement of conscience"; and this acceptance of guilt is performed in order to "gain a purchase on identity", which, in turn, is provided a "social existence...as a subject...purchased only through a guilty embrace of the law, where guilt guarantees the intervention of the law, and, hence, the continuation of the subject's existence" (Butler, 1997, pp. 107, 109, 112). Conscience, according to Butler, "is fundamental to the production and regulation of the citizen-subject, for conscience turns the individual around, makes him/her available to the subjectivating reprimand. The law redoubles that reprimand, however: the turning back is a turning toward". The conscience is developed through the mastery of, and submission to, linguistic skills, learned both at school and at work, and which ensure a form of submission to the "rules of the dominant ideology" (p. 115, 116). The development and knowledge of a person's conscience is, then, a key technology of power; and Foucault believes that knowledge of a person's conscience is central to a particular form of power - pastoral power.

Foucault (1976, p. 93) made an important link between truth and power: “we are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth.” These games of confession and truth told to power are what mark our individuality and divide and classify us within society. Thus, Foucault (1982, p. 783) was able to establish a connection between the pastoral shepherding of the flock within the Christian church and the development of individualising and totalising power structures within states and other institutions. He contended that, while the influence of the ecclesiastical superstructure of the Christian church has faded, the functioning of pastoral power continues beyond the church through a pastoral care that supplants salvation in the next life with a secularised form of salvation taking the form of personal well-being and individual wealth and prosperity in the present life. For Foucault, pastoral power “cannot be exercised without knowing the inside of people’s minds, without exploring their souls, without making them reveal their innermost secrets. It implies a knowledge of the conscience and an ability to direct it” (Foucault, 1982, p. 783). It is the confession of the totality of an individual’s truth that is the foundation of the individualising power characteristic of modern medicine, psychiatry, and employment practices. On the one hand the confession of truth individualises the truth teller, on the other, it is used within relationships of power as a means to shape individuality into specific patterns and forms. Through this process the governance of power is internalised by the subject; a point that Foucault made clear in his meditations on the panopticon.

Foucault contributed significantly to understandings of the effects of power on those subject to its influence in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). In particular, his concept of panopticism, based on Bentham’s model of the ideal prison, is useful in that it provides a schematic through which to understand the dynamic nature of the workings of power in, on, and through the subject. His notion of the internalised authoritative gaze is of special relevance in that it provides a way to understand one of the means by which the behaviour of subordinates is shaped by authority.

The panopticon was to be a circular building with cells facing inwards and configured in such a way that their occupants would be unable to see or communicate with one another. In turn, each and every prisoner could be observed by a person in authority located in a central viewing tower. Bentham's panopticon was unique because its architecture ensured those under observation could never know if, when, and by whom they were being observed.

Inasmuch as Bentham foresaw the panopticon becoming a real building with tangible benefits to society, Foucault set out to reveal how such a concept might be applied to understanding the interplay between power and the subject. Foucault believed that, within disciplinary systems of governance - the military, the factory, the asylum - each person is assigned to individualised spaces and subjected to visible and ongoing surveillance and control. It is this individualisation - the marking of a person as good or bad, normal or abnormal, sane or insane - and the consequential assignment of marked individuals to their places that Foucault saw the architecture of the panopticon describing. Unlike the visible and constant surveillance of a factory though, the panopticon combined the individualising effect of assigning each to their place with a new system of surveillance that magnified power through concealing power. Foucault maintained that panoptic power was produced not through constant surveillance, which he saw as unnecessary, but through the creation of an architectural arrangement whereby power became "visible and unverifiable" and that "induced in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). Importantly Foucault believed that the efficiency of panoptic power resulted from the way those who were aware of being subjected to its gaze reach a point of self-governance, in effect becoming not only the prisoner but the governor of the prison. For Foucault (1977, p. 205), the panopticon was not a building to be constructed as a "dream building", but rather, a metaphor through which the working of power might be understood: "it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form...[,] it is in fact a figure of political technology that must be detached from any specific use." This, I believe, is the key to understanding Foucault's panopticism, not as a prison from

which it is impossible to escape, but as technology of power; a technology that is always emergent, unstable, and vulnerable to resistance.

Foucault (1982, p. 794) claimed that power is best understood through the analysis of forms of resistance to power that pervades everyday life and which produces individuals as subjects. For Foucault, “every power relationship implies, at least *in potentia*, a strategy of struggle”. Resistance is diffuse, complex, and disparate having, “no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances...distributed in irregular fashion...spread over time and space at varying densities...producing cleavages...fracturing unities and effecting regroupings” (Foucault, 1978, p. 96). Insofar as power is productive of the subject, it also produces its own resistance through the same complexity through which the subject emerges¹².

Although *The Subject and Power* focussed on the effects of power on the subject, it did not outline the means by which subjects might assert agency to instigate a struggle. In this vein Butler (1997, pp. 12-14) asks: “How is it that the power upon which the subject depends for existence and which the subject is compelled to reiterate turns against itself in the course of that reiteration?” In response, she asserts that, although power enacts the subject through subjection, it is also used productively by the subject to create itself as the precondition of agency and the “guarantor of its resistance and opposition”. Subordination, therefore, becomes an important strategy on the part of the subject to obtain agency. For Butler, “the subject emerges both as the *effect* of a prior power and as the *condition of possibility* for a radically conditioned form of agency” (p. 14).

Thought of in this way, power delivers to the subject the very agency it attempts to suppress. Outlining how individuals take advantage of the agency and uncertainty within and between subject positions, Phillips develops a line of thought

¹² Butler posits that the incomplete nature of discursive subject production demands an ongoing reiteration of the subject; and it is this iterative process which “becomes the non-place of subversion, the possibility of a re-embodying of the subjectivating norm that can redirect its normativity” (Butler, 1997, p. 99).

that he describes as the “rhetorical maneuver” wherein the individual occupying a subject position invokes or performs a subject form inappropriate to the subject position. The rhetorical manoeuvre relies on the degree to which a subject position remains open, flexible, and negotiable. Phillips cites the example of an individual holding a subject position as a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) who, whilst in that position, speaks as a mother and, therefore, from a possibly inappropriate subject position; a “movement in which one violates the constraints of one subject position by articulating the discourse more appropriate to another subject position” (p. 312). The rhetorical manoeuvre, then, provides a temporary space of freedom, but in a circular, spiraling manner, this momentary freedom yet again returns the already and always incomplete subject back to its triadic struggle with power.

Foucault (1982, p. 794) believed that struggle and insubordination are the preconditions for the existence of power relations: “It [is] not...possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape”; and it is moments of insubordination that I now wish to identify and explore on Heather Armstrong’s blog. In particular I want to locate and analyse Armstrong’s struggle against a form of individualising power - pastoral power - that I believe played a significant role in her relationship to both her church and her work. I also want to identify how power served to shape Armstrong’s subjectivity, but equally, how Armstrong used “a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom” (Foucault, 1982, p. 794) to assert a radical new individuality and temporarily escape from the influence of power. Firstly, though, I want to establish, as anticipated by Foucault and evidenced on Armstrong’s blog, that power, through a never ending series of strategies, pervaded and influenced every aspect of her life.

On the day of her dismissal Armstrong posted to her blog: “[t]wo weeks ago an anonymous person emailed every vice president of my company to inform them that I had written unsavory things on my personal website” (Armstrong, 2002a). Her statement sounds almost benign in its matter-of-fact approach, but it holds the seeds

of a fruitful new understanding about the workings of power that saw her fired. Foucault (1982, p. 288) believed that power only exists as actions taken to affect the actions of another. In Armstrong's case the most obvious evidence of such actions upon actions is the specific act of her firing. Drastic as this action might appear, it was nonetheless an action taken to curb the perceived negative influence of Armstrong's blogging. Armstrong claims this fact was made clear during her termination interview: "They explained that the company had a zero-tolerance policy about negativity (?), that my website was influencing the younger, more impressionable members of the company, and that the CEO demanded that I be terminated at once" (Armstrong, 2002b). The actions of Armstrong's CEO is entirely consistent with Foucault's assertion that the exercise of power, along with using seduction and consensus, at its most extreme "constrains or forbids absolutely" (p. 789).

However, the application of executive powers by the CEO was by no means the only 'action upon action' in this story. The anonymous emailer, by alerting Armstrong's managers to the existence of her blog, also applied an action to Armstrong's actions with the intention of achieving some form of unstated outcome, which itself may have been more or less than what was eventually achieved through Armstrong's dismissal. Additionally, Armstrong's direct supervisor and the company's human resources manager each played their part in shaping their own desired outcomes. It is evident that both met with Armstrong between the arrival of the email and her dismissal and both took various actions that served to shape Armstrong's own actions. Both served simultaneously as agents and instruments of the power flows at work within Armstrong's company; and these power flows served to secure the approval of the CEO through prosecuting Armstrong's dismissal.

While undocumented within Armstrong's blog, evidence exists of even wider relationships of power acting on Armstrong both at the time of, and subsequent to,

her dismissal. In an interview with Rebecca Blood (2005), Armstrong claims to having “sunk into a suffocating depression” following her firing:

I had been so successful up to that point in my life, and I thought I was happy with myself, with the choices I had made to get to that place in my life, and all of a sudden I was out of a job, not because of the economy or cutbacks but because I had done something really stupid. I was asking myself all sorts of questions, like, "Who the hell are you?" and "Is this what you really wanted?"

Armstrong here unwittingly points to the dispersed network of discourses that serve to create and shape a Western view of success. These discourses develop and support hegemonic networks of power through an array of power relations including the family, commerce, and significantly, the church.

Although the stated aim of the The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (2008) is to guide individuals to eternal heavenly life through “help[ing] people come into Christ”, I argue that the Mormon church was, for Armstrong, the embodiment of a form of individualising power - pastoral power - that operated in the same fashion within her workplace. Armstrong notes on her blog the pervasive influence of the church operating through and on her family - both immediate and extended - each of which were attempting to control many aspects of her life; including maintaining an abstinence from sex and coffee. Additionally she indicates the extent of the attempts by her family to influence her formative years through the invocation and recital of church dogma and her attendance of Brigham Young University, an institution that claims to “provide an education in an atmosphere consistent with the ideals and principles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” and that requires its students and staff to abide by a code of honour reflective of these ideals ““at all times and . . . in all places.” (Mosiah 18:9)” (Brigham Young University, 2005).

In a very real manner the pastoral power operating in Armstrong’s workplace and church had the same ends. In both instances they involved “games of confession

and truth" (Foucault, 1976, p. 93) wherein her self revelations provided the marks of her individuality and allowed her to be classified as good or bad, diligent or lazy. As noted above, the Mormon church claims as its primary purpose the salvation of the individual to eternal life, but it also has the secular purpose of helping its adherents to live a happy life in the present existence. This secularisation of salvation is a key strategy of pastoral power within a capitalist setting, providing the promise for future wealth and prosperity in exchange for the truth of one's self through which the confessing individual is provided an individualised place within the commercial system. Her blogging, then, became a form of insubordination and a resistance to this pastoral power.

Armstrong's blog is laden with references to her formative years as a Mormon. In parts of her blog she refers to herself as a recovering Mormon. In this description she creates the possibility that she will never fully cease being a Mormon, that an increasingly small part of her will always be a Mormon in need of repair. Pastoral power was, in a direct manner, central to the shaping of Armstrong's individuality. Armstrong comments on her childhood as being heavily influenced by the "indoctrination of My Mormon Upbringing" (Armstrong, 2005a) and the central position afforded to personal and eternal salvation within the Mormon belief system. "[M]y eternal salvation was at risk with every thought and desire in my heart" (Armstrong, 2005b) and "I was afraid for my eternal salvation all day every day, in every thought and deed" (Armstrong, 2005c) are just two of the many references on Armstrong's blog to the pastoral care at work within the Mormon church. The salvation of the soul is central to Foucault's notion of pastoral power and, in its original ecclesiastical form and as evident within Armstrong's posts, is primarily concerned with the eternal salvation of the soul in a life beyond this existence. Necessarily, this form of power requires its subjects to tell the truth of themselves and Armstrong, out of a desire for a clean conscience, confesses to an older relative the details of some minor childhood indiscretions and repents following her first kiss. The revelations of even the most minute of one's deepest secrets is an essential aspect of the pastoral power at play in Armstrong's life and

became an important means by which the church came to know, and therefore control, her conscience and shape her individuality.

In parallel, pastoral power was at play within her work. Armstrong (2002b) records the occasion of a meeting between herself and her immediate supervisor following the discovery of her blog by her managers. She recalls the meeting as one that, although a “difficult discussion, full of tears and embarrassing confessions”, resulted in a “renewed sense of dedication to helping each other perform our jobs more successfully”. This commitment to the secular well-being of the individual, significantly achieved through self-confession, is an act of power anticipated in Foucault. Through the lifetime care of the individual power disguises its operation until the conscience is known through the confession. On the one hand the church actively worked to mold her behaviour to provide her salvation in the next life, on the other, her work sought to shape her attitude to help her achieve success in the present life. Both shared the common aspiration of providing Armstrong with a form of salvation and both required Armstrong to confess her truth to power. Through her self-confessions Armstrong revealed her inner secrets - all that was within her mind - and these revelations became a key resource for the operation of subjectifying and individualising power.

Although it appears that Armstrong was in the process of self-re-creation, of asserting a new subjectivity and inscribing a radical new individuality, there existed a parallel and ongoing process of subject creation; one established by both her employer and the Mormon church many years before. This process was, for Armstrong, the beginning of the “government of individualisation” against which, through a complex of subject positions, Armstrong maintained a persistent struggle. Foucault (1982, p. 781) proposed that struggles against this form of government were struggles against a “form of power [that] applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals

subjects.” Armstrong’s struggles, then, were against the power of a church-imposed individualisation which dictated her sexual activity, her diet, her vocabulary, and her spiritual beliefs. She was, as far as the Mormon church and her family were concerned, first and foremost a Mormon, and therefore subject to their control. In a similar manner her employer sought to remold Armstrong and to create within her a part that was “irreducible” (Foucault, 1980 p. 276); an employee who could be directed when to work, where to sit, what to say, and how to behave.

I argue, therefore, that the development of Armstrong as an autonomous individual was a key strategy allowing both her employer and church to position her as a subject of power. In the case of the Mormon church, her subjection began at an early age. Armstrong comments throughout her blog on the influence of the church on her early life. Each time she affirmed her individuality as a Mormon, she also affirmed her subjectivity to the hegemonic power structure of her family and church. A corresponding process took place at her work where the hegemony of capitalism, consumerism, and societal expectation served to expand the reach of power such that her blogging activities came to be attached to her individuality and became the basis of a new subjectivity. So thorough was this attachment that Armstrong (2002) raised only the most mildly worded objection to the establishment by her employer of the subject position that led to her firing: “[b]ut I really don't feel like I have the right to be all that bitter. I made my bed; I'll lie in it...”. In a move of power anticipated in Foucault, the full force of her employer’s strategies of power were brought into play only after Armstrong’s individuality came to be ineluctably attached to both her blog and her position as a subject of her employer’s authority. Her individuality and identity had been shaped by power; but it was shaped through a performance in which Armstrong played a lead role.

Her blog served as a very public stage on which Armstrong performed a new subjectivity; a performance that drew a crowd, including her boss. Her employer’s presence was something that Armstrong anticipated with a kind of resigned dread.

She knew her boss might be in the audience, but her performance continued despite the self-consciousness caused by the possibility of his presence¹³.

It is this moment of awkward self-consciousness in the middle of a performance, the moment in which the gaze of authority is internalised, and in which the self takes up the role of the guard in the watchtower, that served to complete the process of individuation, subjectivation, and self-governance that Foucault believed was a key technology of power. It is to this panoptic process that Armstrong (2002) refers when she sheepishly concedes to an awareness that, at some point in the future, her blog might be “discovered” by her managers, and of taking steps directly indicative of an awareness of this possibility.

Armstrong outlines her initial defensive response to her firing: “...I had never mentioned the company or any employee by name, and that I had exaggerated several characteristics of the personalities showcased in a few of my posts.” Had Armstrong been of the belief that her blog would never be the subject of surveillance she would have no reason to obfuscate the identities of the individuals who became the subject matter of her blog posts. In the same vein she would have no reason to conceal the identity of her employer; a concealment that she maintains to the present day. These observations indicate the extent to which Armstrong, as a result of a belief that she *may* be the subject of her employers authoritative gaze, came to “assume... responsibility for the constraints of power” (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). Armstrong, in the moment in which she became an employee and therefore subject to her employer’s structures of power, became “the principle of [her] own subjection” (Foucault, 1977, p. 203). However, the fact that Armstrong was fired as a result of her blog, despite her apparent subjection as a subordinate, indicates that her subjectivity was in no way complete. Far from being a docile body meekly complying with her employer’s desire for sovereignty over more parts of her life, Armstrong enacted a degree of

13 Her performance despite the possibility of the presence of her boss is not unlike a self-conscious teenager dreading the presence of an over-bearing parent in the audience of a school play in which they are to perform the lead role.

agency and resistance to normative power borne from between the spaces of her always incomplete and fragmented subject positions. Her personal blog, then, through its emergent nature within commercial discourse, became a space for Armstrong to publicly articulate a form of resistance to the existing power strategies of her employer.

As an employee Armstrong's subject position both implicitly and explicitly demanded compliance to a code or manner of behaviour expected of someone occupying her subject position. Phillips (2006, p. 314) labels this adherence to an expected behaviour as the "subject form"; "that recognizable pattern of performance attached to a given [subject] position". Up to the point of her dismissal Armstrong had occupied two primary subject positions. Standing in a position of subjectivity as both a member of the Mormon church and an employee Armstrong was expected to adhere to certain standards and patterns of behaviour that defined her subject form. From the text of her blog it could reasonably be asserted that both her church and employer appeared committed to a strategy of finalising and closing off these subject positions thus assuring, through an ever increasing array of rules, regulations, and taboos, her continued submission to their technologies of power. However, any failure to close off her subject position became a key resource in Armstrong's strategies of resistance. Her blog, then, played a central role in Armstrong's struggles by providing a space in which to enunciate a subject position temporarily uninfluenced by power.

While her subject position as an employee provided Armstrong with an intelligible position, or social existence, within a discourse (Phillips, 2006, p. 314), there equally existed a broad variety of subject positions from which she could articulate this existence. For example, Armstrong self-describes as a daughter, a mother, a recovering Mormon, a gym member, and a partner and wife. The gaps between these subject positions, each of which are inhabited with their appropriate subject form, provided Armstrong the agency needed to resist a complex array of power strategies. I contend that her blog provided one such subject position that,

through its recency as a technology, allowed Armstrong to occupy a space of subjectivity that was, at least for a short time, relatively free from the technologies of power of her church and employer. Armstrong, as a blogger on a mission to assert a radical new subjectivity, was able to slip briefly under the radar of power.

Within her blog Armstrong documents some of the many frustrations that serve as the content and motivation for her writing. From “I hate that the Tech Producer doesn't know how to use email”, to “I hate that the Enabling Producer enables nothing but my never-ending agony”, and “I hate the way I can't agree to do anything...[i]t's a constant throwback to third grade”, Armstrong (2002c) appears intent on proffering complaint and accusation at her work, her colleagues, and, significantly, at herself. Her complaints cannot conclusively be described as struggle - people often complain with no commitment to affect an outcome. However, Armstrong indicates a preexisting and ongoing intention to have her say about what she perceived to be fundamental problems at her work despite the potential personal costs:

As for those of you who think I was stupid to post things on my website about my job and about co-workers: I refuse to live in fear. I refuse to be censored. I've lived my life far too long in fear of disrupting expectations. I made a conscious decision when I conceived dooce.com that I would never bow to the intimidation of others, including employers or pussy-ass cocksacks who think I should just stop complaining and be a good worker bee already. For those of you who think it wrong to speak up about matters that fundamentally bother you, go and join the fucking Mormon Church. Attend BYU. Take it up the ass and bleed. Whatever you do, don't read dooce.com, and certainly don't think for yourself. Scandalous! (Armstrong, 2002b)

It is apparent, therefore, that Armstrong was deeply troubled about various aspects pertaining to both her church and her work. In relation to her work - and I argue, her

church - rather than, or possibly in addition to, taking the matter up with her manager, she chose to express her “personal dissatisfaction” (Armstrong, 2002) on her blog. However, I contend that these expressions of dissatisfaction and antipathy were more than mere statements of political protest. Indeed her blog can be thought of as a creative application of a “rhetorical maneuver” (Phillips, 2006) as resistance to individualising power.

Armstrong’s subject positions within her work and church were, to some degree, open, flexible, and negotiable, and this provided an opening in which to creatively articulate a subject form inappropriate to her various subject positions. In a post entitled *Memoirs of a recovering Mormon*, Armstrong (2001b) notes the subject form she adopted during her university years which was reflected in her personal journal entries. Although Armstrong, as a ‘recovering Mormon’, appears embarrassed by the contents of her then hand-written personal journal - the entries were “pleading[s] with Heavenly Father to help me understand why I didn't fit in with everyone else at BYU” - her journal nevertheless demonstrates her compliance with the form expected of her in her position as a subject of the Mormon church; including an aversion to pre-marital sexual activity. In resisting the taboos and prohibitions of the church Armstrong used her blog to say things about the church and her family which, by her own admission, were offensive and upsetting¹⁴. These statements invoked a sexually active, profane, blasphemous subject form which was at odds with her subject position within the church and which served as a means of resistance to the individualising power of the church.

Similarly, in posts critical of her work colleagues, her managers, and her work, Armstrong developed a subject form that was antagonistic to her subject position as an employee. In the days prior to her dismissal Armstrong was counseled by her immediate supervisor about the contents of her blog and was advised during her termination meeting of the company’s zero-tolerance policy toward negative employee behaviour (Armstrong, 2002b). Although there is no evidence, in

14 Many of these posts were later deleted by Armstrong because of the offense they caused her family

Armstrong's account, of the existence of a formalised code of workplace behaviour, her description of these meetings indicates the existence of behavioural expectations that Armstrong's form evidently transgressed. Rather than fighting over a known and defined boundary line, as in the dialectics of a courtroom battle, Armstrong's use of the rhetorical manoeuvre problematised the already porous boundaries of her subject position. The transgression of these boundaries allowed Armstrong to occupy, albeit it briefly, a subject position exterior and beyond the influence of the strategies of power of her church and employer.

Armstrong's freedom was both temporary and relative. Through the praxis of legal and employment discourses her blog emerged as a unique mark of her identity and individuality by which she was categorised, marked by her own individuality, attached to her own identity, and turned once more into a subject (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). Armstrong, through her blogging, was categorised as negative and recalcitrant, made to see, through a series of interviews, that this was the 'truth' of her individuality - and then fired. However, as I have already suggested, Armstrong's struggle was not a struggle against her employer per se but against a form of individualising power that took the shape of her employer and her church. As Foucault (1982, p. 781) argues "...the main objective of these struggles is to attack not so much "such or such" an institution of power...but rather a technique, a form of power...It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects." Viewed in this manner Armstrong's recalcitrant blogging was not a simple case of communicating a dislike of her fellow workers, nor of railing against the proscriptions of her church. Rather, hers was a resistance to a form of power that labelled her, placed her in a categorical enclosure, and closed her off from the possibility of the creation of herself as pure art.

The creation of the self as art was the focus of much of Foucault's later writing. His work on the technologies of the self was backgrounded by a belief that it is within the power of each and every individual to create themselves as a work of art. In an interview, Foucault (1983) queried the failure in our society to see life itself as a

possibility for art: “ What strikes me is the fact that in our society, art has become something which is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or which is done by experts who are artists. But couldn’t everyone’s life be a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?” Whilst some criticised Foucault for attempting to normalise the gendered practices of the artistic genius within the experience of modernity (McNay, 1994, p. 149), his concept of the artist self connected the potentiality of art and creativity with his understanding that insubordination provided to the subject a “means of escape or possible flight” (Foucault, 1982, p. 794). Both art and insubordination are constituted and exist at the surface and, thereby, Foucault avoids seeking hidden meaning beneath the surface, which, as in psychotherapy, returns the individuated self to power.

I have shown thus far how power was all-pervasive within Armstrong’s life and how her behaviour was shaped through a dispersed array of strategies of power. I have further demonstrated how pastoral power turned Armstrong’s confessions, both in her life as a Mormon and at her work, into a strategy of individuation and subjection; and it was against this strategy that her blogging became a strategy of resistance. Too, I have shown that, through the use of the recent technology of her blog, Armstrong created a space for insubordination that allowed her to temporarily escape from the influences of power. It is this space I wish to now examine through Foucault’s theories on the technologies of the self. His view that life, as a work of art (*techne tou biou*), requires the taking care of oneself (*epimeleia heautou*) and can best be achieved through a variety of ascetic practices of the self (*askesis*), has the potential to provide valuable insights into how the practice of personal blogging may be seen as self creation. In particular, his thoughts on fearless speech (*parrhesia*), which I intend to examine in some detail, provide a useful understanding of blogging as both pure creativity and resistance to normalising power.

Blogging as fearless speech

Technologies of the self, subjectivation, and power are not separate projects or events occurring in or on a subject. In a genealogical understanding of the modern subject, power, and therefore the subject, must be understood as the “interplay of techniques of discipline and [the] less obvious technologies of the self” (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982, p. 175). Whereas in *Discipline and Punish* and *The Subject and Power* Foucault primarily focussed on the complex interrelationship between power and the formation of the subject, his later work examined the ways in which individuals become subjects of themselves (Martin, Gutman, and Hutton, 1998). This chapter follows a similar line of progression examining how Heather Armstrong, through her blog, developed herself as a subject of herself. The distinction I draw between the furrowing and traversal of power on, in, and across the subject and the various technologies of the self proposed by Foucault is both artificial and convenient. It is artificial for the reasons mentioned above, but it is convenient as a means to develop a fresh perspective on the nature of Heather Armstrong’s personal blog. As in the previous chapter, then, I will first explore salient aspects of Foucault’s technologies of the self to provide a productive theoretical background for the creation of new understandings about blogging and employment relationships. I will then use these theories to attempt to open a space in which Armstrong’s blog can emerge as something other than personal publication and a revelation of a hidden, secret, and already existent inner-self. It is my belief that, inasmuch as Armstrong’s blog can rightly be viewed as the agonistic struggles inherent within relations of power, it can also be seen as both the means and the product of Armstrong constituting herself as a work of art. In other words, I see Armstrong’s blog as being simultaneously the performance and the stage, the actor and the act.

In his later work, Foucault became increasingly attracted to the idea of the creation of the self as a work of art. For Foucault (1984, p.41) modernity (he was

critical of this label as referring to a historical period but rather saw modernity as an attitude) is “not simply a form of relationship to the present; it is also a mode of relationship that has to be established with oneself. The deliberate attitude of modernity is tied to an indispensable asceticism. To be modern is not to accept oneself as one is in the flux of the passing moments; it is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration...” It is this asceticism which Foucault (1997b, p. 88) describes as an ethics of existence or the “care of oneself” (*epimeleia heauto*). In unfolding his theories about the care of the self, Foucault’s work moved away from a focus on the interplay between power and subjectivity toward a concern for the ways in which individuals might conceive of themselves as self-sovereign subjects capable of creatively producing themselves as an ongoing production.

For Foucault, life as a work of art represented the highest and most pure aspiration for the human soul and therefore warranted a space of inquiry that would allow the emergence of an ethical concern for the self. To open this space Foucault took a leap back in history to analyse examples of *techne tou biou* (the art of living) as practiced in a period between Ancient Greece and early Christianity. His historical analysis of the life practices of ancient Greeks (both real and mythological) appear at first to be an attempt to romanticise Greek culture and wisdom, but such a reading of Foucault imposes on his theories a lineal historicity that denies their genealogical nature. Rather, I believe it is more productive and helpful to imagine Foucault’s use of examples from the Ancients as an artist dipping their brush into a colour on the palette called ancient Greece.

I intend here to outline just a small sample of Foucault’s technologies of the self, those parts of his work that I believe provoke new thought about Armstrong and her blogging. Specifically I want to look at three main areas of Foucault’s thought; first, the confession as a *techne* for the care of oneself (*epimeleia heautou*); second, how the practice of the self (*askesis*) can be thought of as a means for developing an understanding of the relationship between the truth and the self; and, finally, how frank and fearless speech (*parrhesia*) describes a game of truth-telling related to

epimeleia heautou and *askesis* that involves the confession or revelation of the truth of the self to the self and/or others. Although I intend to lay these concepts out sequentially in reality they spiral around and through one another in a way that makes them an inter-dependent whole rather than a series of discrete building blocks.

Foucault outlined his theories on the care of the self (*epimeleia heautou*) in the final book of his unfinished series on sex and sexuality. For Foucault, the working of power as constitutive of the subject is connected to *epimeleia heautou* through the body and its pleasures as a pure form of resistance to subjectifying power. Through sexuality and pleasure, Foucault (1963/1977, p. 33-34) believed, individuals gain access to the possibility of experiencing themselves as an unfolding limit; a limitlessness contained within the the limit that is at once abolished and reconstituted through transgression: “At the root of sexuality, of the movement that nothing can ever limit...a singular experience is shaped: that of transgression” and it is this transgression which “carries the limit right to the limit of its being; transgression forces the limit to face the fact of immanent disappearance, to find in itself what it excludes...”. The body, then, becomes the temple in which both the profane and divine irrupt in moments of pure, creative pleasure. However, while sexuality becomes central to creative resistance to power it is through practical training and exercises (*askesis*) that the individual achieves the mastery required to create themselves as a work of art. For Foucault, “[t]hese exercises are part of what we could call “aesthetics of the self”...One can comport oneself towards oneself in the role of a technician, of a craftsman, of an artist, who from time to time stops working, examines what he is doing, reminds himself of the rules of his art, and compares these rules with what he has achieved so far” (Foucault, 2001, p. 166).

Drawing a distinction between Christian asceticism, that involved self-renunciation and self-denial, and the Greek form of *askesis* that aimed at the development of a relationship with oneself actively engaging in the physical world, Foucault (1988, 2001, p. 144) proposed that these ascetic practices and exercises were

needed to approach a level of mastery of the art of living (*techne tou biou*). In particular, Foucault was interested in those exercises and practices “where someone had to examine the truth about himself, and tell this truth to someone else”. The revealing of the truth about oneself is a game of truth which Foucault believed could be distinguished from the Christian confession. Whereas Christianity posited the confession as a way to reveal a hidden, secret self, confession, as *askesis*, referred to a person making an account of their life and activities in much the same manner as an accountant or administrator might make an assessment of the activities of a business. This accounting, Foucault (2001, p. 149) believed, was a non-judgmental reminding of oneself of various rules and codes of behaviour that guide one’s life rather than the confession of a sin warranting a reaction or penance. Confession, then, is connected with a recalling of rules and guidelines to memory; “the retracing of...mistakes has as its object the reactivation of practical rules of behaviour which, now reinforced, may be useful for future occasions.”¹⁵ In addition Foucault (2001, p. 143) demonstrated how other ascetic practices, such as self-diagnosis and self-testing, are techniques of the care of the self and, therefore, play an important role in a new game of truth “which now consists in being courageous enough to disclose the truth about *oneself*”. That new game was *parrhesia*.

Foucault (2001, p. 11-20) traced the emergence of the concept of *parrhesia* - translated in English as “free speech” - from within Greek and Roman culture. He contended that there were five key elements to parrhesiastic speech. First, there was a matter of frankness, “to say everything” and to speak one’s mind fully so the audience might know all that the speaker thinks. This frankness is best achieved with direct and uncomplicated language. Second, while *parrhesia* includes a pejorative sense of chattering without thinking, its primary goal is to convey truth to an audience; “the *parrhesiastes* [the speaker of *parrhesia*] says what is true because he *knows* that it *is* true; and he *knows* that it is true because it is really true”; and this truth can be evidenced by the third aspect, the need for courage in order to speak

15 Foucault here was referring to his analysis of a portion of Seneca’s *De ira*, a text he believed provided a poignant example of the ascetic practice of solitary self-examination.

something which creates a potential danger - the loss of face, life, popularity - to the *parrhesiastes*. Fourth, this danger exists through the implicit or explicit criticism of someone more powerful contained within the message. Finally, the *parrhesiastes* is free to remain silent and yet chooses, out of a sense of duty, to speak despite the danger involved. In summary, “[i]n *parrhesia* the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood and silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy” (Foucault, 2001, p. 20).

Although *parrhesia* is an ascetic practice of the care of the self it brings with it the problem of who can be a *parrhesiastes*. According to Foucault (2001, p. 73), if everyone were considered to have equal right to speak all that was on their mind, in the same way as a democracy entitles all to stand as equals in the eyes of the law, then the pejorative form of *parrhesia* that involves truthful chattering, poses a problem to institutions in which the *parrhesiastes* speaks. In some cases parrhesiastic speech may be broadly popular and yet subversive and unhelpful to the long term good of a democratic institution¹⁶. In others the *parrhesiastes* might be punished for the exercise of *parrhesia*.

This problematic implies the existence of a parrhesiastic contract, one in which the *parrhesiastes* is permitted and encouraged to speak by power. Despite - or perhaps because of - the dangers involved in *parrhesia*, power invites the *parrhesiastes* to speak knowing they may receive some form of benefit, such as wise advice or a timely warning, from the parrhesiastic message. Equally, the *parrhesiastes* risks overstepping the mark by going too far with their *parrhesia*, and having their parrhesiastic contract renounced through censure, punishment, or even death. The dynamics of the

16 For Foucault (2001, p. 73) the problematic of parrhesia became who was entitled to parrhesiastic speech: “[T]he problem is one of recognizing who is capable of speaking the truth within the limits of an institutional system where everyone is equally entitled to give his own opinion. Democracy by itself is not able to determine who has the specific qualities which enable him to speak the truth (and thus should possess the right to tell the truth). And parrhesia, as a verbal activity, as pure frankness in speaking, is also not sufficient to disclose truth since negative parrhesia, ignorant outspokenness, can also result”.

parrhesiastic contract then provide benefits to both the *parrhesiastes* and their audience; but it is always somewhat tenuous, dynamic, and unfolding, being continuously negotiated and renegotiated through the tension of parrhesiastic discourse.

It is this parrhesiastic contract I now wish to analyse in relation to Heather Armstrong's blog. My contention will be that Armstrong, as a *parrhesiastes*, pushed the unwritten limits of the parrhesiastic contract with her employer to a point of where her *parrhesia* was seen as a threat to the stability of her employer organisation and she was punished, wisely or otherwise, for her *parrhesia*. However, I believe the *parrhesia* for which she was fired was incidental to her using her blog as a *techne* for *epimeleia heautou*. Her main purpose for blogging, I believe, was to live life as a work of art, and, therefore, I hope to show that, as an ascetic practice, her reflections, through being publicly available on her blog, became a confession of truth to power, and therefore served both as a means of subjectivation and as a parrhesiastic resistance to power.

How, then, can Armstrong's blog be viewed as *epimeleia heautou* or care of the self? As already mentioned, Foucault outlined a number of ascetic practices for the care of the self including the solitary self-examination found in Seneca. This form of self-examination involved the recording of one's activities and reactions without attempting to fix or undo anything, or pay penance. It also involved the recalling of the various rules and guidelines that serve as codes of personal conduct. Once recalled, these guidelines serve as a reminder of the way one hopes to act in the future when next the same circumstance is faced. Armstrong appears to have adopted this same form of self-examination even prior to the start of her blogging. Her blog describes the contents of a number of hand-written journal entries that describe her reaction to new life experiences and that also served as a reminder of the

biblical codes of behaviour to which she chose at the time to adhere¹⁷. This self-examination continued on the blog and there is a particularly poignant example in a post entitled *A Can of Worms* (Armstrong, 2006) in which Armstrong describes her reactions to a television programme about a polygamous sect of the Mormon church.

But last night as I was watching the third episode my body started to recoil involuntarily as it had done during the first two episodes. For the entire one hour duration of the show I had to fight the urge to puke. The work that goes into maintaining a marriage to one person is hard enough, but three? THREE? When I watch the show I feel like I'm married to all three women and by the end of the night I want to divorce each one of them. I can barely watch the dynamics among all three women, how in God's name are these actors even pretending that it's okay?

Armstrong accounts for her reactions to the programme frankly and with no evident attempt to censor her response. Equally, though, Armstrong reminded herself of some of the rules of personal behaviour that she had developed and adopted since leaving the church. Particularly Armstrong reminded herself of a self-imposed rule of not publishing anything on her blog that would cause hurt or upset to her family. She describes the potential for her blog post to cause her family concern and discomfort by noting:

I have been reluctant to write about it [her reactions to the television programme, *Big Love*] here because my response to this show goes way beyond a cursory thumbs up or down. It is inextricably tied to how I feel about the Mormon church, and if I explain those feelings I am going to be

¹⁷ Butler (1997, p. 73-7) develops a line of thought connecting the Nietzschean idea that guilty conscience is awakened by the possibility of punishment arising from a broken contract or promise and the internalisation of punishment that produces the 'I' at the point at which the promise is made. Thought in this vein, Armstrong's blog becomes a record of a promise about boundaries that serves to create her self; but the foundation of the self is the already internalised punishment for the transgression of the promise. For Butler, the payoff for bad conscience is the pleasure of self-persecution, which, in turn, becomes the price paid for the production of the self.

crossing into some really uncomfortable territory for many members of my family who read this website.

She then describes one of the boundaries which she had established after having offended her family earlier in her blogging activities:

As this website has evolved I have had to take a hard look at my boundaries, at what I will and will not write about, and for at least a few years now I have stayed very far away from any serious talk of Mormonism, although I have frequently poked fun at my Mormon heritage and have on more than one occasion described the proper way to hit a Mormon with a moving vehicle.

This reminder about the limits of her boundaries then becomes a way for Armstrong to publicly write about her reactions to *Big Love* in a way that lessened the impact of her words on her family. By so doing Armstrong employs an ascetic practice of the self both to examine and account for her own reactions and to constrain and direct her message. For unlike her pre-blogging self-examination which involved the extensive use of an unpublished personal journal in which she could recall and reflect privately, her blog made her self-examination *public*. It was through her blogging that her self-examination became public confession.

Whilst confession is a technology of power it can also be thought of as an ascetic care of the self enabling the emergence of “an individuated self and a defined personage in the social order” (Gutman, 1988, p. 103). Through her blog Armstrong presents to her readers a raw and unabridged confession of many aspects of her personal life, including revelations of her problems with constipation, details of her battle with depression, and reflections on her personal issues with the Mormon Church and her family. Armstrong (2007a) sardonically observes some of the restrictions which shaped her early years: “In fact, I never had a cup of coffee until I was 23-years-old. I had pre-marital sex for the first time at age 22, but BY GOD I waited an extra year for the coffee”. Having left the church and its rules and

regulations, Armstrong's strategy became the creation of a new form of subjectivity in which she became the author of her own moral code and in which she actively asserted a right to express her individuality and to question authority. It is through this ascetic form of confession that Armstrong participated in a game of parrhesiastic truth, one in which the very public nature of her blog transformed her *askesis* into frank and fearless speech and that problematised the parrhesiastic contract within her workplace.

Danger and the parrhesiastic contract are inextricably linked; and it is Armstrong's evident courage and sense of duty to frankly speak what was on her mind - her own truth - that supports the assertion that, through her blog, she became a *parrhesiastes*. Intuitively, Armstrong (2002) knew that at some future point "key members of [her] company might discover" her blog and take some form of disciplinary action; nonetheless her blogging persisted despite the risks involved; and it is this personal relationship to risk and danger that is, in Foucault, one of the key components of *parrhesia*. Armstrong expressly acknowledges being present to the risks of speaking out when she states: "I understood the risk when I wrote certain things about certain figures..." Not only was she present to the dangers involved she was also present to a sense of duty which compelled her to speak. It was this sense of duty which lead her to say, and as quoted in the previous chapter, "I refuse to live in fear. I refuse to be censored. I've lived my life far too long in fear of disrupting expectations. I made a conscious decision when I conceived dooce.com that I would never bow to the intimidation of others" (Armstrong, 2002b). More recently Armstrong (2008) reinforced this sense of duty to speak frankly in the face of danger when she responded to some disparaging and personal criticism about a post relating to the issue of abortion:

When I sat down to write those posts I knew that certain readers (and maybe even certain advertisers) would subconsciously or even deliberately misinterpret my words and perhaps make good on a threat to leave this website forever. And I knew when I had that thought that I

could not be silent — such self-censorship would not be faithful to the spirit of this website...Years from now when my daughter reads through the pages of this website she will know that I didn't just sit here on my hands when I had the opportunity to speak out against what I consider to be injustice. In fact, I feel compelled to set this example for her, to show her just how lucky she was to be born in a place where her mother cannot be imprisoned or silenced because of her passion.”

Armstrong, I believe, is a *parrhesiastes* par excellence in the style of Diogenes, the Cynic of old, who made it a habit of saying and doing scandalous things to point out the absurdities and contradictions within society. Foucault (2001, p. 122) describes Diogenes as a fearless *parrhesiastes* who, amongst other shameless acts, would masturbate in the *agora* to point out the problematic of the fulfillment of bodily needs within Greek society. It is, though, his dialogue with Alexander the Great at Corinth that is most telling about Diogenes’ *parrhesiastic* style. According to Foucault (2001, p. 126), Diogenes calls the king “a bastard” and “tells him that someone who claims to be a king is not so very different from a child who after winning a game, puts a crown on his head and declares that he is king.” His criticism and *parrhesia* is clearly dangerous. Push too far and Alexander was quite within his rights and power to run a spear through Diogenes’ heart. For Foucault it is this pushing of the *parrhesiastic* contract to the limit which is at the heart of the *parrhesiastic* game played by Diogenes; the *parrhesia* “borders on transgression because the *parrhesiastes* may have made too many insulting remarks” (Foucault, 2001, p, 127) It is right here that Armstrong most resembles Diogenes by pushing the *parrhesia* on her blog to the very limits. History shows that Armstrong’s employment ended with a metaphorical spear through her heart; but then again her employer was not Alexander the Great.

Conclusion

Heather Armstrong was fired as a result of something she wrote on her personal website. Rather than recording her reflections in a private journal, she chose to publish them on a stage that is both highly public and very nearly permanent. However, these were no ordinary reflections, but often sharp and incisive critiques of her family, her church, and her colleagues. The negativity of her observations, combined with the public nature of her blog, in the end, gave her boss no choice but to terminate her employment.

At least from the perspective of popular commentary this version of events goes largely unchallenged. Some argue over the fairness of her dismissal, others chide her for being boorish and subversive, but invariably the debate is fought by arguing points of law. I have attempted to take a different approach by analysing Armstrong's dismissal from within the moments of struggle documented on her blog, or, as Foucault (1982, p. 780) might put it; "Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies."

Armstrong's blogging, at least in part, was a struggle against individualising pastoral power; but it was not a fight against her employer or her church per se but against a form of power that sought to constrain her, to cut her off from her own creativity, and to turn her into a subject. On the one hand pastoral power, in its ecclesiastic form, operated on Armstrong by promising eternal salvation of the soul through the confessions of her conscience, on the other, it promised secular salvation in the form of career success and financial well-being and similarly required the confession of truth to power.

Through her blogging Armstrong created a space that was temporarily free from the individualising affects of pastoral power. At the time of her dismissal blogs were a relatively new technological platform that provided a stage on which she was able

to enunciate a subject performance which questioned and challenged many of the proscriptions to which she had become subject. However, her employer was quick to respond to Armstrong's strategy of insubordination by declaring her blog to be a space over which the company was entitled to exercise sovereignty. In so doing, her employer was able to manoeuvre Armstrong such that they were then able to implement their final strategy of power through the termination of her employment.

Although Armstrong's blogging can be understood as antagonistic struggle within a power relationship, it can also be seen as an attempt to live life as a work of art. I have demonstrated how Foucault's concept of life as a work of art (*techne tou biou*) was central to his understanding of the care of the self (*epimeleia heautou*) through a variety of ascetic practices (*askesis*); and it is here that I believe that Foucault's theories are at their most productive as ways to understand Heather Armstrong's dismissal. For as much as her blogging can be understood as a creative means for resistance to power, it can, as I have shown, be understood as an ascetic practice of the self directly linked to Armstrong taking care of herself and producing herself as a work of art.

To be clear, I am not arguing that her blog was in itself an ascetic practice. What I argue is that her blog provided a space within which to carry out the ascetic practice of the confession and which, through the very public nature of the blog, became *parrhesia*. As *parrhesia* is a game in which truth is told to power in a way that puts the teller at risk, her *parrhesia* was, in a very real way, a resistance to power. The parrhesiastic contract requires a certain permission to speak freely and it is at the limits of this permission that the game of parrhesiastic truth-telling takes on ever greater risks and yet potentially bears fruitful rewards. Armstrong is a *parrhesiastes* in the manner of Diogenes; someone who is willing to tell the truth in a most fearless and irreverent manner, someone who is willing to put their social existence on the line for the sake of what they understand to be true.

I will take this assertion one step further to argue that Armstrong is, in fact, a *basanos*, or touchstone, in the Socratic tradition of *parrhesia*. In Greek the term *basanos* describes a stone that is used to assess the quality of gold; and it is a similar testing of a person's relationship to truth that is at the heart of Socratic *parrhesia*. The *basanos*, as a touchstone, "tests the degree of accord between a person's life and its principle of intelligibility or *logos* [word]" (Foucault, 2001, p. 97). In other words, through incisive questioning, the *basanos* tests out the congruence between a person's words and deeds until the listener is forced to confront their own relationship with truth.

It is the questioning of the *basanos* that I believe Armstrong achieves par excellence on her blog for, through the questions that are posed by the irreverent art of her blog posts, she brings her readers in contact with their relationship to their own truth about certain aspects of modern life. Through her fictionalised accounts of the events and people at her work she asked questions of her managers that brought them face-to-face with the truth of their relationship to freedom of expression, diversity, equality, and the rights of women in the workplace.

Armstrong may well have lost her job because of her blog, but her courage to reveal her own truth will continue to define her as a touchstone.

References

- Armstrong, H. (2001a). *Relaunch*. Retrieved July 2. 2008, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/daily/09_27_2001.html
- Armstrong, H. (2001b). *Memoirs of a recovering Mormon*. Retrieved July 20. 2008, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/daily/08_10_2001.html
- Armstrong, H. (2002a). *Collecting unemployment*. Retrieved November 4. 2007, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/daily/02_26_2002.html
- Armstrong, H. (2002b). *Tell it to their face for Christ's sake*. Retrieved June 27. 2008, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/daily/02_27_2002.html
- Armstrong, H. (2002c). *I Have something to say*. Retrieved June 27. 2008, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/daily/02_12_2002.html
- Armstrong, H. (2005a). *Spoiler alert*. Retrieved July 29. 2008, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/nubbin/02_24_2005.html
- Armstrong, H. (2005b). *There's a lady who's sure all that glitters is gold*. Retrieved July 29. 2008, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/daily/04_13_2005.html
- Armstrong, H. (2005c). *You should ask her about the time I made dood balls for my Mormon boyfriend, Kovar*. Retrieved JULY 29. 2008, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/daily/02_08_2005.html
- Armstrong, H. (2006). *A can of worms*. Retrieved October 19. 2008, from http://www.dooce.com/archives/daily/03_27_2006.html
- Armstrong, H. (2007a). *About*. Retrieved July 1. 2008, from <http://www.dooce.com/about>
- Armstrong, H. (2007b). *FAQ*. Retrieved July 3. 2008, from <http://www.dooce.com/faq>
- Armstrong, H. (2008). *Dancing Monkey*. Retrieved October 20. 2008, from <http://www.dooce.com/2008/10/20/dancing-monkey>
- Barry, B. (2007a). *Speechless*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

- Barry, B. (2007b). The cringing and the craven: Freedom of expression in, around, and beyond the workplace. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 17(2), 263-296. Retrieved June 24, 2008, from EBSC Host database.
- Blood, R. (2005). *Heather Armstrong: bloggers on blogging*. Retrieved July 29, 2008, from <http://www.rebeccablood.net/bloggerson/heatherarmstrong.html>
- Bulter, J. (1997). *The psychic life of power: theories in subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Brigham Young University (2005). *The Honor Code* Retrieved July 31, 2008, from http://honorcode.byu.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3585&Itemid=4643
- Clineburg, W. A., & Hall, P. N. (2005). Addressing blogging by employees. *The National Law Journal*, June 6, 2005. Retrieved November 5, 2007, from Proquest database.
- Dreyfus, H., & Rabinow, P. (1982). *Michel Foucault: Beyond structuralism and hermeneutics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Flynn, N. (2006). *Blog Rules*. New York: AMACOM.
- Foucault, M. (1963/1977). A preface to transgression. In D. Bouchard (Ed.), *Michel Foucault: Language, counter-memory, practice*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Foucault, M. (1969). *The archaeology of knowledge*. London: Routledge.
- Foucault, M. (1976). Two Lectures. In C. Gourdon (Ed.), *Power/knowledge* (pp. 78-108). Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited.
- Foucault, M. (1977). Panopticism (A. Sheridan, Trans.). In *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). The history of sexuality. In D. Welton (Ed.), *The body: classic and contemporary readings* (pp. 268-285). Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777-795. Retrieved April 2 2008, from Jstor database.
- Foucault, M. (1983). On the genealogy of ethics: An overview of work in progress. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (pp. 340-372). London: Penguin Books.

- Foucault, M. (1984). What is enlightenment? In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault Reader: an introduction to Foucault's thought*. London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1985). *The use of pleasure: The history of sexuality. Volume 2*. London: Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (1988). Technologies of the self. In L. Martin, H. Gutman & P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self*. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Press.
- Foucault, M. (1997). The ethics of the concern for self as a practice of freedom. In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *Ethics: subjectivity and truth* (pp. 281-302). New York: New Press.
- Foucault, M. (1997b). Subjectivity and truth (R. Hurley, Trans.). In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *Ethics : subjectivity and truth*. New York: New Press.
- Foucault, M. (2001). *Parrhesia in the Care of the Self*. In J. Pearson (Ed.), *Fearless Speech*. Los Angeles: Semiotext(e).
- Giddens, A. (1995). Surveillance and the capitalist state. In *A contemporary critique of historical materialism, 2nd Edn*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Gutman, H. (1988). Rousseau's confessions: A technology of the self. In L. Martin, H. Gutman & P. Hutton (Eds.), *Technologies of the self* (pp. 99-120). London: Tavistock Publications.
- Lenhart, A., & Fox, S. (2006). *A portrait of the Internet's new storytellers*. Retrieved November 4, 2007, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP%20Bloggers%20Report%20July%2019%202006.pdf>
- Martin, L., Gutman, H., & Hutton, P. (1988). *Technologies of the self: a seminar with Michel Foucault*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- McHoul, A., & Grace, W. (1993). *A Foucault Primer: discourse, power and the subject*. Melbourne: Melbourne University Press.
- Metafilter (2002). *Heather Hamilton got fired because of her blog*. Retrieved October 28, 2008, from <http://www.metafilter.com/15133/>
- Nardi, B., Schiano, D., Gumbrecht, M., & Swartz, L. (2004). Why we blog. *Communications of the Association for Computing Machinery*, 47(12), 41-46.
- McNay, L. (1994). *Foucault: A critical introduction*. Oxford: Polity Press.

- Phillips, K. (2006). Rhetorical maneuvers: subjectivity, power, and resistance. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 39(4). Retrieved July 11, 2008, from Project Muse database.
- Poster, M. (1995). Databases as discourse, or electronic interpellations. In *The second media age* (pp. 78-94). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Scoble, R., & Israel, S. (2006). *Naked Conversations*. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.
- Simonetti, E. (2004). *Perspective: I was fired for blogging*. Retrieved November 4, 2007, from http://www.news.com/I-was-fired-for-blogging/2010-1030_3-5490836.html
- Technorati Inc. (2008). *About Us*. Retrieved May 29, 2008, from <http://technorati.com/about/>
- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (2008). *Membership in Christ's Church*. Retrieved October 23, 2008, from <http://www.mormon.org/mormonorg/eng/basic-beliefs/membership-in-christ-s-church/membership-in-christ-s-church>
- Vivian, B. (2000). The threshold of the self. *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 33(4), 303-318. Retrieved June 29, 2008, from Project Muse database.
- Witt, A. (2004). *Blog Interrupted*. Retrieved November 5, 2008, from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A54736-2004Aug10.html>
- Wright, J. (2006). *Blog marketing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.