Foucault Studies

REVIEW ESSAY

Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, translated by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa (London/New York: Routledge, 2006) ISBN: 0415277019.

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Introduction

Since its presentation on May 20, 1961, Foucault's principal doctoral thesis has never ceased both to fascinate and to fuel controversy.[1] Blanchot, Barthes, Serres and Mandrou[2] published glowing reviews very early on. These were followed by a more reserved welcome from the Anglo-American world. Doctor Gerald Weissmann held Foucault responsible for the free circulation of schizophrenics in the streets of New York,[3] which is a paradox, inevitable perhaps, since Foucault understands "madness" less as a mental condition than as a cultural situation. Historian Lawrence Stone criticized Foucault for his pessimism, free interpretation and anti-Enlightenment attitude.[4] In 1990, the debate continued in two special editions of

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[1] Georges Canguilhem (thesis director) recognized the philosophical value of Foucault's investigation while Henri Gouhier (president of the jury) criticized Foucault's use of allegories and myths to define madness. However, all agree on the originality of the work. See Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991), Part 2, Chap. 1; David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), Chap. 5; James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), Chap. 4. The 1961 "Preface" and the 1964 essay "Madness, the absence of an œuvre" (both included in *History of Madness*) provide answers to early critiques.

[2] Maurice Blanchot, "L'oubli, la déraison," *NRF* (1961), 676-686; Roland Barthes, "Savoir et folie, *Critique*, 17 (1961), 915-922; Michel Serres, "Géométrie de la folie," *Mercure de France* (août 1962), 683-696 and (sept. 1962), 63-81; Robert Mandrou, "Trois clés pour comprendre l'«*Histoire de la folie à l'époque classique*»," *Annales ESC* (juillet-août 1962), 761-771. Published later but worth mentioning is Robert Castel, *The Psychiatric Order* [1976] (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

[3] Gerald Weissmann, "Foucault and the Bag Lady," *Hospital Practice* (August 1982), 28-39.

[4] Lawrence Stone, "Madness," *The New York Review of Books* (December 16, 1982), 28-36 [a review of four books on madness that includes many attacks directed towards Foucault]; Michel

the review *History of the Human Sciences.*[5] After the publication of *History of Madness*, there was again renewed debate about the thoroughness of Foucault's historical analyses and his arbitrary criticism of the Enlightenment.[6]

In what way can this be considered a founding work? Throughout his dissertation, Foucault describes with great subtlety the development of knowledge/power practices by studying disciplinary and normalization strategies. These analyses go beyond the framework of the psychiatric field, extending to all control mechanisms. However, the principal thesis remains paradigmatic for this enterprise. Not only is *Histoire de la folie*, which marked Foucault's spectacular entry onto the intellectual scene, by far the most frequently quoted work in *Dits et écrits*, but the arguments he developed there were also more fully developed during the 1970s.[7] The work also became a reference for what is perhaps mistakenly called the "French anti-psychiatry" movement (institutional psychotherapy of Jean Oury et al., Lacan's desubjectivization of psychosis, Deleuze's and Guattari's schizoanalysis, etc.). Foucault's renowned thesis also gave health sociologists arguments with which to rethink certain policies. Furthermore, *History of Madness* remains one of the hubs around which Foucauldian studies gravitate. Among the examples illustrating its relevance today, Foucault's principal thesis is a source of inspiration for the contemporary activism that concerns both the denunciation of certain practices in psychiatry and, more generally, the "bio-securitarian" obsession with risk so characteristic of our societies.[8] The work also allows us to situate the originality of dissenting psychiatric movements outside France, particularly in Italy.[9] Finally, it was in favour of a return to the 1961 thesis that the "technocratic turn" of Foucault's last work was criticized, a work whose ethic breaks with the theme of transgression

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Foucault and Lawrence Stone, "An Exchange with Michel Foucault, *The New York Review of Books* (March 31, 1983), 42-44 [Foucault's answer to Stone's "Madness" and Stone's reply to Foucault].

[5]   *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Feb. 1990) and Vol. 3, No. 3 (Oct. 1990). See also Arthur Still and Irving Velody, *Rewriting the History of Madness: Studies in Foucault's Histoire de la Folie* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

[6]   Andrew Scull, "Scholarship of Fools. The frail Foundations of Foucault's Monument," *The Time Literary Supplement* (March 23, 2007), 3-4; Colin Gordon, "Extreme Prejudice: Note on Andrew Scull's *TLS* review of Foucault's History of Madness:" http://foucaultblog.wordpress.com/2007/05/20/extreme-prejudice/ (downloaded on June 12, 2007).

[7]   Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France 1973-1974* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); *Abnormal. Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-1975* (London: Picador, 2003).

[8]   Mario Colucci, "Foucault and Psychiatric Power after *Madness and Civilization*" and Pierangelo Di Vittorio, "From Psychiatry to Bio-politics or the Birth of the Bio-Security State," in Alain Beaulieu and David Gabbard (Eds.), *Michel Foucault and Power Today* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 61-70, 71-80.

[9]   Mario Colucci et Pierangelo Di Vittorio, *Franco Basaglia* (Milano: Mondadori Bruno, 2001); French. trans. *Franco Basaglia. Portrait d'un psychiatre intempestif* (Ramonville: Érès, 2005).

that linked the young Foucault to the *Collège de sociologie*.[10]

There have been several editions of the French version of the work: the first by Plon (1961), followed by an abridged version published by 10/18 (1963) and then a return to the unabridged version by Gallimard (1972 and 1976). The first two editions were entitled *Folie et déraison* with the subtitle *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (hereafter *HF*). In the Gallimard edition, only the subtitle was retained and the original 1961 preface was replaced. Two appendices were added in 1972 ("La folie, l'absence d'œuvre" and "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu"), but were subsequently withdrawn from the 1976 edition. In 1965, Richard Howard translated an incomplete version of *Folie et déraison* into English, published as *Madness and Civilization*. *History of Madness* translated by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa is the first full version of the unabridged work. This latest version contains a foreword by Ian Hacking, the preface and the two appendices of 1972, a response to Derrida (another version of "Mon corps, ce papier, ce feu"), the illustrations that accompanied the first edition, as well as several annexes, including an exhaustive bibliography dedicated to the 1961 work.

History of Madness ends with a defence of an anti-discourse in reference to Nietzsche, Nerval, Van Gogh, Hölderlin, Artaud, et al. The complementary thesis reached a similar paroxysm towards the end, defending the "superman" against Kant's question *Was ist der Mensch?*[11] This may appear naïve to some. *History of Madness* nevertheless provides a wealth of analysis beyond compare, which has opened up new fields of research by playing a part in undermining some of the foundations of Western culture.

Where did Foucault's interest in this type of work come from? In the early 1950s, he undertook vocational training related to his studies in psychopathology at the Sainte-Anne psychiatric hospital, where he assisted a group of scientists (including Henri Laborit and Jean Delay) who had discovered and experimented with the first neuroleptic drugs. This gave him the opportunity to observe the effects of psychiatric knowledge and the power of medicine. In 1975, he recalled those years of training in the following words:

> Not being a doctor, I had no rights, but being a student and not a patient, I was free to wander. Thus, without ever having to exercise the power related to psychiatric knowledge, I could nonetheless observe it all the time. I was a surface of contact between the patients, with whom I would talk, under the pretext of carrying out psychological tests, and the medical staff, who came by regularly to make decisions. This position,

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[10]   Frank Pearce, "Foucault and the 'Hydra-Headed Monster': The *Collège de Sociologie* and the two *Acéphales*," in Alain Beaulieu and David Gabbard (Eds.), *Michel Foucault and Power Today* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2006), 115-137.

[11]   Michel Foucault, *Thèse complémentaire pour le doctorat ès lettres. Introduction à l'anthropologie de Kant*. The complete introduction remains unpublished and is available at *Archives Michel Foucault* (IMEC, Abbey of Ardenne, France, document D-60) or online ‹www.michel-foucault.com/kant.pdf›.

which was the result of chance, allowed me to see the surface of contact between the insane person and the power exercised over him, and I then attempted to render its historical formation.[12]

These training periods sparked his interest in phenomenological psychiatry, whose merit consists in understanding psychic disorders as expressions of specific ways of being-in-the-world contained in a common world of meaning. In 1953, Foucault visited Binswanger; in *Maladie mentale et personnalité,* published in 1954 (a reworked version was published in 1962 entitled *Maladie mentale et psychologie),*[13] he comments on existential psychiatry; in 1958 he wrote a long introduction to the work by Binswanger, *Traum und Existenz.*[14] and the same year he translated (with Daniel Rocher) *Der Gestaltkreis* by von Weizsäcker.[15] In his 1961 thesis, Foucault broadens his thoughts to a historical perspective in which he looks at culture and the way Western societies work. Disenchanted by the "monologue by reason *about* madness" (*HM*, xxviii), Foucault distanced himself from both the biological and the phenomenological aspects of psychiatric knowledge:

> I worked with philosophers and also with Jean Delay, who introduced me to the world of the insane. [...] But I do not practice psychiatry. What counts for me is the investigation of the very origins of madness. The good conscience of psychiatrists disappointed me.[16]

Title and Translation

It is, of course, a good thing for those who work on Foucault in English now to be able to point to a complete translation of *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*. How this text will stand next to *Madness and Civilization*, Richard Howard's translation of the abridged version of *Folie et Déraison*, will be interesting to follow as readers are encouraged to reconsider Foucault's early masterpiece.

One doubts that it will be a simple matter of one text replacing the other. Already in the title, multiple texts appear. Ian Hacking's "Forward" to *History of Madness* notes how the "Unreason" (*Déraison*) in the original title has faded away in subsequent editions; in such a fading, according to Hacking, one can find "all the signs of Foucault changing his mind about madness." (*HM*, ix) Rather than focus on Foucault's changing his mind, one might ask why in this edition the brief (not to say truncated) title *History of Madness* was chosen, especially when one considers that

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12   Our translation. Taken from a 1975 interview (p. 55) not reprinted in *Dits et écrits,* but published under the title "Les confessions de Michel Foucault," in *Le Point* (1 Juillet 2004), 52-63.

13   Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). For a detailed comparative study of the 1954 and the 1962 versions see Pierre Macherey, "Aux sources de l'*Histoire de la folie,*" *Critique,* no. 471-472 (1986), 753-774.

14   Michel Foucault, "Dream, Imagination and Existence," in Michel Foucault and Ludwig Binswanger, *Dream and Existence* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1993), 29-78.

15   Viktor von Weizsäcker, *Le cycle de la structure* (Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1958).

16   Michel Foucault in Sylvère Lotringer (Ed.), *Foucault Live* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 7.

this is a direct translation of the title of the abridged version of the text! Is anything gained by this brevity? Is anything lost?

What might be gained is that it draws attention to the fact that the text presents itself first and foremost as a *history*, which, as Foucault tells us in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, "is one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably bound."[17] The complete text gives the reader a better sense of the "mass of documentation" that Foucault is working with and through in a way that *Madness and Civilization* did not. Will explicit reference to this mass of documentation reassure those readers of *Madness and Civilization* who are suspicious of Foucault's scholarly appreciation of the historical record? Probably not.

One of the lasting features of Foucault's work is the way his histories challenge the historiographical pretensions of all who appeal to the "historical record," the way they have the historical record challenge itself. Here, the brief title *History of Madness* may be misleading. It can lead the unsuspecting reader to think that the text is a history of a particular "object" called madness. And yet part of the fascination exerted by this text is that it evokes something variously *called* madness, folly, insanity, precisely *not* as an object but as an Other to something else called reason, and this for a certain period and in a certain place (principally the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe). The (current) title of the French text (itself the original subtitle) makes this clear, as does the tripartite division of the complete text (a division not reproduced in *Madness and Civilization*). The focus of the text is "madness in the classical age." The first and third parts (dealing with the Renaissance and the early nineteenth century) are contrastive and serve to frame the core discussion of the "classical age," which, for Foucault, presents us the archival figure of what he calls Unreason, which itself serves as a contrast to the notion of reason itself. This division of the text, along with the introductory chapters to Parts II and III, should – somewhat paradoxically given the supplementary material – lead readers of *Madness and Civilization* to appreciate the tentative and exploratory dimension of Foucault's text.

Foucault's sensitivity to the "torn presence" (*HM*, 164) of madness probably most vividly expresses itself in his style. On this point, the new translation by Jonathan Murphy and Jean Khalfa proves sometimes to be a hindrance to a full appreciation. One suspects that the translators, themselves sensitive to the various complaints about Foucault's style, tried to compensate by translating as plainly as possible various passages, such as those that plausibly serve as summary statements. The problem with this is that it takes away from the force of the text, a force that through its style is attempting to remain true to the "torn presence" of the madness that is its concern. To that extent, the translation sometimes plays too heavily into the Hegelian thematic of self-development as against the wariness of its Nietzschean

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[17]   Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge* [1969] (London: Routledge, 1972), 7.

inspiration.

For example, in the initial chapter "Stultifera Navis" (passages included in *Madness and Civilization*), one discerns an attempt by the translators to downplay the dramatic tone in favor of a more didactic approach. Concerning "the great divide that was yet to come in the Western experience of madness" (*HM*, 16), "ce qui sera la grande ligne de partage dans l'expérience occidentale de la folie" (*HF*, 34), they offer this translation:

> The rise of madness on the Renaissance horizon is first noticeable in this decay of Gothic symbolism, as though a network of tightly ordered spiritual significations was beginning to become undone, revealing figures with meanings only perceptible as insane. Gothic forms lived on, but little by little they fell silent, ceasing to speak, to recall or instruct. The forms remained familiar, but all understanding was lost, leaving nothing but a fantastical presence; and freed from the wisdom and morality it was intended to transmit, the image began to gravitate around its own insanity. (*HM*, 16-17)

A little further, a transitional sentence is rendered as: "The strange fascination that lurks in these images of madness can be explained in a number of ways." (*HM*, 18) And the sentence concluding the section is rendered thus: "These mad images are an expression of hidden Renaissance worries about the menacing secrets of the world, and it was those fears that gave the fantastic images such coherence and lent them such power." (*HM*, 21)

Now, consider the passages in French:

> La montée de la folie sur l'horizon de la Renaissance s'aperçoit d'abord à travers le délabrement du symbolisme gothique; comme si ce monde, ou le réseau de significations spirituelles était si serré, commençait à se brouiller, laissant apparaître des figures dont le sens ne se livre plus que sous les espèces de l'insensé. Les formes gothiques subsistent encore pour un temps, mais, peu à peu, elles deviennent silencieuses, cessent de dire, de rappeler et d'enseigner, et ne manifestent plus, hors de tout langage possible, mais pourtant dans la familiarité du regard, que leur présence fantastique. Libérée de la sagesse et de la leçon qui l'ordonnaient, l'image commence à graviter autour de sa propre folie. (*HF*, 34); "Quelle est donc cette puissance de fascination qui, à cette époque, s'exerce à travers les images de la folie? (*HF*, 36); Dans tant d'images – et c'est sans doute ce qui leur donne ce poids, ce qui impose à leur fantaisie une si grande cohérence – la Renaissance a exprimé ce qu'elle pressentait des menaces et des secrets du monde. (*HF*, 39)

The perhaps overly succinct translation of the first passage (along with the mistake of translating "insensé" as "insane" rather than something like "without sense"), the absence of the interrogative form in the second passage, the omission of the "sans doute" in the third, along with its overly declarative translation are not unreasonable choices in themselves. What these translations, and other passages like them, lack is the full force of the evocative tone of the original which is intent on opening us to a perspective too quickly cast in rationalizing and normalizing form (including the rationalizing and normalizing form of historical development). A difficult task, no

doubt. And this is a difficult book, even a disconcerting one, in Charles Taylor's words.[18] Indeed, if Foucault's histories are disconcerting it is because they challenge our complacencies with regard to what we claim to know about the world and they confront us with the complicities that structure what is given us to do in the world. As Todd May has put it, Foucault's histories serve "as reminders, reminders of who we are and how we got to be that way, and, even more important, of the contingency of both."[19] This contingency itself is not only historically demonstrated by opening up the archive, but is also evoked by a style that serves to query who we are not, and who we need not be.

Hegel

The reader might be struck by the duality of Foucault's approach in *History of Madness,* which, though resolutely inspired by Nietzsche to write about madness outside of the recuperative and presentist mode typical of most histories, nevertheless remains indebted to a Hegelian thematic of a historically self-developing reason unfolding through conflict and the attempt to resolve them. Much of the text describes the ways in which the classical age transforms madness such that, for it:

> Madness becomes a form related to reason, or more precisely madness and reason enter into a perpetually reversible relationship which implies that all madness has its own reason by which it is judged and mastered, and all reason has its madness in which it finds its own derisory truth. Each is a measure of the other, and in this movement of reciprocal reference, each rejects the other but is logically dependent on it. (*HM*, 28-29)

Throughout the text, Foucault tracks these various "dialectics" within which reason is seen to struggle with what it perceives to be its ambiguous other – first as folly, then especially as unreason, until with insanity, "the experience was no longer of an absolute conflict between reason and unreason, but rather of a play – always relative, always mobile – between freedom and its limits. (*HM*, 439) But, of course, these various "dialectics" are not described in terms of their "contradictions" with a view to the sublation of their terms. Foucault does not *follow* the Hegelian thematic of a self-developing reason; rather, he might be said to *track* it, and warily at that. One gets the sense that Foucault's text proposes itself as a closer look at what one finds when one observes what Hegel called the self-development of "Reason in History" (the title of his Introduction to his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*), not from

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[18]   Charles Taylor, "Foucault on Freedom and Truth," in *Philosophy and the Human Sciences: Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985), 152.

[19]   Todd May, "Philosophy as a Spiritual Exercise in Foucault and Deleuze," *Angelaki. Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2000), 227.

its own perspective and preoccupations, but from the perspective of its most recalcitrant element: madness. Foucault does not presume to write his *History of Madness* from the point of view of the mad themselves, but from the *perspective* this reference to madness (within reason's self-development) opens up. Here, the full text will allow readers to appreciate Foucault's attempt to explore this perspective which recognizes that "the meaning of madness for any age, our own included, can never be covered entirely by the theoretical unity of a project: it lies instead in its torn presence." (*HM*, 164)

Derrida and the Enlightenment

What Derrida discusses on a "speculative" level through deconstruction, Foucault analyzes through "concrete" practices. In their debate surrounding *History of Madness*, they mutually accuse each other of fostering authoritarian thought. There was a complete rift between the two, until Foucault, out of intellectual solidarity, took the side of Derrida, who had been arrested for "drug trafficking" when taking part in a seminar organized by dissidents in Prague in 1981.[20] The discussion began in 1963 with Derrida's essay "Cogito and the History of Madness"[21] (published for the first time in 1964), in which he comments on Foucault's work. Derrida refuses to see any trace of ostracism of madness in the sentence drawn from the first of Descartes' *Meditations* and which was one of the watersheds in Foucault's reasoning: "But such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself."[22] Derrida notes: "The sense of Foucault's entire project can be pinpointed in these few allusive and somewhat enigmatic pages,"[23] where Cogito and insanity conflict. According to Derrida, Descartes does not imagine madness as being exterior to Cogito and he does not submit madness to any particular exclusion. Descartes refutes the certitude of knowledge by the senses and by dreams, but not by madness. So, according to Derrida, Cartesian philosophy was founded before the division of reason and madness. In other words, Derrida believes that the mad person, as opposed to the empiricist or the dreamer, can experience the Cogito, which is therefore not exclusive to the philosopher or sound-minded scientist:

> The Cogito escapes madness only because at its own moment, under its own authority, it is valid *even if I am mad*, even if my thoughts are completely mad. There is a value and a meaning of the Cogito as of existence, which escape the alternative of a determined madness or a determined reason.[24]

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[20] Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1991), 121-122.

[21] Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," in *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, IL: University Press, 1978), 31-63.

[22] René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2006), 77.

[23] Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," art. cit., 32.

[24] Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," art. cit., 55.

According to Derrida, Cartesian reasoning does not exclude what is different from it, but it recognizes the presence of madness in itself; the division of madness therefore remains internal to reason. Derrida thus argues the auto-deconstruction of Cartesian self-identity to highlight the play of différance between reason and madness, accusing Foucault of creating another type of internment: that of reason.[25]

Foucault's response (*HM*, 550-590) appeared eight years after Derrida's essay was published. He attacks the "little pedagogy" of Derrida, who "teaches the student that there is nothing outside the text." (*HM*, 573) For Foucault, Descartes' text remains incomprehensible if it is not replaced in the historical context of discursive and institutional practices. In refusing these practices, Derrida misses the meaning and scope of Descartes' text (1641), contemporary of the "Great Internment" (1657), both presented as belonging to the same episteme associated with the exclusion of madness by reason.

Ferry and Renaut[26] refuse to come out in favour of either Foucault or Derrida, whose interpretations they consider characteristic of French Nietzscheanism. In their view, classical reason is no more repressive (Foucault) than it is thrown into the play of différance (Derrida). Descartes would simply tell us that at this point in *Meditations*, there is no way of refuting the objection presented by the hypothesis of madness, an objection that is resolved by the radicalization of doubt. Ferry and Renaut are therefore seeking (and they are not the only ones) to bring reason back on track by criticizing the post-structuralist attacks on the Enlightenment. But in doing so, they omit to consider that the repression exercised by reason in the Classical Age is not simply expressed in the "marginal" passage of the 1641 *Meditations*. In his *Anthropology* (1798), Kant repeats the Classical gesture of excluding madness from the philosophical field:

> *Subtilizing* (without sound reason) is a use of reason that ignores its final end, partly from lack of ability and partly from adopting a mistaken viewpoint. *To rave with reason* means to proceed according to principles as far as the form of our thought is concerned, but with regard to its matter or end, to use means diametrically opposed to it.[27]

The madman is he who, according to Kant, is caught in a set of contradictions that make knowledge impossible. Additionally, for Kant there exists no way of curing the insane person of his illness and "no method of therapy can be effective."[28] Foucault, who himself translated this text, accompanied by a long introduction in his

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[25]   Jacques Derrida, "Cogito and the History of Madness," art. cit., 55.

[26]   Luc Ferry and Alain Renaut, *French Philosophy of the Sixties: An Essay on Antihumanism* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), 68-89.

[27]   Emmanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1974), 72. Monique David-Ménard shows that the Kantian conception of knowledge finds its origin in Kant's battle against the visionary delirium of Swedenborg. See *La folie dans la raison pure. Kant lecteur de Swedenborg* (Paris : Vrin, 1990).

[28]   Emmanuel Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, op. cit., p. 84.

complementary thesis,[29] no doubt judged it appropriate to discuss Kant in *History of Madness* so as to avoid any overlaps. Nevertheless, Kant's *Anthropology* clearly illustrates the fact that the division of madness from reason is one of the archetypal Classical concerns. Never did this division constitute such an important issue for thought and practice than in the Classical Age. And Foucault presents the first analysis of it in brilliant fashion.

The Historians

Foucault's rapport with Kant and the Enlightenment subsequently underwent, as we know, numerous changes. But Derrida's demonstration of the différ*a*nce between reason and madness, as refined and as appealing as it may be, is no longer really at the heart of the debate. More adventurous critics tend to question the historical exactitude of Foucault's interpretations in *History of Madness*.[30] We must rule out prior interpretations as to why and under which circumstances mad people were locked up before the seventeenth century or that medical care existed before Pinel. Forms of oppression and medicalization did exist before the Classical Age, but Foucault is absolutely correct in presenting confinement as a trend that became established during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and which led, in Europe, to the multiplication of asylums to marginalize what were deemed to be deviant minds. Several observers who criticize the lack of thoroughness of *History of Madness* attack the analyses constructed arbitrarily from works of the aesthetic sphere (Brandt's novel *Narrenschiff*, Bosch's painting *Ship of Fools*, Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, Shakespeare's plays, Diderot's *Rameau's Nephew*, etc.), even going so far as to liken *History of Madness* to a "romanticization of mental illness." Foucault is also accused of speaking in the name of European culture although he relies mainly on French sources, of forcing the interpretation of certain archival documents, of misinterpreting the meaning to be given to the "Great confinement" of the Classical Age by making a connection between English experiments (small madhouses of fewer than twenty inmates) and Parisian ones (thousands of Parisians sent to the

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[29]   Emmanuel Kant, *Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique* (Paris : Vrin, 1991). This book contains an excerpt of Foucault's complementary thesis (see p. 7-10).

[30]   For a presentation and/or discussion of the historians' critiques of *Histoire de la folie* see H. C. Erik Midelfort, "Madness and Civilisation in early Modern Europe: A Reappraisal of Michel Foucault," in Barbara C. Malament (Ed.), *After the Reformation* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 247-265; Peter Sedgwick, *Psycho Politics* (London: Pluto Press, 1982); José Merquior, *Foucault* (London: Fontana, 1985), Chap. 2; Colin Gordon, "*Histoire de la folie*: an unknown book by Michel Foucault," *History of the Human Sciences*, 3/1 (1990), 3-26; Andrew Scull, "Michel Foucault's History of Madness," *History of the Human Sciences*, 3/1 (1990), 57-67; Colin Gordon, "History, Madness and other errors. A Response," *History of the Human Sciences*, 3/3 (1990), 381-396; Elisabeth Roudinesco & al., *Penser la folie* (Paris: Galilée, 1992); Gary Gutting, "Foucault and the History of Madness," in Gary Gutting (Ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1995), 47-70.

Hôpital Général), and of too quickly assimilating Tuke's interventions (holistic perspective on recovery at the York Retreat) and those of Pinel (medical care), and so on.

What value does Foucault's thesis represent in terms of the study of history? Several historians have praised the way in which Foucault was able to revive the discipline (Braudel, Le Goff, Veyne, to name but a few). Nonetheless, certain of Foucault's interpretations can be considered tendentious. On the one hand, his rich historical analyses are worthy of the highest esteem, while on the other, even though in his self-criticism of 1969[31] he sought to apply methodological rigour to *Histoire de la folie* and his other works of the 1960s, Foucault finally candidly admitted having abandoned the ideal of scientificness:

> I am fully aware that I have never written anything other than fictions. For all that, I would not want to say that they were outside the truth. It seems plausible to me to make fictions work within truth, to introduce truth-effects within a fictional discourse, and in some way to make discourse arouse, 'fabricate' something which does not yet exist, thus to fiction something. One "fictions" history starting from a political reality that renders it true, one "fictions" a politics that does not yet exist starting from a historical truth.[32]

Does this mean that the moments of epistemological rupture – the "Great confinement" of 1657 and Pinel's liberation of the insane in 1794 – used as critical points in the analyses in *History of Madness*, are the result of pure invention? This has to be admitted, at least in part, because Foucault's main goal in writing was not to accumulate knowledge. His task was not simply intellectual but also eminently practical. He had to distance himself somewhat in order to recognize this. If Foucault "fictions" reality in the same way as a caricaturist, it is because he enlarges the features of a certain reality to make them more evident. Some historical facts therefore take on larger-than-life proportions. Foucault has a complex and particularly efficient way of transforming minor ("Great confinement," panoptic, infamous man, etc.) into major. The only way to appreciate Foucault's work is to accept to play this sometimes perplexing but most often revealing game. From a traditional point of view, some of it might be wrong. But we acquire visionary power when we accept these reversals. We also understand better what Foucault meant when he stated that he had only ever written fiction: he saw himself not as an intellectual thirsty for truth, but as a tactician or an "artificializer," comparing his books to "mines" and "packets of explosives."[33] That is one of the significations that can be given to Foucault's famous "toolbox."[34] The primary goal of the Foucauldian enterprise is not to reveal the truth that is common to all (which Foucault does not

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[31]   Michel Foucault, *Archeology of Knowledge* [1969] (London: Routledge, 1972), see "Introduction."

[32]   Michel Foucault in Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 204.

[33]   Michel Foucault, "Les confessions de Michel Foucault," art. cit., 57.

[34]   Often attributed to Foucault, it is Gilles Deleuze who used this expression for the first time in 1972. See Deleuze in Sylvère Lotringer (Ed.), *Foucault Live* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 76.

believe in), but to produce "effects of truth" that enable us to fight against the *dispositifs* of knowledge/power without promise of redemption and only (which is already a lot) with a view to changing attitudes and beliefs. Commenting on *History of Madness*, Foucault states:

> In reality, what I want to do, and here is the difficulty of trying to do it, is to solve this problem: to work out an interpretation, a reading of a certain reality, which might be such that, on one hand, this interpretation could produce some of the effects of truth; and on the other hand, these effects of truth could become implements within possible struggles. […] It is the reality of possible struggles that I wish to bring to light. That is what I wanted to do in *History of Madness*.[35]

Foucault reveals several forgotten moments of our past, but historical rectitude is not the primary object of his teachings. They are much more concerned with the fact that methods of fighting as well as solutions to conflicts must be invented. *History of Madness* is no exception. Its power to fascinate resides in its ability to provide an alternative way of looking at the division of reason and madness, by arguing in favour of this alternative.

Gladys Swain

Historical criticisms also came from the psychiatric camp. The most elaborate of these was produced by the psychiatrist Gladys Swain.[36] By bringing the insane out of the asylums in favor of clinical treatment, Pinel apparently helped humanize the relationship with madness, which became mental illness. Pinel also very certainly helped toward the classification of psychic problems, starting with the works of Kraepelin and Bleuler through to the contemporary nosography established in the *DSM*.[37] Foucault sees Pinel's intervention as the development of a new control strategy, the creation of an objectivizing discourse pejoratively qualified as "monologue by reason *about* madness," which remains alien to the deeper meaning to be given to insanity.

Against "the Myth of Pinel" constructed by Foucault, that is to say Pinel as a false humanist and agent of power, Swain proposes a new history of madness by showing the beneficial value of psychiatric medicine. Using Hegel, among others, as

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[35]   Michel Foucault in Sylvère Lotringer (Ed.), *Foucault Live*, op. cit., p. 261.

[36]   Gladys Swain, *La question de la naissance de la psychiatrie au début du XIXᵉ siècle* (thèse pour le diplôme d'État) (Caen : Université de Caen, 1975); Gladys Swain, *Le sujet de la folie. Naissance de la psychiatrie* (Toulouse : Privat, 1977); Gladys Swain, *Dialogue avec l'insensé.* Précédé de *À la recherche d'une autre histoire de la folie* par Marcel Gauchet (Paris : Gallimard, 1994); Marcel Gauchet and Gladys Swain, *Madness and Democracy: The Modern Psychiatric Universe* [translation of *La pratique de l'esprit humain. L'institution asilaire et la révolution démocratique* (Paris : Gallimard, 1980)] (Princeton, NJ : Princeton UP, 1999).

[37]   American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, 4ᵗʰ Edition (Washington, D. C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1994). The DSM-V is currently scheduled for publication in 2011.

an example, she turns madness into a moment of reason, the two not being mutually exclusive but participating in the same becoming which makes dialogue possible, as well as treatment, based on democratic values (equality, integration, humanism, etc.).

In criticizing *History of Madness* in this way, Swain seems to forget that the primary intention of Foucault's analyses was to view madness less as a clinical case than as a cultural condition. When he discussed the repression and medicalization of madness, Foucault was not primarily referring to the work of psychiatrists. Besides, Foucault never professed to be opposed to the prescription of neuroleptic drugs and he never denied the suffering of psychotics. What interested Foucault above all was the signification to be given to psychiatric practices arising from Pinelian medicine, in order to show what they involve in terms of a vision of man, the world, and organization of social life. *History of Madness* must be discussed from this standpoint. And in this respect, Foucault's argument for a variety of techniques to control insanity remains highly relevant today. Therefore we do not so much need a new history of madness as a new chapter of *History of Madness* itself.

A New Chapter

Foucault did not live long enough to experience the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill that began in the mid 1980s.[38] At that time, policies were enacted in most industrialized countries to deinstitutionalize psychiatric care. A number of factors led to the closure of beds in psychiatric hospitals in order to help people with mental health problems return to the community: the discovery of neuroleptic drugs in the 1950s and 1960s, criticism of the asylum segregation practised in the 1960s and 1970s (Foucault, Goffman, Basaglia, Cooper, Laing, et al.), the neo-liberal context that promoted State privatization and modernization, as well as recommendations relating to the link between well-being and social integration emanating from the *World Health Organization*, among others.

Should we welcome this situation? After all, deinstitutionalization enables the so-called "insane" to live outside the asylum and the hospital. They now have an address and the chance to enter the job market through employment programs. In reality, this is an pseudo-emancipation in that it makes way for new extra-institutional control strategies developed for the "social protection" of psychiatric ex-patients. Without having had the chance to study them in themselves, Foucault anticipated the implementation of these new *extra-muros* control practices:

> While, on the one hand, the disciplinary establishments increase, their mechanisms have
> a certain tendency to become 'de-institutionalized', to emerge from the closed fortresses

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[38]   Ellen Corin et al., *Sortir de l'asile? Avis sur les services de santé mentale de la France, de la Grande-Bretagne, de l'Italie et des États-Unis* (Québec : Les Publications du Québec, 1986); Henri Dorvil et al., *Défis de la reconfiguration des services de santé mentale* (Québec : Gouvernement du Québec, 1997).

in which they once functioned and to circulate in a 'free' state; the massive, compact disciplines are broken down into flexible methods of control, which may be transferred and adapted.[39]

Policies of deinstitutionalizing psychiatric care are not as "neutral" as they claim. In fact, they open the way to new techniques of normalization that are subtler than the former *infra-muros* control practices (asylum or hospital), and which also become more tolerable in the eyes of the public by insinuating themselves into and circulating within the social fabric in attitudes, beliefs, behavior and ideas. We will briefly present three of these normalization mechanisms resulting from the deinstitutionalization of psychiatric care: urban zoning, the branching of the psychiatric hospital system and the continuity of care.

Certain zoning practices follow the principle of "ghettoizing" marginalized populations. For "public health" reasons, housing for people considered abnormal is built in out-of-town areas, for example, while community mental health organizations are forbidden from operating in certain more affluent areas. This control over the location of populations is a common practice implemented through municipal and town-planning strategies that literally "sort" populations by legislating on the division of space, at the same time assuring the existence of uniform, standardized spaces. For example, census data show that in the territory of the city of Montreal, 45.5% of beds devoted to psychiatric clients were concentrated in only 5.5% of that territory.[40] This is a good illustration of what Foucault might have meant by comparing town planners to the police.[41]

The technique of branching psychiatric hospitals into the community constitutes another normalization mechanism generated by policies of deinstitutionalization. In concrete terms, this means that hospitals prevent the money saved by bed closures from being transferred to the community. Several hospitals hold on to this money by managing community care residences. To illustrate this phenomenon, a simple comparison of the annual reports of the Louis-H. Lafontaine hospital (one of Canada's largest psychiatric hospitals) for 1990-2000 shows that the hospital's budget remained practically the same during that period, despite the fact that the number of patients was reduced by almost half. The budget set aside for caring for the former patients should have gone with them when they returned to the community, but the hospital maintains financial control by using the amounts saved by the closure of beds to manage residential services for "psychiatric ex-patients" living in the community. The practical organization of daily life (activities, schedule, medication, etc.) for this "deinstitutionalized" population therefore remains covertly subordinate to the asylum model.

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[39]   Michel Foucault, *Discipline & Punish* (New York: Random House, 1977), 211.

[40]   Paul Morin, *Espace urbain montréalais et processus de ghettoïsation des populations marginalisées* (Montréal : Université du Québec à Montréal, 1993).

[41]   Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-1978* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), Lecture of April 5, 1978.

This type of technique goes beyond the simple hospital framework to infiltrate the whole of society, so far as to produce a rational model of care continuity. The new paradigm of social integration placed under the generic title of "intersectorality"[42] thus responds to the new imperatives of normalizing life for people classified as mentally ill. Intersectoral action in mental health can be defined as the setting up of an advisory network bringing together service users and professionals from various sectors (housing, employment, hospital, education, etc.) with the aim of defining the best way to integrate people suffering from mental health problems. The stated intent of these consultations is to avoid the logic of sectoring by developing "intersectoral strategies" that support different cooperation networks and encourage better communication among the various sectors of activity. But with this good will there is also a potential for "bureaucratization," preventing those directly concerned from making a true choice. Psychiatrists, managers and certain social workers are therefore able to exercise subtle "partnership dictatorship."[43] Far from manifesting "political realism," intersectorality presents itself rather as a naïve form of progressivism based on a consensual ideal.[44] The actions, aptitudes, behaviour and performance of psychiatric ex-patients continue to be normalized according to ideals defined by integration professionals around discussion tables.

These three control strategies are some of the "little tricks" (*petites ruses,* as Foucault would say) carried out beyond the boundaries of state governance or outside the legal system, promoting the emergence and development of decentred control techniques exercised continuously on the lives of individuals. They operate silently under colour of so-called emancipatory policies and are encouraged by a new humanist ideal of the same type as that which incited Pinel to free the confined insane. Furthermore, the new strategies introduced to normalize the life of psychiatric populations remain hidden, which makes them all the more pernicious.

Our societies no longer choose to normalize the present by locking up deviants but to anticipate potential future risks so as to minimize their impact on the present. The life of psychiatric ex-patients is therefore the subject of a sophisticated calculation of risk. The image of the "dangerous madman" conveyed by the media thus contributes to identifying those classed as mentally ill and living in the community with would-be terrorists who could destabilize the established order. Yet we know that these people pose a greater threat to themselves (by suicide) than to others, and that in reality it is the so-called "normal" people who, relatively speaking, are more likely to commit homicide.

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[42]   Deena White et al., *Pour sortir des sentiers battus: l'action intersectorielle en santé mentale* (Québec : Publications du Québec, 2002).

[43]   Julien Damon, "La dictature du partenariat," *Futuribles*, no. 273 (2002), 27-41.

[44]   Gilles Bibeau, "L'intersectorialité, une utopie mobilisatrice?", in Deena White & al., *Pour sortir des sentiers battus: l'action intersectorielle en santé mentale* (Québec : Publications du Québec, 2002), 279-297.

More than forty-five years after its publication, *History of Madness* reminds us to what extent insanity continues to shape our culture's future and to depend upon the society in which it exists, and also to what extent it has never ceased, since the Classical Age, to be perceived as the incarnation of a threat. The success of the *DSM*, which is the determining reference in psychiatry and whose successive editions continually add to the number of psychic troubles and their related biochemical treatments, shows very strikingly how *History of Madness* has failed in its attempt to widen the discourse on madness to a socio-cultural dimension. All the indications are, unfortunately, that it is the large pharmaceutical companies, and not the history of ideas, that will benefit the most from the return of the "madman" into social life. A re-reading of the 1961 thesis, whose imperfections can be forgiven in light of Foucault's later comments relating to power, normalization, control strategies, etc., offers arguments that can be used to counter all these forms of health determinism.