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INTERVIEW

Foucault and Intellectual History: An interview with Stuart Elden on his book *FOUCAULT'S LAST DECADE* (Polity Press, 2016)¹

Antoinette Koleva

Antoinette Koleva: You have been interested in – and maybe influenced by – Foucault for how long? And which are the research paths of yours that have made you keeping your interest in Foucault so alive during the years?

Stuart Elden: First, I should say that I'm very grateful for the chance to discuss this work. I first read Foucault as an undergraduate in the early 1990s, and wrote my PhD thesis on the relation between Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Heidegger. That became my first book, *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History* (Continuum 2001). Right as I began the PhD, in 1994, the French collection *Dits et Écrits* was published. This brought together almost all the shorter pieces published in Foucault's lifetime – essays, lectures, journalism, activism. For me it was really helpful in situating the books in the wider context of his work, of seeing the continuity of concerns, and filling in the gaps between, for example, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in 1969 and *Discipline and Punish* in 1975; or the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* in 1976 and the second and third in 1984.

Then in 1997 French editors began the publication of his Collège de France lecture courses. The last of these was published only in 2015, and there have been some courses from outside Paris too. So in the whole period I've been interested in Foucault, there has been a steady stream of new material. And while the lecture courses certainly anticipate some of his major publications, there is a huge amount of new material to absorb, of projects begun but not completed, some

¹ The interview will appear, translated into Bulgarian language and in a paper-printed version, in a special issue of the journal *Sociological Problems* {Социологически проблеми}, a publication of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, dedicated to the 90th anniversary of Michel Foucault. This special issue's editors are Antoinette Koleva and Kolyo Koev.

abandoned, or alternative angles on familiar concerns. So there has been a long-standing interest and a genuine curiosity about what is coming out next.

I've certainly been interested in Foucault then, but yes, certainly influenced by him too. The most substantial work I've done that has been thematic, rather than about specific theorists, has been on territory. I've long said that I couldn't have done the work I did on territory without the influence of Foucault, Heidegger and Henri Lefebvre. Foucault was crucial for that work, especially in the historical study *The Birth of Territory*. This influence shaped my whole approach to the topic, even though I believe that Foucault is historically misleading on territory specifically. Working out why that was the case was itself helpful in orientating how I approached the topic.

AK: What about the genesis of this book? I will admit that this is the period of Foucault's work that I have been always most interested in (besides the very beginning of his work, themes around *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*), and I could guess how tough it could be to work on such a sophisticated and multifaceted period of Foucault's intellectual biography... How long did you work on the book?

SE: In *Mapping the Present* I had two chapters on Foucault. One of these is on his historical approach and the role of questions of space within it; and the second is a two-part chapter which provides readings of the *History of Madness* and *Discipline and Punish* and related works. I don't say a great deal in that book about the *History of Sexuality*, so much of what I wrote is about Foucault of the 1960s and early-mid 1970s. That wasn't to say that I didn't have any interest in the later work, but just that I didn't have so much to say about it at the time.

As the lecture courses began to be published, a different way to think about Foucault from the mid-1970s to his death in 1984 began to reveal itself. In 2000, Paul Bové asked me to write a review essay of the second Collège de France course published, *Les Anormaux* – 'Abnormal' or 'The Abnormals' – for the journal *boundary 2*. Having done this, he then invited me to the University of Pittsburgh to give a couple of talks, and one of these was on 'Society Must Be Defended', the first of Foucault's courses published. These courses were from 1974-75 and 1975-76. I then wrote a book review of the third course published, *The Hermeneutic of the Subject*. And then, over the years that the courses were published, I usually gave talks on or wrote about them. Some of those pieces were published, but not all. I had a sense fairly early that in time these might be the basis for a book. And when there were just two courses left to be published, and the schedule for those was set, I began working on the book in earnest. This was in the summer of 2013.

It took about two years from beginning to write the book *as a book* to its completion, but the material that went into it stretched back to 2000, and my reading of the lecture courses as they came out beginning in 1997. Of course, I did plenty of other things along the way. I've long tended to work on major projects in parallel, rather than in sequence. And it's worth saying that much of

what I wrote earlier in this period was changed quite a bit in the writing of the book. One of the things that was unusual about the publication of Foucault's courses were that they were not published in chronological sequence. So it was only quite late in the process that you could read the courses in the order Foucault delivered them. This changed some of the ways I understood the material, and of course I dug much deeper into all the material as I brought this manuscript together.

AK: And why were Foucault's courses at College de France not published in chronological sequence?

SE: There were a few reasons. They began where they did, with '*Society Must Be Defended*', because they were trying to pre-empt an unauthorised Italian version. A couple of the lectures from the courses had been available for several years in Italian, then English and finally French. It was also in part to give a quite different insight into Foucault's work, because so much of that course did not directly relate to books published in Foucault's lifetime. As I understand it, they then allocated courses to different editors, with some taking more than one or a block of courses – Michel Sennellart for the late 1970s ones; Frédéric Gros for the 1980s ones. These editors worked at different tempos, and they sometimes alternated ones from different editors to space things out. That meant a rough alternation between 1970s ones and 1980s ones. The earliest Collège de France courses presented the most difficulties, because there were no tape recordings to work from. With the 1972-73 one, *The Punitive Society*, the tapes labelled for that course actually had the following year's course recorded on top of them. But fortunately Foucault had had a transcript made at the time, which he had himself corrected, so that became the basis for the edition. With the first two courses only Foucault's handwritten manuscript had survived, so the *Lectures on the Will to Know* and *Penal Theories and Institutions* are transcriptions of the those, rather than what he actually said in the lecture hall. Given those difficulties, this is why the earliest courses were some of the last to be published. Although I read and worked on each course as they came out, I found re-reading them in sequence to be very revealing in terms of tracing links, continuities of concerns, and how themes came and went.

AK: Would you try to give a genre-definition of your book? The only thing I could add here is that the book is so absorbing and fascinating that even its endnotes are an absolute 'must' to read. And all the time when reading you I have the feeling of reading an author who has been investigating a piece of Foucault's intellectual history via the very instruments forged and recommended by Foucault himself, is that right?

SE: The one thing I am clear about is that the book is not a biography. I don't say very much about Foucault as a person, except as how it impacts on the work. There are two very good biographies of Foucault already – by David Macey and Didier Eribon – and I think it would be hard

to improve on those. So I had a different goal in mind. I think intellectual history is the closest definition to what it is that I'm doing. One of the books that was on my mind as a model was Theodore Kiesel's *The Genesis of Heidegger's Being and Time*, which traces how and why Heidegger wrote that major, unfinished work. Kiesel uses Heidegger's lecture courses, other documentary sources including archival material and so on to track that book's development and emergence. There are other studies along similar lines with other thinkers, of course, but Kiesel's book was the real inspiration.

Foucault has been so important to me in terms of how to do a historical study that it would be surprising if something of his approach wasn't found in the book. But I'm not sure it's a very Foucauldian account of Foucault. It's certainly a genre that Foucault didn't really write himself. He wrote one very important essay on Nietzsche, a short piece on 'Nietzsche, Freud, Marx', but relatively little of his work is on specific thinkers in this way. His only book length study of a person's work, rather than a topic, is a study of the author Raymond Roussel, or there is his long introduction to his translation of Immanuel Kant's *Anthropology*. So my book isn't necessarily one he would have liked. But I hope it's helpful to people reading Foucault, in the sense that it shows the links between different parts of his work and between different registers of his work – lectures, books, collaborative reports and activism.

AK: What was the documentary support of your work? Which archives were you able or, shall I say, 'happy' – to consult? We know that Foucault did not want to have any posthumous publications, and at the same time we are witnessing a process of a constant 'liberalization' of this author's veto. Do you think that some day this prohibition would be totally removed? And, in order to get in some curious details, have you had the chance to take a glimpse at his manuscripts such as *Les Aveux de la chair*?

SE: There are three main archives of Foucault's work. First, the archive at IMEC – a contemporary French archive now housed in a converted and renovated abbey outside of Caen in Normandy. This includes the archives of the Prison Information Group, the old collection of the Centre Michel Foucault, which includes tape recordings and some manuscript material, and also the collaborative research work Foucault did with Félix Guattari's CERFI group. I worked through much of that material a decade ago, when it was still housed in Paris, and made a visit to the abbey in 2015 to go over some different material. Much of what they have has been published – it was one of the main places where you could listen to Foucault's lecture courses before they were transcribed, for example, and there are two good editions of the prison group's work. Nonetheless there is still a lot of unpublished material there.

The second archive is at the Bancroft library at University of California, Berkeley. This has some overlapping material with IMEC, but lots more tape recordings of discussions, and especially some material relating to Foucault's time in North America. Foucault taught at Berkeley from

1975 until 1984, making several visits, some of quite lengthy duration. It was clearly a very important place for him. So the archive has material relating to his teaching there and elsewhere in the US and Canada, and also material he gave to Paul Rabinow for both the book Rabinow wrote with Hubert Dreyfus, and *The Foucault Reader* which Rabinow edited. I spent a few days at this archive too.

The third place there is material is at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, at the Richelieu site in Paris. Until recently this comprised five boxes of material – an early draft of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and drafts of material that was published in the second and third volumes of the *History of Sexuality*. The latter material was my focus for this book, and it helped me to understand how those books took their eventual form in 1984. At one point Foucault had a single integrated manuscript that covered the material for both books, but then decided to split it and rework things, moving material around and changing the structure. There were successive drafts of most chapters, so it really helped me to track those changes. In addition it was exciting to see the very material traces of the writing process – Foucault's handwritten versions, ones typed by Collège de France staff, his hand annotations and old-fashioned cut and paste, and further reworked versions.

But this archive at the Bibliothèque Nationale has now had 110 extra boxes of material added to it. Only about forty boxes are currently listed in the catalogue. I didn't really use this new material for *Foucault's Last Decade*, but I did work through about thirty boxes of material for *Foucault: The Birth of Power*, which is coming out in early 2017 and which is a kind of prequel, discussing the 1969-75 period. At the moment, most of the available material comprises Foucault's reading notes – the research that he did for his lectures and books. These notes are filed thematically, and unfortunately undated. But they offer fascinating insights into what he was reading, and how he was arranging material for published and planned projects.

I've not had access to *Les Aveux de la chair*, the fourth volume of the *History of Sexuality*, though it is part of the collection now at the Bibliothèque Nationale. As far as I know only two people have looked at it – Daniel Defert, Foucault's long-term partner, and Henri-Paul Fruchaud, Foucault's nephew, who is now actively involved in the editing work. There are plans, as I understand it, to publish several more volumes of Foucault's work. The first stage will be courses before he was elected to the Collège de France – from Vincennes and Tunisia in the 1960s, but also possibly some very early courses from the 1950s. All that material is at the Bibliothèque Nationale, but in uncatalogued boxes. I think then they may turn to manuscripts, and Defert has said that *Les Aveux de la chair* will eventually be published. Of course, as you say, this goes against Foucault's explicit wishes.

AK: Let us move to a more conceptual plan: While entitling your book *Foucault's Last Decade* you nevertheless say that the book in fact offers a detailed intellectual history of his project on the *History of Sexuality*. I do think your book is far richer than that, but nevertheless: why this prioritizing of the *History of Sexuality*? Could you summarize – be it brutally simplified – the story about the *History...*, and its “basculements”?

SE: Well, Foucault was working on the *History of Sexuality* throughout the ‘last decade’ which this book examines. Material destined for the series was delivered in lecture courses from 1974, and he was working on the series right up until his death. Indeed, *Les Aveux de la chair* was being corrected in the last months of his life, and he’d expected it would be published in late 1984. Defert also said to James Miller that Foucault began writing the first volume in 1974, which I think makes sense given what we know from his teaching. So the ‘last decade’ was one in which this was, I believe, continually his key focus.

Now, in the book I talk about all of his lecture courses from this period, all his publications, the collaborative research from his seminars and so on. So the book is richer than a narrow focus on just the three volumes of the *History of Sexuality* which he published in that time. But I make the case that almost everything he did in that period was connected, in some way, to that series. There are exceptions of course. The book he compiled and co-authored with Arlette Farge, *Le désordre des familles*, was the culmination of work on the Bastille archive he began in the 1950s; the collaborative research projects and seminars treated different themes. But many of his lecture courses were preparatory to work he intended, at one time or another, for the sexuality project. And as that series transformed into a history of subjectivity, many more themes were linked.

The whole book is really an account of the story about the sexuality project, with all its detours, dead ends and new discoveries. But the key issue I try to address is how Foucault’s plan shifted from the thematic version he outlined in the first volume, published in 1976, to the much more historical version he was working on at his death. In 1976 he said there would be volumes on various topics – confession, perverts, children, women, races and populations. But he published none of these, though there are traces of each in his lectures and elsewhere. There are indications that more is in the archive, though I’ve not yet been able to consult this. In 1984 two books appeared on ancient Greece and Rome, and the fourth volume on the early Church was said to be forthcoming. So, how did he shift from one plan to the other? That’s really what I tried to address. The key, for me, to this story is the problem of confession. It’s the topic of the initially planned second volume, and the focus of the missing fourth volume of the later historical version – *Les aveux de la chair* would translate as ‘The confession of the flesh’ or ‘The avowal of the flesh’. I think a lot of the detours of the series can be understood if we realise that all along Foucault was trying to write a book on confession, and in so doing was led down many different paths.

AK: While staying on the “concepts’ ground”: You say ‘confession’ must have been the most important, in terms of a structuring concept, for the last decade in Foucault’s work. Would you please motivate this claim of yours? Why choose not to put the accent on the concept of ‘power’ instead of interpreting the confession as a (one of the) form(s) of power? And what must have been the function of ‘confession’ in the very process of re-formulating the plans for the study on sexuality itself?

SE: Power is certainly really important, and I don’t neglect that as a theme in his work. It’s crucial, especially in the 1970s – the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* has a very important chapter on this, for example. The second of my two books on Foucault takes that as a central topic – how did power emerge as a key theme in Foucault’s work in the early 1970s? In this book confession is crucial to me because for Foucault it’s a problem. He is initially interested in confession because it is a mechanism shared by the church, by judicial practice and psychoanalysis. Sex is a theme in all – confession of sins, sexual crimes, and of course sexual behavior and mental state. He’s especially interested, in the mid-1970s, in the way confession becomes institutionalized in the Catholic Church. There are indications of this in the *Abnormals* lecture course and in the first volume of the *History of Sexuality*. I think this is what he intended to cover in the initially announced second volume of the series, *La chair et le corps*, ‘The Flesh and the Body’. But Foucault says that he came to realise that the claims he was making about the sixteenth century actually had a much longer heritage in the Christian tradition, and so he moved back further and further historically, ending up with discussions of the early Church fathers – people like Tertullian, Augustine and John Cassian. And he says that his introduction to the reconfigured book on confession in the church, which is now under the title of *Les Aveux de la chair*, treated pagan antiquity. This analysis was there to contextualize the discussion of early Christianity. But Foucault says he began to realise that this relied on what he calls ‘clichés’ from the secondary literature, and so he decided to investigate that earlier period for himself. And this is what led to the material in the actually published second and third volumes.

So the initially planned second volume is transformed, through the process of its research and its writing, to look at a completely different historical period, and it leads him to write initially one book, and then two books, on antiquity. So the ‘confession’ book is pushed down the publication order – from the second volume, to the third and then, finally, the fourth. But Foucault’s death means it is never published, and so the series in its revised form is not completed. Now, that’s a heavily compressed summary of what I spend much of the book explaining in detail, of course, but it’s the key contours of the argument. Confession in a sense moves from being a mechanism of power to an insight into the relation between the subject and truth. And all this is based on what Foucault himself said about the series and its transformations. But I hope that by putting his comments on this problem together, and filling in all the details we now have from his lecture courses and other material, I’m better able to account for just how that worked.

AK: ‘Governmentality’ might be able to take “the first prize” if one would try to assess the relative weight of the contemporary uses of – and studies after – Foucault’s conceptual inventions. At the end of your book you mention Foucault’s research seminar at Berkeley in 1983. Would you give us some details?

SE: Foucault’s work on ‘governmentality’ is certainly something that has had a series of after-lives. Tracing the ways that it has been picked up and developed wasn’t an aim with this book – I had a focus on Foucault himself, and people like Thomas Lemke, Mitchell Dean and William Walters have done much of that work on its uses and development. Colin Gordon’s introduction to *The Foucault Effect* is also very valuable. I would say that Foucault was using the term to analyse a quite specific set of historical events, in focused places. Perhaps more care is needed in the development and application of those terms. But to turn to the specific questions.

Foucault gave lectures at Berkeley in the autumn of 1983 on *parrēsia*, which have been available for some time in English as *Fearless Speech* and which were recently published in a critical French edition as *Discours et vérité*. Alongside these lectures Foucault met with a group of students at Paul Rabinow’s house near campus. There is a picture of several of these students with Foucault in the Didier Eribon biography – Foucault is wearing a cowboy hat, which was their parting gift to him. I spoke to several of the people in that picture, and they were able to give some details of what was discussed. The students and Foucault developed plans for a collaborative research project, which would return to the question of governmentality. The idea was that they would study the early twentieth century, with a focus on France, Italy, the US and the USSR. The French work would be done by Foucault, of course, but David Horn would look at Italy, Keith Gandal the USA, and Stephen Kotkin the USSR. The plan was that Foucault would return to Berkeley in the autumn of 1984, but of course he died in June of that year, and so it never happened. There is a report of what was planned in one of the first issues of the *History of the Present* newsletter coordinated by Rabinow and others at Berkeley, and a project outline on “New Arts of Government in the Great War and Post-War Period” can be found in the IMEC archive. The part on France was never written due to Foucault’s death, but Horn’s *Social Bodies*, Gandal’s *The Gun and the Pen* and Kotkin’s *Magnetic Mountain* were all eventually published, and all are explicit in linking their development back to these 1983 discussions. I recently edited a discussion Foucault had with another Berkeley student, Jonathan Simon, for publication in *Theory, Culture and Society*.

AK: You are talking about the conversation “Danger, Crime and Rights”, aren’t you? It is a conversation with more psychological – or even psychiatric – dimensions. Would you please shed some more light on the topics? And the context?

SE: It was a tape in the archive at Berkeley, and I talked to Jonathan about it. I’d met him at a conference on Foucault, and I thought the discussion might be of wider interest. It was a recording of a meeting between them in October 1983, while Foucault was teaching at Berkeley. They

begin by discussing Foucault's essay "About the Concept of the 'Dangerous Individual'", and move onto discussions of rights, politics and crime in US and French contexts. Jonathan told me that he'd had a transcript made at the time, and shortly after Foucault's death had tried to get it published. But the journal said that he spoke too much, and it would need to be billed as 'Foucault interviews Simon', rather than the reverse. In the 1980s this perhaps would not have been of much appeal. But I felt that today, with Jonathan now a Professor at Berkeley and a leading figure in debates about the US legal system, this would be of real interest. It is also, as Jonathan says, an insight into Foucault as the research mentor, meeting a much earlier career researcher and taking time to discuss their interests and work. Jonathan could not find the original transcript, so I had it transcribed again, and edited the text, and Jonathan kindly agreed to write a very revealing reflection on their meeting and discussion. While it was in production a copy of the original transcript was found in a Toronto archive – a good example of the continued discoveries of new pieces of evidence in the story of Foucault's work.

AK: Still related to the 'governmentality' topic: Do you think that all that today's (quite shrilling) "mixing up" of Foucault with the neoliberalism is relevant?

SE: Foucault and neoliberalism has been discussed for some time, and then again recently, with the supposed 'revelation' that Foucault had some sympathy to it. There are several things to say about this. The first is that the recent work does not seem, as far as I am aware, to have uncovered any new material with which to substantiate its claims. The sources seem to be the 1978-79 lecture course *The Birth of Biopolitics* and some contemporaneous interviews, all long available. Yet we know that there was other work done – course editor Michel Senellart mentions a manuscript on liberalism, there is the limited work developing from the 1983 Berkeley seminar, the 1981 work at Louvain, and some Collège de France seminars on related themes. Foucault met with various people in Paris late in his life to discuss contemporary socialism, no documentary traces of which seem to be available. In time more of this material may come to light. The second thing that seems to be missed is that Foucault's interest in neoliberalism is in some senses similar to his interest in reason of state or the pastoral in the previous year's course, or the early Church in the following year. With each he is working in a similar way, unpacking and examining these historical texts, in the service of a wider project. The closer temporal proximity to neoliberalism perhaps makes it more tempting to say whether Foucault was 'for' or 'against' the thing he was studying, but I think this is fundamentally to confuse what he is actually doing. The final thing I'd say about this is that the specific context in which Foucault was working seems to be missed. Why was Foucault interested in these questions in 1979? I think there are at least two reasons – first the immediate political context of late 1970s France, and wider issues in Europe. And second, the writing projects he was engaged with at the time. I say most about the second in the book, but the first context is also important.

AK: Another somewhat personally partial question while we are still in Foucault's "concepts fields": I have just finished translating into Bulgarian the lectures of Foucault at the Collège de France in 1982-1983, *The Government of Self and Others*, being quite fascinated by the topics such as *parresia* and its uses not by the historical personages Foucault observes but by Foucault himself. Don't you think the analysis of *parresia* functions much stronger as a mark for Foucault's strives for self-defining, namely as a means for him to identify, locate and 'label' so to say his own work?

SE: I'm sure there is a biographical context to some of Foucault's later work, especially as he realizes that his own health is failing and he comes to terms with his mortality. There is the reading of the death of Socrates in the following year's course, where he says that a philosopher has to discuss this at least once in his career, and that he has now paid his debt. And there is certainly something in the discussion of the self, the care of the self, and the mode of self-creation. Foucault's 1982 Toronto lectures are being edited for publication at the moment, and these were under the title of 'Telling the Truth about Oneself [Dire vrai sur soi-même]'. One of the people I talked to who knew Foucault suggested that this was very much about his own identity as a gay man, even though the course was on Seneca, Cassian and Augustine. I accept there is something in that, though I wouldn't want to reduce Foucault's work to his biography; and as I've said, I was clear I was not writing a biography.

The three courses on *parrēsia* – in Paris in 1982-83 and 1983-84, and Berkeley in 1983 – along with elements elsewhere such as *The Hermeneutic of the Subject* course from 1981-82 are interesting. They are clearly related to the *History of Sexuality* project, which was being finalized in parallel with these lectures, but they also point to planned work beyond them. They treat a similar time period – from classical Greece to the Hellenistic period and the early Roman Empire, through to early Christianity – but pose some different questions. There are various indications of the books that Foucault intended to publish on these themes, outside of the *History of the Sexuality* series. Confusingly, at one point *The Care of the Self* was the title for one of those separate volumes, but then Foucault decides to use it as the title of one of the sexuality volumes, as he rearranges that material. I try to disentangle the projects. There are certainly discussions of material which he planned to publish for which the lectures are currently the best glimpse into his work, but the editor of the late courses, Frédéric Gros, mentions the extensive notes and material to be found in the archive. *Parrēsia* was certainly one of those themes, though with the detailed lectures on this – and one from Grenoble has also come to light recently – we have a good sense of what Foucault was doing with this topic.

AK: While still talking about the ensemble of lectures from *The Government of Self and Others* - a slightly misleading title, sure, for those great analyses of the truth-telling - I would like to draw your attention to some of Foucault's statements: about the need of elaborating "ontologies of the discourse of truth" while thinking of ontology "as a fiction", and seeing the very history of

thought as a history of “singular inventions”. Have you ever had the chance to stumble across any pieces of archival texts which could explain such, so to say, solemn utterances?

SE: I've not worked through the archival material on those very concerns, which are mentioned by Gros in his editorial notes to the late courses, because, to my knowledge, they are not yet publically accessible. I think what we find in the very last years of Foucault's life is him trying to work on two large projects in parallel. One is his *History of Sexuality*, which we've already discussed, but crucially its reformulation as a history of subjectivity. Sexuality becomes, I think, for Foucault a means of accessing that more fundamental question. At the same time, this work proliferates into a whole set of analyses of what he calls technologies of the self. In some late interviews he discusses how that project might proceed to publication. There are overlaps between those two projects of course, but I think in his lectures and publication plans he is alternately between them. The bulk of what becomes the sexuality books was drafted by 1981, although Foucault was reworking and redrafting material right up until his death, and the work on the unpublished fourth volume on Christianity was cut short by it. But at the same time he was working on a similar historical period but with different concerns. Those concerns come through in his final three Paris lecture courses. Truth is one of the elements within this work, but it is broader than just that. And the language on ontology and history of thought is prevalent throughout this period. One of the earliest essays I wrote on Foucault was entitled 'Reading Genealogy as Historical Ontology', where I traced the connections between Foucault, Heidegger and Nietzsche. That was based on the research for my PhD thesis, which became the *Mapping the Present* book. I think much of Foucault's work is an attempt to question the ontological basis of much of Western thought, and he does this by rendering its concerns historical. It's there in the notion of the historical *a priori*, in the work of *The Order of Things*, and in the last writings in explicit form, but I think it runs throughout his career. So I'd see those claims about ontology you highlight as part of that wider project. So many of Foucault's concerns are means of access to deeper questions.

AK: I have been delighted to read countless hints, in your book, about the need – if one would like to be closer to an 'objective truth' – to totally crash down the myth of some “cuts”, ruptures in Foucault's works and problematizations during the years (i.e. an early Foucault influenced by phenomenology, then a more post-structuralist Foucault, then an archaeologist, then a genealogist, then a 'later Foucault', etc.). Have you managed to find out evidence to completely refute such a view?

SE: Well, I think the lecture courses show this – I'm not sure it needs a commentator to point out that some of those periodizations of Foucault are problematic. But yes, I certainly try to disrupt the simple periodizations of Foucault's work. Alan Sheridan's early book on Foucault had two parts – the archaeology of knowledge and the genealogy of power – and that contrast has continued in some of the ways we read Foucault. I think the English 'Essential Works' has perhaps so-

lidified that as well – a thematic collection, with volumes on Ethics, Aesthetics and Power, compared to the chronological arrangement of the French *Dits et écrits*.

Now this isn't to say of course that Foucault doesn't go through some quite important transitions in his thinking. The language of cuts, breaks or ruptures is interesting here. At one point Foucault is asked if he is a thinker of discontinuity, and he responds to say that he is often seen as that, but really what he's trying to do is to indicate supposed discontinuities, and then show how actually we can trace the small transitions that led from one to the other, and that the break is anything but stark when viewed in that way. It's the reason he begins *The Birth of the Clinic* and *Discipline and Punish*, for example, with those dramatic contrasts. Often those books are read as if the contrast was his point, but really it's the rest of the book's purpose to interrogate the much more gradual transition. Something similar is going on with his own work, I think. So instead of a shift from power to ethics, for example, between *History of Sexuality* volume I and the later volumes, I try to show how there was a much more nuanced and gradual transition. The lecture courses help dramatically in showing this. In the earlier period which I examine in *Foucault: The Birth of Power*, I try to read his first few Collège de France courses to show the slow emergence of this term in his work, and the development of genealogy as an approach. It's striking to me that though his essay 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History' appeared in 1971, even as late as 1973 he is suggesting that a dynastic analysis might be the complement to archaeology. The 1970-71 course *Lectures on the Will to Know* shows that Foucault was deeply familiar with Greek thought, and this challenges claims that Foucault only turns to Greece late in his career. So the lectures challenge any straightforward chronology of his work, and I try to show those more gradual transitions in my writing.

AK: What was your major personal pathos when writing the book? And, in order to slightly divert from that: What has always been the one among Foucault's concepts that you have always used, though agreeing or disagreeing with Foucault in its definition(s)? What is the 'general lesson' Foucault is teaching us when working with his concepts is concerned?

SE: The key thing I take from Foucault is his way of posing questions, of interrogating things historically for the light that they then shed on contemporary concerns and practices. His way of working is inspirational, and I'd challenge anyone who thinks he wasn't a diligent scholar to spend some time going through his handwritten notes in the archive, which show just how much preparatory work went into his lectures and books. The references are not always made directly, which makes sense in lectures, and is perhaps more to do with a particular French way of working when it comes to his books. Going through those notes has been humbling – it's really astonishing how hard he must have worked. And it is striking how much material he developed which he never published – not only the late manuscripts which he did not live to complete, but lots of material from earlier in his career which seems to have been delivered as a lecture once, and never returned to.

So there was an admiration for his work that only increased the more I studied it. It certainly wasn't the case that the deeper I dug the more the shallow foundations became apparent. Now, this isn't to say that there is nothing problematic about his work, and that I don't disagree with him on some things. I mentioned the work I did on territory, for example. Although I've challenged his reading of the shift from territory to population as an object of government, I was enormously inspired by his own work on government in that period, and in working through his lectures on this I was able to better situate my own research. It also inspired me in *The Birth of Territory* to really work hard on the archive, in tracing the story with care. I've said before that I get a bit annoyed when people think they can do a genealogy of something in the first few pages of a journal article, and then move onto contemporary concerns. Genealogy is, Foucault says, "grey, meticulous and patiently documentary", and I think his work measures up to that standard. It's certainly the one I've aimed for, both in the work on territory and, in these two books, on Foucault's own thought.

AK: As far as *Foucault's Last Decade* is concerned, you say that the book does not have a conclusion intentionally. Would you please explain? At a place you also state that you have used, in your book, a great amount of archive material; but you admit that a next one dedicated to Foucault will be based upon many more documents. Would you present your ongoing project, I mean your newest study on Foucault? Do you plan a sort of a 'Foucault series' of books?

The conclusion is not there because the story is not yet complete. Unless and until *Les aveux de la chair* is published, and perhaps some of the material Foucault drafted in the 1970s and 1980s for other planned books in the sexuality series and outside it, there are gaps in the story. So, I resisted any attempt to provide a final statement. I hope that what I've written so far is a good account based on all the available material, but I may need to revisit it as and when other sources become available. I published this book when I did because all the Collège de France courses were available, at least in French. As I said, it was in development for much longer, but I decided I could complete it when I knew the schedule for the last couple of courses, and then they were published while I was focused on turning all the material I had into a book. But as I've also said, the publication work is ongoing, and new things are coming to light. For all those reasons I didn't feel a conclusion was appropriate.

Foucault: The Birth of Power developed out of the research for *Foucault's Last Decade*. There was initially going to be an introductory chapter on the work of the early 1970s to set the analysis of 1974-84 in context. But this chapter became two chapters, which were each quite long. I had some other material on that earlier period which wasn't included. And when I completed a draft of *Foucault's Last Decade* it was far too long overall. I went back to the publisher, Polity, to discuss and in the end we decided that I would write a separate book on that earlier period. So I took the first two chapters of *Foucault's Last Decade* out, revised that text to be a much more tightly fo-

cused study of 1974-84 and submitted it for review. I then took the two chapters from the earlier version and split each into three parts. This gave me the beginnings of the six chapters of *Foucault: The Birth of Power*. I therefore already had a lot of material to use for that second book, and I'd assembled a collection of materials on that period – all the published work in French and English, some documentary material, and also knew where to find the unpublished materials. This second book came together fairly quickly, as I was on research leave at the time. In this period the archive in Paris was opened up much more, and I made several visits there to work through materials. I went back to IMEC, as I said. I was able to expand the treatment of various themes, now that I was writing a book on this period, rather than a couple of chapters. In particular I say a lot more about his political activism at this time – the prisons group, of course, but also his involvement with a group on health concerns. They worked on issues such as industrial accidents, immigrant health and were involved in the struggle for abortion rights. Foucault was not as centrally involved as he was in the prisons group, but I thought there was a good story to tell.

For the moment, these two books, which treat 1969-75 and 1974-84, with a slight temporal overlap, are the culmination of work I've been doing on Foucault. Everything I've written on Foucault is now either out or forthcoming – *Foucault: The Birth of Power* will be out in very early 2017. But I am thinking of writing another book on Foucault, treating the 1960s and perhaps even the 1950s. I'm waiting to see what they announce for publication, but I hope that the Tunisia and Vincennes courses will transform our understanding of Foucault's work in the 1960s in the same way the Collège de France courses have for the 1970s and 1980s. It may be some time before this material is all made available – it took eighteen years to publish thirteen Collège de France courses. For these early courses, and the very early ones from the ENS and elsewhere, we have Foucault's manuscript and some student notes: there are no tapes. So I suspect the archive for this material will only be available after they have been published. But there are a few boxes of Foucault's reading notes from the 1960s which are available and which I've not yet looked at. I have another Paris trip booked for December, so I hope to begin looking at those then.

AK: Let's do a circle-like move, though slightly going outside the book of yours we are discussing: At the very beginning of the interview you mentioned that Foucault was historically misleading on territory specifically, in terms of concept. At the same time your personal website 'Progressive Geographies' – sloganed 'Thinking about place and power', a very insightful and informative place, a great place to regularly look at – is in fact quite a Foucault influenced place of thinking of territory. Would you risk a couple of sentences if I invite you to make a short abstract here concerning 'territory' and your characteristic distantiating regarding Foucault?

SE: Absolutely. Foucault was incredibly useful to me in thinking about the question of territory. All the three main thinkers that I've worked on – Heidegger, Lefebvre and Foucault – have informed my way of thinking about it. With Foucault, his historical approach was probably the

most crucial inspiration to the way I went about asking these questions, as well as his continued insistence on the important of space to the exercise of power. In his lecture course *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault makes a broad schematic argument that the object of government shifted from territory to population, or at least that discourses of political rule started to emphasise the latter. Foucault suggests that the modern notion of 'population' emerges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and he tracks earlier elements of this notion at different times in Western political thought. I think what he does with population is extraordinary, and extraordinarily productive in thinking about politics. My challenge is to the way he characterises 'territory' as the object of government in the earlier period, such that it can be eclipsed later. I actually think territory emerges at the specific concept rather later, indeed later than Foucault thinks it is replaced as the dominant focus of political rule. I take issue with his reading of some of the key thinkers – Foucault sees territory as crucial for Machiavelli, but I think it's largely absent from his work; Foucault suggests Botero is indicative of the shift, but I think Botero is a thoroughly spatial political thinker, and so on. But while I take issue with the specifics of Foucault's reading, I think that the broader approach he takes is of real use in thinking about territory. And this is because, in part, I see territory emerging as a focus at around the same time as the question of population. Most crucially, the same kinds of developments in political calculation which Foucault sees as important for population are, for me, also important for tracing the history of territory. So Foucault was fundamental to my thinking on territory, even if the specific things he says about territory are, to my mind, at best historically misleading. I tell the story of territory in the book *The Birth of Territory*, which is a book very much inspired by Foucault, and challenge his readings in detail in two essays – 'Governmentality, Calculation, Territory', and 'How Should we do the History of Territory?'

AK: And in order to finish this interview, one last question going a little bit away from the book: What about the history, the concept itself and the role of the periodical *Foucault Studies*? It seems to me that it is quite a strong centre of the scholars working on Foucault's texts, and you have a distinguished position in this periodical's board.

SE: I was one of the founding editors of the journal, along with Alan Rosenberg and Clare O'Farrell. Together we edited the first four issues, but this was an online, open access journal with no author charges and no institutional support. It was a lot of work to put together – edited to high standards, and we spent a lot of time between us choosing and chasing referees, making decisions, copy-editing papers, formatting pdfs and designing the website. Clare and I felt that it was unsustainable on this model, and planned to close it. But the journal was rescued by Sverre Raffensøe who brought his own energies to the journal, and managed to secure some funding which has made its continued existence possible. Alan continued working with the new team, and there are of course many others involved. I've not had much involvement with the journal since I stepped down as editor, but I'm always delighted to see new issues. The journal has been a home for work on Foucault, inspired by Foucault, and some translations of work by Foucault.

It's also published some useful research tools – Alain Beaulieu published a piece detailing what was in the Berkeley archive, for example. I recently added to this with a piece listing all the short pieces by Foucault that were not in *Dits et écrits* – a list I'd been compiling for my own research, but which I hoped would be useful for others. I can't take any credit for the success of the journal, given I stepped down a decade ago, but it is great to see it thrive.

Bio-bibliography: Stuart Elden

Stuart Elden is Professor of Political Theory and Geography at University of Warwick and Monash Warwick Professor in the Faculty of Arts at Monash University. He is the author of seven books including *The Birth of Territory* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), *Foucault's Last Decade* (Polity, 2016) and *Foucault: The Birth of Power* (Polity, 2017). He has been involved in editing several collections of Henri Lefebvre's writings, and has edited or co-edited books on Kant, Foucault and Sloterdijk. He runs a blog at www.progressivegeographies.com and his current project examines different aspects of territory in Shakespeare's plays

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Antoinette (Antoaneta) Koleva is director of Critique and Humanism Publishing House (Sofia, Bulgaria) and the Bulgarian language translator of M. Foucault's *Maladie mentale et psychologie*, *L'histoire de la folie à l'âge classique*, *L'archéologie du savoir*, *Surveiller et Punir*, *La volonté de savoir*, *L'usage des plaisirs*, *Le souci de soi*, *Le Gouvernement de soi et des autres: Cours au Collège de France. 1982-1983*, as well as of two collections of Foucault's texts co-edited and prefaced by her (1997): *Power and Enlightenment and Critique*. She has also translated Foucault's texts in another collection co-edited and prefaced by her (1996): *M. Foucault, J. Derrida, Madness*. A. Koleva is author of a number of essays on Foucault's work.

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