

BOOK REVIEW

Marcelo Hoffman (special ed.), *Foucault and the Politics of Resistance in Brazil. The Carceral Notebooks 13*. (2017-2018). pp. 230. <http://www.thecarceral.org/journal-vol13.html>.

Michel Foucault set foot in Brazil not once or twice but five times between 1965 and 1976. A prolific scholarship that draws inspiration from Foucault's far-reaching and multifaceted research now attests to his significance in Brazil. That scholarship ranges across different fields of study, from law to education, from psychology to sociology, from history to philosophy, and from political science to criminology. Foucault's writings have also stimulated different political groups (mostly anarchists and autonomists) as well as practices of freedom and resistance across Brazil.

This recent volume of the *Carceral Notebooks*, edited by Marcelo Hoffman, is a new and welcome contribution to the study of Foucault's relation to Brazil and of the Brazilian reception of Foucault's work. Hoffman and the general editor of the *Carceral Notebooks*, Bernard E. Harcourt, collaborated on the production of the volume in the wake of Heliana de Barros Conde Rodrigues's cutting-edge book *Ensaio sobre Michel Foucault no Brasil: Presença, efeitos, ressonâncias* (Essays on Michel Foucault in Brazil: Presence, Effects, Resonances) from 2016 and under the shadow of Bolsonaro's victory in the presidential election of 2018. Taking into account the fact that Foucault's visits to Brazil occurred during the period of the military dictatorship (1964-1985), a critical "revisiting" of his time in Brazil is assumed in this volume as a springboard for a renewed reflection on the authoritarianisms of our present moment. If, indeed, "the ethico-political choice we have to make every day is to determine which is the main danger,"¹ in Foucault's own words, then this book rightly addresses the great danger of our current times by placing itself as a response to Bolsonaro's election. For this reason, the present volume of the *Carceral Notebook*—an outcome of the workshop "Foucault and the Politics of Resistance in Brazil" held at the Columbia Global Center in Rio de Janeiro in 2018—offers a timely and piercing anthology that advances the task of a diagnosis of the present.

Whereas the volume is thematically unified by the general heading of Foucault's relation with Brazil, it actually includes multiple approaches and varying points of view on it, which enlarge and enrich the reader's grasp of the many experiences of Foucault in Brazil. Thus, the reader encounters biographical anecdotes of Foucault's sojourn in the country (José Castilho Marques Neto; Ernani Chaves); analyses of the development of his ideas against the backdrop of his presentations in Brazil (Salma Tannus Muchail and Márcio Alves da Fonseca; Priscila Piazzentini Vieira); critical assessments of his intervention in Brazilian politics in light of his philosophical commitments (Marcelo

Hoffman; Heliana de Barros Conde Rodrigues and Rosimeri de Oliveira Dias; Oswaldo Giacoia Junior); creative applications of his conceptual tools to Brazilian reality (Mauricio Pelegrini; Margareth Rago) and an account of the ways in which Foucault's work motivated the penal abolitionism of the Center of Anarchist Sociability (Nu-Sol) in São Paulo (Edson Passetti). As Hoffman sums it up in the introduction: "What emerges collectively from the essays is the importance of Brazil as a space of conceptual and political innovation for Foucault and the significance of Foucault for debates about theory and politics in Brazil." (2).

The first paper of the volume, "Power and Resistance: Foucault's Laboratory in Brazil" by Salma Tannus Muchail and Márcio Alves da Fonseca, gives weight to the hypothesis of Brazil as a testing ground in which Foucault allowed himself to probe new ideas and open up different investigative paths. Fonseca and Muchail show how Foucault's 1973 lectures at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), "Truth and Juridical Forms," and his lectures at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) on the topic of social medicine in 1974 elaborate on his analysis of disciplinary society and also expand it with the concept of biopolitics. This passage from the discipline of the individual body to the regulation of the populational body would be of extreme importance for the development of Foucault's thought in the subsequent years, with the 1975-1976 course "*Society Must Be Defended*" and the publication of Volume I of *The History of Sexuality* in 1976. And this movement of Foucault's thought, as Muchail and Fonseca demonstrate, was anticipated, tested, and developed throughout his lectures at PUC-Rio and UERJ on distinctive and complementary forms.

Next on the list, there is the piece written by the special editor Marcelo Hoffman, which bears the title "From Public Silence to Public Protest: Foucault at the University of São Paulo in 1975." In brief, it sets out to comprehend why it took so long for Foucault to take a public stance against the Brazilian military government. For it was only in 1975, in his fourth visit to the country and in the context of massive student uprisings, that Foucault came to denounce the political persecutions and systematic oppression of the dictatorial regime. But Foucault must have certainly known, at least to some degree, about the arbitrary violence of the military government prior to 1975. So why did he not openly criticize it in his previous journeys to Brazil? With meticulously conducted research, Hoffman ponders this question and contemplates it from different perspectives, while taking stock of Foucault's conception of "specific intellectual." Furthermore, Hoffman provokes us to think about silence not as a sign of omission or complicity on Foucault's part but much more as a strategic and well-thought-out form of action.

The third piece, "In the Taxi with Michel Foucault: Memories of a Twenty-Two-Year-Old Philosophy Student" gives us a first-hand account of José Castilho Marques Neto's encounter with Foucault that illuminates the historico-political setting of Foucault's excursions in Brazil in the 1970s. It is followed by Ernani Chaves's personal report of Foucault's lecture in Belem on his last trip to Brazil in 1976, mediated by the towering intellectual figure of Benedito Nunes, one of Brazil's greatest philosophers, as both an interpreter and interlocutor to Foucault.

Next, Heliana de Barros Conde Rodrigues and Rosimeri de Oliveira Dias supply a thoughtful and thorough description of Foucault's relation to different "tiny press" (*imprensa nanica*) vehicles in Brazil. The "tiny press" comprised counter-hegemonic media outlets that flourished underground during the military regime that succeeded the 1964 coup d'état. Rodrigues and Dias take up the qualification of "tiny" (*nanica*) in an explicit reference to the "becoming minoritarian" of Deleuze and Guattari and in contradistinction to traditional media channels, which tended to be either passively complacent or forthrightly complicit with the authoritarian government. Rodrigues and Dias cautiously uncover and flesh out the direct or more diffuse reverberations of Foucault's presence in Brazil in the independent and alternative press, with a detailed account of his participation in *Versus* and *Jornal da tarde*. Thus, the piece is valuable not only for its diligent research on an unexplored effect of Foucault's relation to Brazil but also for its retrieval of several excerpts from these "tiny press" vehicle interviews with Foucault that are by no means easily accessible.

After that, Mauricio Pelegrini explores the provocative, albeit inchoate and oblique notion of "political spirituality" from Foucault's work, especially in his engagement with the 1979 Iranian revolution. First, Pelegrini identifies key passages in which Foucault deals with this notion of "political spirituality" and seeks to analyze it in three interrelated dimensions: historical, religious, and subjective. Having accomplished this and giving more substance to "political spirituality" as a practice of self-shaping that is historically circumscribed and collectively coordinated in a political movement of transformation, the author then employs it as "a conceptual support for understanding liberation theology and its fields of action in Latin America as a counter conduct to the various authoritarian governments that were established in the region during the 1960s and 1970s" (132-3). Thus, in an ingenious and instructive appropriation of the concept of "political spirituality", Pelegrini gives concrete evidence of the inexhaustible potential of Foucault's philosophical toolbox.

In turn, in the paper "Foucault, Subjectivity, and Self-Writing in Brazilian Feminism," Margareth Rago makes use of a different set of Foucauldian conceptual resources to investigate the rise of different strands of the feminist movement in the last four decades of the 20th century in Brazil. By bringing to bear an array of concepts from Foucault's late work such as "arts of living," "self-writing," "counter-conducts," and "parrhesia", Rago delves into the lives of three emblematic feminist activists: Ivone Gebara, a Catholic nun and feminist philosopher-theologian, author of the book *Rompendo o silêncio: Uma fenomenologia feminista do mal* (*Breaking the Silence: A Feminist Phenomenology of Evil*); Crimeia Alice Schmidt de Almeida, a political militant of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) and guerrilla fighter at Araguaia; and Gabriela Silva Leite, champion of sex workers' rights and founder of the non-governmental organization *Davida – Prostitution, Civil Rights, Health*. The result is a compelling examination of their lives from a Foucauldian perspective that emphasizes the politics of the self and virtue of a critical attitude.

Oswaldo Giacoia Junior, in "Beyond a Critic of Human Rights: Foucault in Brazil," begins by giving a picture of Foucault as both a genealogist in the trail of Nietzsche and a critical philosopher in the Kantian tradition. From this, Giacoia meticulously considers

the apparent ambiguity of Foucault as a critic and supporter of human rights; one who acutely detected the dispositifs of subjection at play in the formation of modern subjectivity and who also publicly denounced the Brazilian dictatorship in 1975 and the tragic deadlock of the “boat people” in 1984. In the end, Giacoia ventures to think about Foucault’s formulation of “new right,” that is, of a kind of law unhinged from the principle of state sovereignty.

Priscila Piazzentini Vieira reflects upon the novelty of Foucault’s experience of militancy in the Prisons Information Group (GIP) in the framework of his lectures “Truth and Juridical Forms” at PUC-Rio in 1973. More specifically, Vieira zooms in on the resonance of Foucault’s undertaking with the GIP at the roundtable discussion succeeding the lectures as a means of elucidating the interconnectedness in Foucault between “theory and practice, thought and militancy, discourse and life” (205). Through this, Vieira manages to shed light on the peculiarity of his attitude as a “specific intellectual” who refused to speak on behalf of others and who aimed instead to give them instruments for taking up the political stage and voicing their own claims.

Finally, Edson Passetti considers the blend between Foucault’s critical analysis of disciplinary power and Louk Hulsman’s radical proposal of penal abolitionism as a powerful source of inspiration for his brand of anarchist abolitionism at the Nu-Sol (Center of Anarchist Sociability) in São Paulo. Taking up the penal abolitionism of Nu-Sol as a kind of “heterotopia of journey” (220), in the manner of Foucault’s 1967 talk “Des espaces autres,” Passetti gives testimony to a form of practice that could be perhaps thought to belong to the same lineage of the GIP’s militant endeavor.

Overall, then, this present volume of the *Carceral Notebooks* is of immense value to those who wish to appreciate oft-neglected and meagerly explored facets of Foucault’s intellectual and militant trajectory, especially on the terrain of his intricate relation to Brazil. Owing to the extensiveness and heterogeneity of critical engagements between Foucault and Brazil assembled in this volume, it sets a mark for all future research on this promising area of investigation.

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2018). Furthermore, he was the recipient of a competitive grant from the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) for the publication of this book, which was the result of his MA thesis at PUC-SP (2016).