Michel Foucault and Francophone geography.

Circulations, conversions and disappearances.

Par Juliet Fall

Claude Raffestin s'est penché récemment dans EspacesTemps.*net* (Raffestin 2005) sur son article de 1997 « Foucault aurait-il pu révolutionner la géographie? ». En contraste avec le peu d'écho de Michel Foucault dans le monde de la géographie francophone, le monde des sciences sociales et de la géographie anglo-saxonne ne jure que par lui — une histoire contée en partie récemment par François Cusset dans son livre *French Theory : Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze & Cie et les Mutations de la Vie Intellectuelle aux États-Unis* (2003). L'histoire du succès de certains aspects de la pensée de Foucault en géographie sera relatée dans un livre qui paraîtra prochainement sous le titre de *Space, Knowledge, Power : Foucault and Geography,* Aldershot, Ashgate (2006) sous la direction de Jeremy Crampton et Stuart Elden, deux chercheurs travaillant respectivement aux États-Unis et en Grande-Bretagne. Dans le cadre de cet ouvrage, l'article suivant, publié ici dans une première version pour stimuler le débat, fait le point de l'impact de Foucault sur la géographie francophone. Prévu pour un public anglophone, il tente de raconter l'histoire parallèle de la géographie Francophone qui fait contraste avec le monde *Anglo*.

Claude Raffestin recently reflected in EspacesTemps.*net* (Raffestin 2005) on his 1997 paper 'Foucault aurait-il pu révolutionner la géographie ?'. The question remains particularly timely, particularly in the Francophone world. In contrast to the lack of interest in Michel Foucault's writings within Francophone geographies, Anglophone social science's love affair with Foucault is well known — a tale recently told by François Cusset in his book French Theory: Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze & Cie et les Mutations de la Vie Intellectuelle aux États-Unis (2003). The story of the success of certain parts of Foucault's *oeuvre* more specifically within geography will be further developed in a book published next

year entitled *Space, Knowledge, Power: Foucault and Geography*, Aldershot: Ashgate (2006), edited by Stuart Elden and Jeremy Crampton, each working respectively in the United Kingdom and the United States. A slightly different version of the following article on Michel Foucault and Francophone geographies will be published in this book. Written primarily for an Anglophone audience, it appears here first in order to stimulate debate and possible attract some feedback, as it attempts to spin the tales of the encounters between Francophone geographers, Michel Foucault's writings and various academic traditions.



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In a recent article in *L'Espace Géographique*, Jean-Marc Besse notes, almost with some surprise, that 'one of the important references of [Anglophone] postmodern writers is the work of Michel Foucault, in particular the articulation between knowledge and power'[1] (Besse, 2004: 4). The fact that this is worth noting in an introductory article of a journal on postmodernism and geography articulates the gulf between Anglo[2] and Francophone geographies. This paper on Foucault and Francophone geography explores the context of this comment and the corresponding fracture between two very different geographical

traditions. It confronts, as Minca has put it, ‘the persistence of a sort of “parallel” geographical tradition that in France is still very much alive but […] does not nurture a broad dialogue with the Anglo-American [“international”?] geographical universe, although it continues to exert significant influence on a number of European geographies’ (Minca, 2000: 286; see also Chivallon, 2003). It is also an opportunity for a reflexive look at the production of scientific discourses by comparing two different contexts.

Despite the seminal interview of 1976 in which Michel Foucault was interviewed in the geographical journal Hérodote and that appeared to build a bridge between disciplines, Francophone geographers have rarely used his work. To some extent, this reflects differences in the way authors and references are used within the two traditions, a point I will return to. Yet more than just writing styles underpin these differences. This paper seeks to explore why Foucault is such a marginal figure in Francophone geography, why he has in effect performed his own exercice de disparition. I start out by briefly noting the ironic absence of ‘French Theory’ within Francophone geography, a group Foucault is framed in the Anglo world as belonging to, subsequently exploring the institutional and historical contexts of university life in France and other Francophone countries that point towards explanations. I then move on to explore what parts of Foucault’s writing have in fact permeated and been picked up, tracing how they got there, using the contrast of the Anglo world to highlight specificities, emphasising in particular the recent work of Christine Chivallon, Michel Lussault, Ola Söderström, Bernard Debarbieux and Jacques Lévy. Lastly, by examining more in details the writings of Claude Raffestin, a Swiss geographer who relied heavily on certain aspects of Foucault’s work, and by exploring why he has remained largely unknown outside of his immediate circles, I point to a number of further paths for reflection.

Setting the scene: French Theory everywhere but in France.

The crux, of course, and the main point that is explored here, is that while Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and others were becoming

unavoidable in universities across the Atlantic and in Britain, ‘their names were being systematically eclipsed in France’[3] (Cusset, 2003: 22). This absence of Foucault is especially striking within geography: heralded as manna in the various foci of Anglo geography, he shines by his absence as we say in French — in Francophone geographical circles. As two members of the established clique of French geographers put it simply: ‘the French critical philosophy of the 60s and 70s is less popular in France and the Latin countries than in the United States — Barthes and Derrida are not quoted; the interest in Foucault is more evident’ (Claval and Staszak, 2004: 319, see also Söderström and Philo, 2004: 304). Yet even if Foucault gets a special mention in that editorial to a special journal edition on ‘Latin’ geographers — in this case French, Swiss-Romand, Italian and Brazilian — the only explicit reference in the entire issue is to factual historical points put forward in Les Mots et les Choses (Foucault, 1966). A short survey of the scant references to Foucault by Francophone geographers indicates that in addition to Les Mots et les Choses, only La Volonté de Savoir and L’Ordre du Discours have been used in any meaningful way and even then only scantly.

In his book on what has been called ‘French Theory’, Francois Cusset (2003) lays out some of the historical, social and institutional processes that participated in the creation of a global politico-theoretical arena fed by an amalgamation of key writers, firmly centred and grounded not in France, but in American universities. To a certain point, this present book on Foucault and geography is part of this global movement. The tale of reducing, reusing and recycling ideas in order to create ‘French Theory’ is nothing new and was first hinted at, albeit ambiguously, by Sylvère Lotringer and Sande Cohen two years earlier. The latter cannot make their mind up about the true nature of French Theory, describing it simultaneously as ‘arguably the most intellectually stimulating series of texts produced in the postwar area’ (Lotringer and Cohen, 2001: 3), or ‘an American invention going back to at least the eighteenth century’ (Lotringer and Cohen, 2001: 1) and eventually stating that ‘that was never any “unity” to such French Theory, even among those close to each other’ (Lotringer and Cohen, 2001: 8). Cusset is much less ambiguous, stating that the unity within French Theory is indeed no more than a juxtaposition, a proximity and promiscuity forced through systematic intertextuality, a position also adopted in this present paper. This in

no way diminishes the individual contributions of the various authors, nor does it deny their tentative collaborations.

Institutions, rituals and personalities across Francophone geography.

Foucault's absence is particularly surprising in France since geography is institutionally still largely associated with history, a fact that has been called a 'bidisciplinarité relative', dating back to the institutionalisation of the disciplines in the 1880s' (Garcia in Djament, 2004). French historians have tackled Foucault's proposals on archaeologies of knowledge and genealogies to a certain extent and a historian, Olivier Razac is for instance credited by Michel Lussault — a geographer — with having written the best 'foucaldian' essay on space in his Histoire Politique du Barbelé [barbed wire] (Razac, 2000). When looking at Foucault's very different impact on geography, Raffestin wrote that 'I don't know if […] M. Foucault revolutionised the study of history, only historians can endorse this or not, but in any case the foucaldian method provided, together with the archaeology of knowledge, a precious method for 'genealogical' researches that the human sciences are often confronted with'[4] (Raffestin, 1992: 23). The link between geography and history is far from benign in France[5]: in many ways it reduces geography to the role of little sister of the more glamorous sibling, in contrast to the context of, say, French-speaking Switzerland where geography is institutionally more likely to be associated with the social sciences, the earth sciences or the natural sciences.

The French system of universities is very alien to Anglo-Saxon ways of organising the academy. It is also different from the much more decentralised structures prevalent in other French-speaking contexts such as Switzerland or Quebec. Understanding the intricacies of the French system and its potential for immobility helps to understand the non-emergence of Foucault within French geography. It is a cliché to say that France remains a centralised country, with official lists of required reading set on a national level by a committee of respected elders: the Cnu or Conseil National des Universités. Research is still largely directed centrally within programmes defined by the Ministry of Research

and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (Cnrs) (Collignon, 2004: 376). It is not surprising that such a system led Foucault to come up with the term ‘groupe doctrinal’ (Foucault, 1971: 47), describing particular sociétés de discours whose functions were to ‘conserve or produce discourses in order to circulate them within an enclosed space, but only distributing them according to strict rules and without this bringing about any loss of control for the holders’[6] (Foucault, 1971: 42). Although naturally not restricted to the academy, such a definition seems convincingly apt in France, land of the supposedly reason-led planification nationale. In this context confusing to outsiders, a whole host of academic-oriented concours [competitions] are organised on a national level, each requiring about a year of preparation within designated schools of varying prestige, creating a highly guarded clique of people able to discuss any topic at very short notice (see Lévy 1995 for a personal description; Bourdieu 1984 for an outline)[7]. Another formal step on the way to an academic career is the Maître de conférence exam which is more like a competitive registration: having finished a doctoral thesis, candidates have it validated by the Cnu. Approximately 40% of candidates get through and can then apply for lectureships at universities, paying out of their own pockets to attend interviews around the country.

This is not a system designed for rapid innovation or the rise of freethinkers — innovation for innovation’s sake is scorned upon and pointed out as something uniquely Anglo, and therefore intrinsically suspect (Cusset, 2003: 230). Instead, as one anonymous colleague put it, the system rewards cooptation through spiritual formatting from an early stage, rewarding those who are strong enough to navigate through a jungle of implicit and explicit rules, gaining substantial diplomatic and strategic skills in the process and wisely choosing well-placed mentors (Anon 2004, personal communication). In comparison to British or North American contexts, the French geographical world is like a small family within which — as one geographer put it — il faut montrer patte blanche (Chivallon, 2005, pers. comm.), that is to say that individual acceptance is obtained by demonstrating one’s worth, as in many exclusive peer groups, as well as by conforming and not sticking out too much. Furthermore, a form of intellectual immobility is maintained by hierarchy: academics only get to supervise doctoral theses towards the end of their careers, once they have attained the status of full professors, after passing another hurdle, similar to the

German Habilitation, by writing what amounts to a second thesis. Paradoxically, however, or maybe in consequence of this hierarchical system, ‘belonging’ to a particular school of thinking is not highly regarded in France — in contrast, I would suggest, to the Anglo world — and instead being ‘outside’ and ‘unclassifiable’ is valued (Lévy and Debarbieux, 2004, pers.comm.; Chivallon, 2005, pers.comm.). Anything identified as jargon is savagely frowned upon. This could be seen as a rejection of clear doctrines (Foucault, 1971: 45), although to suggest there are none within geography would be to misunderstand Foucault’s point. Likewise, labels (‘postmodern’, ‘postructuralist’, ‘constructivist’, ‘feminist’ and so on), are seen to enclose and are largely rejected in France (Chivallon in Antheaume et al., 2004: 13) and sometimes feared. Indeed, in another piece, Chivallon writes that ‘it is scarcely possible to speak of ‘postmodern geography’ in France without suspicion of scientific heresy’ (Chivallon, 2003: 406). This, however, does not mean there is no cult of particular individuals on a national level, each engaged in very actively promoting themselves within the media, often at the cost of actual debates about ideas[8] (Lévy, 2004, pers.comm.). As Bourdieu (1984) has noted, this need to position oneself within the academia has an important effect on how ideas are spread and appropriated, relating to the varying visibility of different thinkers. Another substantial difference in France is the rarity of public debates, partly due to the absence of recent paradigmatic change, due mainly to reduced generational renewal. This institutional fixity has largely contributed to a certain climate of comfortable conformity and the corresponding strategy of remaining within the accepted pré carré, the designated field assigned to the discipline, rather than seeking inspiration from the outside — such as from social theorists like Foucault. This may well be simply a current trend linked to individual waves of recruitment, as the current pattern is in contrast to more vivid debates in the Seventies and Eighties pitching the Nouvelle Géographie against established conservative paradigms (Chivallon, 2005, pers.comm.).

In consequence of this highly codified French system, the smaller, marginal or peripheral schools in Switzerland and Quebec have sometimes acted as catalysts and innovators, largely simply by staying outside of partisan politics in France. In the past thirty years, many French academics have moved to Switzerland, for instance, not only lured by the substantially higher salaries and

better material conditions, but also for the perceived intellectual freedom, rejoining what Söderström rather prettily described as an ‘archipelago of thinkers’ [9] (Söderström, 2004, pers. comm.), very different from the centralised French system of large centrally-funded laboratoires. Individuals such as Jacques Lévy, and Bernard Debarbieux, most recently, made the strategic choice to move to Switzerland. In fact, it almost seems as if some French geographers have idealised Switzerland as an innovative periphery, as Guy di Méo romantically stated (di Méo, 2004, pers.comm.) that Swiss-Romand geographers have historically had an impact on geography far beyond the objective size of the academy[10], in particular through the work of Claude Raffestin, Jean-Bernard Racine and Antoine Bailly. The former will be discussed more at length towards the end of this paper. French-speaking Canada on the other hand has also played a different role of catalyst, a point I will also return to subsequently, by translating and bringing into French much of the trends and literature prevalent within the Anglo world (Racine; Lévy, 2004, pers.comm.), although not as much as might have been expected.

Act I, scene 1 : Enter Foucault.

It is in these particular academic contexts that Foucault’s writing appeared on the scene in the 1970s. At the time, academic geography in France was undergoing violent and highly personalised fistfights and struggles (Orain, 2003: 267) in which official national geographical institutions such as the Comité National de Géographie were seen as nothing less than the ‘hateful emanation of an over-hierarchical system of mandarins that systematically marginalised progressive groups, specifically financially’[11] (Orain, 2003: 264). The time was one of volatile rejection of the orthodox Vidalian Géographie Classique and the corresponding renegotiation of a theoretical grounding within the quantitative and positivist Nouvelle Géographie. At this time, the publication of an interview of Foucault constituted a first, indicating a welcome change in the nature of academic debates in a country where these have often centred on individuals, not ideas (Lévy, 2004, pers.comm.).

Opinions differ as to whether geographers would have really read Foucault at the time, notwithstanding his public visibility: Foucault was cited in a 1981 Lire

survey of opinion leaders as the third most important contemporary Maître à penser in France (Bourdieu 1984: 281). Lévy, for instance, suggests that geographers were not particularly well read at the time and that innovators were more likely either to be involved in the quantitative surge or else were reading Karl Marx instead (Lévy, 2004, pers.comm.). More convincing, I believe, is that opinion that Foucault was read, but that the academic and political contexts were not conducive to his absorption and adaptation in any meaningful way. As Collignon suggests, 'we did not digest the authors to which they [Anglo geographers] refer in the same way, especially because we read them in the original versions within a different historical context — that of the Sixties and Seventies, and not the 1980s as our Anglophone colleagues did — and because these were integrated into the common grounding of the social sciences before the arrival of the postmodern society which they helped explain and describe across the Atlantic'[12] (Collignon in Anteaume et al., 2004: 22). Söderström suggested Foucault in particular was 'strategically forgotten' (Söderström, 2004, pers. comm.), something that is different from being outright ignored. He nevertheless permeated the work of certain geographers, including Söderström and Debarbieux but in an implicit, though perhaps fundamental way. His impact was therefore much more difficult to identify than within the more obviously allusive Anglo way of writing. Foucault, questioning universalising knowledge — a French obsession — was also strategically avoided. The return of Foucault, to the extent that there has been one in Francophone geography, thus took place most recently via those Anglo interpretations within 'French Theory', particularly via Quebec. Guy Di Méo, for instance, recalled hearing about the enthusiasm for Foucault in geography when colleagues such as Vincent Berdoulay and Olivier Soubeyran returning to France, bringing Foucault back with them, so to speak (Di Méo, 2004, pers.comm.). This provided a second impetus to explore his work, after the first wave provoked by Raffestin in the Eighties. Dupont makes a similar comment about the influence on location in discovering authors when he recalls first reading Foucault in the United States: 'I read Foucault in the English text. I thought he was brilliant, and then when I got to France I said to myself "he's not that brilliant, he just managed to express the often frozen structures of knowledge that exist in France". He simply critiqued that, and in the United States this was taken to be a revolution, when instead he was just asking the

question of the limits and structures of knowledge in France'[13] (Dupont in Antheaume et al., 2004: 19). While this is of course a rather rash statement, it nevertheless reflects to a certain extent how Foucault has been perceived in France.

Act I, scene 2 : Different Foucaults in different places.

Translation and transposition, as well as the different way quotes and literature reviews are used in both traditions are important factors in explaining the different reception of Foucault. As hinted earlier, the need to ground an argument by referring to key authors within an initial literature review is less prevalent in the Francophone world, lessening the amplifying effects of authors invoked *de rigueur* but barely appropriated, reduced to magical incantations (Debarbieux and Lévy, 2004 *pers.comm.*). Additionally, 'because they are in themselves transfers and repeated appropriation, translations participate on their own level, and perhaps more powerfully than other processes, in the means of production of theoretical discourses'[14] (Cusset, 2003: 101). As Dupont's quote indicated earlier, translation does not mean simply copying out a text in another language [15] but instead adapting it to a given context, be it linguistic or academic. Lussault, writing in French, states that 'in reading him [Foucault], the potential richness of his writing appears to those interested in space. A potential richness, however, because the work of critical "translation" of Foucault into geography needs to be done almost entirely'[16] (Lussault, 2003: 377), a comment applied of course exclusively to Francophone geography. This need to adapt an author to a discipline, an act of conceptual translation, may be paradoxically easier when the author is writing in another language. Cusset had further suggested that because English is a more playful language it desecrates words more eagerly than French (Cusset, 2003), making it easier for Anglos to reinvent Foucault to suit a new paradigm.

Foucault, of course, could have predicted the disparition of his original texts and would no doubt have been amused by it, as he playfully recognised the lives they lead after their creation: 'many major texts are scrambled and disappear, and

commentaries at times come to replace them. But even if their area of concern may well change, their function remains; and the idea of a shift is constantly replayed'[17] (Foucault, 1971: 25). Foucault's comment is subtle, hinting at the Borgesian appeal of 'the playful existence of a critique that would endlessly discuss a work that does not exist'[18] (Foucault, 1971: 25), paradoxically saying something for the first time and yet endlessly repeating that which was never said. Chivallon is much less amused by this desecration of Foucault and others, and notes with some irritation that commentaries on commentaries have tended to accumulate in the Anglo world (Chivallon, 1999: 302; see also Cusset, 2003: 235). This is not as chauvinistic as it might sound, since her main point is that the marginal position of Foucault's thoughts on space in line with postmodern deconstructivist paradigms does not really justify his enthusiastic embracing by Anglo geographers. She suggests instead that the link between them and Foucault is tenuous and that 'the name of the famous philosopher is but a smokescreen'[19] (Chivallon, 1999: 310). Instead, she suggests, the bulk of his writing on space is more largely in tune with existing more classical positions that consider space as constitutive of the social, including attempts to explore the semantics of space such as carried out by Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes and, later on, Marc Augé, Augustin Berque and Claude Raffestin. Since 'the most explicit references to space made by Foucault are tightly linked to projects that we have not been used to calling postmodern'[20] (Chivallon, 1999: 310), his lauded project for thinking autrement about space and his 'conception of a new way of thinking that mobilises spatial resources is barely formulated'[21] (Chivallon, 1999: 309). This comment also draws attention to a uniquely Francophone obsession with modernity, partly explaining why the term 'postmodern' is in scant use. 'In France, the limits of reason and modernity are questioned as though nothing could exist beyond them; this explains for instance why thinkers such as Foucault or Barthes are considered here, in France, to be modern, within a philosophical tradition stemming from social philosophy, questioning the limits of reason and the limits of applying reason to the organisation of society by the State. Whereas in the United States, their writing is taken as a demonstration of a break from this position, at least on a theoretical level'[22] (Dupont, 2004: 11). Similarly, and in contrast to what Harvey (1989) and Soja (1989) have suggested, Di Méo has argued that Foucault did not really

contest the permanence of modernity for two reasons: firstly because socio-spatial segmentation and segregation as modern technologies of domination are not in decline in western countries, and secondly because reason always acts through the exclusion of unreason [déraison] or that considered as such (Di Méo, 1991: 14).

Noting that Foucault pretty much ignored geographers, notwithstanding his interview with Hérodote, Michel Lussault admits that indeed 'symmetrically, geographers have engaged too little with the work of Michel Foucault'[23] (Lussault, 2003: 377). Agreeing with Chivallon's earlier comments, Lussault suggests that space does form an integral part of Foucault's work: 'he took it abundantly into account in his work, without reducing it to an inert produced form or to a neutral substrate. It is possible to enrich our thinking about space by drawing upon Foucault'[24] (Lussault, 2003: 379). Söderström has suggested that Francophone geography specifically missed out on Foucault on three levels: theoretically, in failing to understand his use of discursive formations and relational approaches; thematically in ignoring his notions of heterotopia and governmentality; and methodologically, by failing to build on his approach to the control of space (Söderström, 2004: *pers.comm.*). Taking this suggestion seriously, I will briefly examine each of these, aiming for a brief panorama of what has actually been done.

Act II, scene 1 : Theory : relations, power and discourse.

Foucault famously stated that space is fundamental in any form of communal life; space is fundamental in any exercise of power (see for instance Elden, 2003: 119). Claude Raffestin's *Pour une géographie du pouvoir*, published in 1980, implicitly built on this statement, constituting a form of response to Michel Foucault's questions to geographers. Raffestin was a driving force of what has been called the post-vidalian critique[25], endorsing the role of senior theoretician in the linguistic and constructivist turn the discipline took in the Francophone world at the end of the Seventies. Much of his inspiration came from the work of Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Martin Heidegger and Luis

Prieto, bringing a much-needed breadth of references to a discipline pitted by intellectual incest. He is one rare example of a Francophone geographer active within and not outside the wider sciences humaines. Söderström and Philo wrote for instance that ‘the most substantial theoretical contribution to non-Anglophone social geography in the 1970s and 1980s was […] to be found in the work of the Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin. Being rather idiosyncratic, his social geography was difficult to categorize in the neat boxes traditionally used to describe English-speaking geography (terms such as spatial analysis, humanistic geography, and radical geography)’ (Söderström and Philo, 2004: 304-305).

It is in fact not always easy to read Raffestin, as his grand theory of territory and territoriality, as well as his wider writings on the geographical intelligibility of reality, are often put forward more as proposals than polished theories. Orain notes for instance that ‘his production has the character of a slowly built up mosaic in which each text takes its place as a piece, both a device and a process. It is a device in that each piece of writing refers to other contemporary ones, edging them on and adding elements through partial repetitions that can be easily pieced together’ [26] (Orain, 2003: 315). Raffestin’s Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir did constitute a clear formalisation of a theory of territory and territoriality within a clearly foucaldian framework of power relations strongly influenced by *La Volonté de Savoir* published in 1976; yet even this is a far from finished theory, reflecting his rejection of finished, closed systems and his personal attachement to a pensée en procès. Raffestin writes beautifully, making use of a breadth of references and myths. Foucault’s notion of power is a central inspiration, and he subtly gives it a more spatial dimension and rootedness:

‘power, a common noun, hides behind Power, a proper noun. It hides so efficiently specifically because it is present everywhere. It is present in every relation, within every action: it insidiously uses every social fracture to infiltrate into the heart of people. It is ambiguous because there is Power and there is power. But the former is easier to grasp because it manifests itself through complex apparatuses that surround and grasp each territory, control the population and dominate the resources. It is visible, massive, identifiable power. In consequence it is dangerous and unsettling, but it inspires wariness through

the very threat that it represents. But the most dangerous is that which is unseen or that which one no longer sees because it is assumed to be discarded through house arrest. It would be too simple if Power were the Minotaur locked into its labyrinth that Theseus could kill once and for all. But power is reborn worse than it was, when Theseus meets the Minotaur: Power is dead, long live power. From then on, power is assured to live forever as it is no longer visible; instead it is consubstantial to all relations'[27] *(Raffestin, 1980: 45).*

As this short extract illustrates, Foucault's definitions of power developed in La Volonté de Savoir underpins Raffestin's approach. Each relation is the place [le lieu] within which power manifests itself, as energy and information get manipulated: formed, accumulated, combined, and circulated (Raffestin, 1980: 46). Knowledge and power are linked as insolubly as energy and information, within any relation, a point Raffestin reinforces by quoting Foucault and Deleuze's comment that any point in which power is exercised is simultaneously a place of knowledge formation[28]. Raffestin's concept of territory also draws upon Lefebvre's idea of the production of space, further spatialising Foucault. Territory, in his perspective, is a space within which work [travail], that is to say energy and information, has been projected and that in consequence is constructed through and reveals power relations (Raffestin, 1980: 129). His distinction between space (pre-existent to any action) and territory (produced relationally) is fundamental, enriched by an analysis of representations and the semiotics of territory that draw on sources as diverse as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Edward Soja and Umberto Eco. In an interview in 1997, Raffestin noted that 'I have been very heavily criticised for this use of Foucault and the only consolation I have is that Americans, and in particular Californian geographers, are discovering or are rediscovering Foucault today[29] (Interview carried out by Elissade, 1997, quoted in Orain, 2003: 306), presumably referring in this case principally to Soja.

Jacques Lévy commented on *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir* by linking it to Paul Claval's rather different (and far from Foucaldian) *Espace et Pouvoir*, noting cautiously that 'despite the great interest of these books, they were scarcely taken up, perhaps because they cumulated two opposite handicaps. On one hand, they were too advanced for their readers, handling concepts perceived to

be too abstract, too far from usual research fields; on the other they continued to approach politics indirectly, a topic that remains the real blind spot of the geographical *Weltanshauung.* In that, they gave up creating a political geography based on a clear epistemological and theoretical basis. This is true for France and for other Latin countries, because within the Anglophone world throughout the 1980s political geography has softly conquered a significant place within the discipline'[30] (Lévy, 2003: 738). This is a more guarded critique than the angry one that Lévy wrote in a volume of EspaceTemps in the 1980s, emphasizing the lack of definition of the 'political' that is replaced with the much wider and more global theory of *pouvoir*. He is not convinced by Raffestin's uses of Foucault, noting that *pouvoir* is neither a category nor a social science concept, but instead is only a linguistic category, upstream epistemologically from the *politique*, a notion he has personally favoured (Lévy 1994). As a notion, he believes pouvoir to be too general to be operational, noting simultaneously that the *politique* is really a dark spot in the social sciences, linked to psychological issues which are intrinsically taken to be suspect and difficult to cope with within existing frameworks (Lévy, 2004: *pers.comm.*). A similar point was made by Villeneuve who wrote that Raffestin 'could be accused of practising political determinism when he argues that power is consubstantial to all relations'[31] (Villeneuve, 1982: 266). Yet these, I think, are unfair to Raffestin and mainly reflect both commentators' lack of familiarity with Foucault as a theoretical grounding. They also stem from Raffestin's conscious choice not to exploit and apply his proposals on power empirically, preferring instead to assume this would be done subsequently by someone else.

Perhaps Raffestin's greatest sadness has been an increasing disillusion with other geographers, coupled with a personal frustration at not being recognised for his contributions. This is of course where the peripheral nature of Swiss geography shows its limitations: Raffestin's lack of insertion into certain guarded circles of French geography, certainly didn't help to get his ideas spread about. However, having said that, a number of links did exist and continue, in particular inserting geographers working in Geneva into networks centred on universities and laboratoires at Grenoble and Pau, in France. Raffestin also has a large following in Italy where he currently spends most of this time. Nevertheless, being seen as raffestinien(ne) has sometimes been a dangerous card to play in

certain circles, dividing individuals between loyal followers[32] and enemies.

In an article dealing with regulation and self-regulation, offering a theoretical grounding for understanding the production of scientific knowledge, Raffestin noted that 'it is because there are networks of practices that there is a need for norms, both statutory and legal, and not the other way round. Likewise, it is because of the historic nature of the world [parce qu'il y a de l'historicité] that there is a similar need within the human sciences since their construction is always confronted with networks of practices. It is probably the great lesson left behind by Michel Foucault, and put into perspective by Paul Veyne first for historians but also for all researchers working within the human sciences, even if few within geography have claimed it. But that is another story […]'[33] (Raffestin, 1996: 124).

Act II, scene 2 : Other catalysts and converts.

Another author to draw upon Foucault, partly via Raffestin's work, is Guy Di Méo, one of the main proponents of innovative social and Marxist geography in France. He also draws upon both Foucault and Lefebvre in his project of arming social geography and similarly also has a fondness for Heidegger. His work has included introducing the tools of historical materialism to geography, including dialectic thinking, a non-linear and evolving conception of time, and an awareness of spatial or territorial contradictions that partly give meaning to and explain social life (Di Méo, 1991: 15). Di Méo also notes pessimistically, like many others, that despite certain theoretical contributions to geography such as Raffestin's 'it is nevertheless clear that up to now it is mostly sociologists and anthropologists who have theorised about spatial practises and territoriality'[34] (Di Méo, 1999: 79).

Other authors have referred to Foucault referred mostly peripherally, using elements from his work as building blocks within a larger theoretical body based on other sources. Ideas of 'discourse' and 'discursive formation' gleaned from l'Archéologie du Savoir (1969) have been used successfully by Söderström (1997: 31) for example, as have the links between knowledge and power. Thematically, the idea of a 'security society' from De la gouvernementalité (1989)

and notions of heterotopia have likewise also been picked up by several authors. Di Méo, for instance, used the concept in passing, noting that ‘in the heterotopia that Foucault defines, all the frontiers of space whether real or imagined, only take on a very limited meaning, like an anecdote. It is the global space that has meaning. […] In reading Foucault, it clearly appears in what way territoriality can spring out of geographical space, moulded by repeated use’[35] (Di Méo, 1999: 85). Lussault also mentions heterotopia, stating that despite being ‘an announcement of ulterior developments that manifested a series of intuitions that Foucault regrettably did not develop’[36] (Lussault, 2003: 379), the opportunity Foucault left has not been taken up by geographers, neither theoretically nor methodologically. In fact, in stark contrast to Raffestin, none of these authors have drawn upon Foucault in any fundamental way. At best, he has provided theoretical fodder for thinking about power, discourse and space as part of the required backbone of requisite readings in the social sciences gleaned during individual studies, integrated but not explicitly cited (as would be expected within the Anglo tradition), at worst he has been used to suggest little more than research themes such as surveillance or heterotopia. Methodologically, of course, searching out for a latent, underlying Foucaldian flavour within a discipline is much more difficult than skimming lists of explicit references — a point that may be kept in mind as a nuance on some of the comments above that suggest that Foucault has had little visible impact on Francophone geography.

Chivallon, in an excellent article on British postmodern geography decoded for French-language readers, gives further compelling arguments for why Foucault has not been picked up in the same way by Francophone geographers. In particular, she notes the near-absence of any interest in France for traditionally postmodern categories such as race, gender and sexuality. This is reflected, for instance, in the near-total absence of any original Francophone feminist geography. Chivallon is in fact critical of the way Foucault has been used, in parallel with this Anglo obsession with categories. She first notes that Foucault’s warning that power is everywhere and stems from everywhere is paradoxically in danger of being forgotten in the surge of enthusiasm for ‘other’ voices: ‘at a time when the marginalised and dominated voice is considered to be the only container of truth, it is in many people’s interest to demonstrate and conserve a position from which it is taken to be legitimate to speak’[37] (Chivallon, 1999:

305). Chivallon directs this virulent comment particularly at certain feminist geographers, noting that 'there must also be something related to power [quelque chose de l'ordre du pouvoir] in the process of construction of women's knowledge'[38] (Chivallon, 1999: 305). Such a comment goes a long way in indicating the chasm between what is considered orthodox within the two traditions, and indeed she has gone so far as to say that the total adhesion to postmodern discourses within the Anglo world is almost alienating to those on the outside, in total contrast to the proffered attempts to question hegemonic discourses (Chivallon, 2005, *pers.comm*.).

Act III: Conclusion.

Foucault once defined philosophy as the critical process of thought carried out on itself, that rather than legitimising what is already know, consists of attempting to know how and to what extent it would be possible to think otherwise (Foucault in *Dits et Écrits*, iv, n°338). To a modest extent, this paper has sought to contrast two traditions in order to explore precisely how one author has been used to think in very different ways. By exploring what scant parts of Foucault's writing have in fact permeated and been picked up within Francophone geography and by tracing why there is so little to write about in contrast to the plethora within the Anglo world, I have attempted to highlight specificities and point out a number of further paths for reflection. If anything, this paper has highlighted the near-total absence of Foucault within Francophone geography at a time when, even in France, he is slowly undergoing a renaissance. A gathering in January 2005 organised by Science Po (the prestigious political science department in Paris) and the Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherche en Sciences Sociales, for instance, tellingly includes a wide range of social scientists — but scant geographers. This would not be cause for undue concern if Francophone geography were otherwise healthy and vibrant. Indeed, diversity in the face of increasing Anglo hegemony would be more than welcome. The sad thing is that part of the explanation lies in the immobility of the French academy. However, the strong indication of a renaissance of a critical strand of fresh thinkers within Francophone geography is cause for celebration, as authors are increasingly open to other literatures yet convincingly critical of normative postmodernism.

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Résumé

L'enthousiasme pour la pensée et les écrits de Michel Foucault parmi les géographes anglophones s'oppose au manque certain d'enthousiasme, voir de déni total, parmi leurs collègues francophones. Alors que Foucault est cité très largement dans la littérature contemporaine anglophone au sein des sciences sociales, il demeure marginal pour la grande majorité des géographes travaillant et publiant en français. Malgré l'entrevue de Foucault publiée dans la revue Hérodote en 1976 qui paraissait jeter un pont entre les disciplines, les géographes francophones ont peu lu et peu utilisé ses propositions pour les sciences sociales et politiques. De plus, comme les approches politiques en géographie ont eu relativement peu d'écho pour de multiples raisons, les rares travaux existants comme le livre Espace et pouvoir (1978) de Paul Claval ou La géographie ça sert, d'abord, à faire la guerre (1976) de Yves Lacoste ne sont pas influencés par les apports de Foucault. Cet article se propose de faire état de la situation par une revue et un examen de la littérature existante, complétée par des entretiens de géographes contemporains. Les œuvres choisies reflètent les rares utilisations explicites de Foucault par des géographes francophones. L'accent est mis plus particulièrement sur Pour une géographie du pouvoir, écrit en 1980 par Claude Raffestin, ainsi que sur ses articles plus tardifs sur le territoire et la territorialité. L'analyse propose que cet essai d'adapter un certain nombre des propositions de Foucault au contexte de la géographie a été écarté et ignoré, malgré son grand intérêt, pour un certain nombre de raisons institutionnelles, conceptuelles et personnelles. Suivant la piste de Foucault dans

une approche tant épistémologique que sociologique, l'article examine d'autres apports de géographes fréquentant des lieux éloignés des luttes de pouvoir du monde académique français, explorant brièvement le travail de géographes québécois et suisses, fruits d'une nouvelle génération de penseurs francophones. L'auteure propose que de telles approches du politique méritent un public et un débat plus larges, spécifiquement en ce qu'ils sont différents des approches foucaldiennes anglophones qui sombrent souvent dans un moule homogène et totalisant.

Notes

[1] All translations, unless stated otherwise, are personal translations. The original text is included in these footnotes for clarity. Translation from: 'une des références importantes des postmodernes aux États-Unis est l'œuvre de Michel Foucault, en particulier cette articulation faite par Foucault entre savoir et pouvoir'.

[2] In order to avoid arguing myself into a corner over whether to use Anglosaxon, Anglo-American or English-language as the adjective to describe the sort-of-geography-as-carried-out-in-English-language-contexts, I will use the French spoken term *Anglo*, a mildly slangy expression used when discussing it 'from the outside', as in 'Les *Anglos* font comme ça, mais nous […]'. It is harder to find a snappy equivalent to describe the French-language world since the term often used by the *Anglos* is 'French'. As an Anglo-Swiss, I find this unsatisfactory, and have chosen 'Francophone' as a rather less poetic alternative.

[3] 'leurs noms connaissaient en France une éclipse systématique.'

[4] 'Je ne sais pas si P. Veyne a eu raison d'écrire que M. Foucault a révolutionné l'histoire, seuls les historiens peuvent ou non en témoigner mais, en tout cas, la méthode foucaldienne a fourni, avec l'archéologie du savoir, une précieuse méthode aux recherches « généalogiques » auxquelles les sciences humaines sont souvent confrontées'.

[5] Both Jean-François Staszak and Louis Dupont commented on this proximity of geography and history in France in the debate reprinted in *L'Espace géographique*, 2004 (1), pp. 18 and 19. Dupont notes in particular that 'On est surpris de l'ancrage incroyable qui fixe et limite le savoir géographique à l'histoire'.

[6] 'conserver ou de produire des discours, mais pour les faire circuler dans un espace fermé, ne les distribuer que selon des règles strictes et sans que les détenteurs soient dépossédés par cette distribution même'.

[7] To start with, candidates must pass the *Capes* in order to qualify as *histoire-géographie* high-school teachers, with the further option of the *Agrégation* to be better-paid teachers or academics. The latter in particular, while not formally an academic degree, is run by academics and rewards candidates' ability to produce a *leçon magistrale*, an academic lecture, at short notice on any topic. Its highly selective nature and formal ranking of individuals confers substantial prestige on its holders, making them better placed when applying for academic jobs and reinforcing a dominant clique firmly centred on Paris, grounded in a particular body of thought. While not formally required when applying for academic jobs, successful candidates are more likely than not to be *Agrégés*, having passed both geography and history sections. For geographers, this would mean three written parts in geography and one in history, for both written and oral exams. In recent years, to give an idea of the scale of these competitions, roughly 10'000 people sign up for the geography/history Capes, of which 800-900 are selected. At the next level, the 'Capétiens', assuming they have four years of university-level studies, can apply for the *Agrégation.* Each year, about 1000 people do of which 35 are finally selected. Their individual rank is published in a formal *classement.*

[8] Cusset makes a similar comment in his scathing attacks on Luc Ferry, Bernard-Henri Lévy, Pierre Nora and Alain Renaut (Cusset 2003 : 323-330).

[9] 'un archipel de penseurs'.

[10] Within the four French-speaking geography departments in Switzerland, there are only 10 full professors in all : equivalent to one large department in

many universities in Great Britain, for instance.

[11] ‘l’émanation haïssable d’un système mandarinal par trop hiérarchique, marginalisant (d’abord et avant tout financièrement) les équipes « progressistes »’.

[12] ‘nous n’avons pas digéré de la même façon les auteurs auxquels ils se réfèrent, notamment parce que nous les avons lus dans leur version originale, dans un autre contexte historique – celui des années 1960 et 1970 et non pas celui des années 1980 comme nos collègues Anglophones – et parce qu’ils ont été intégrés au fond commun des sciences sociales avant l’avènement de la société postmoderne qu’ils ont servis, outre-Atlantique, à appréhender’.

[13] ‘j’ai lu Foucault dans le texte anglais. Je le trouvais génial, puis arrivé en France je me suis dit : « il n’est pas si génial que cela, il a simplement exprimé les structures souvent figées du savoir dans la structure française ». Il a simplement critiqué cela, et aux États-Unis on a pris cela comme une révolution, alors qu’il posait la question des limites et des structures du savoir en France’.

[14] ‘parce qu’elle est elle-même transfert et réappropriation, la traduction participe à son tour — et peut-être plus puissamment que les autres procédés — de ces modes de production du discours théorique.’

[15] I have borrowed this expression from Sophie Rey, a translator and friend, who laughs at herself in saying that ‘je recopie simplement des textes dans une autre langue’.

[16] ‘A le lire, on s’aperçoit en effet de la richesse potentielle de ses écrits pour qui s’intéresse à l’espace. Richesse potentielle, car il faut entreprendre presque entièrement le travail de « traduction » critique de Foucault à destination de la géographie’.

[17] ‘bien des textes majeurs se brouillent et disparaissent, et des commentaires parfois viennent prendre la place première. Mais ses points d’applications ont beau changer, la fonction demeure ; et le principe d’un décalage se trouve sans cesse remis en jeu.’

[18] ‘jeu […] d’une critique qui parlerait a l’infini d’une oeuvre qui n’existe pas’.

[19] ‘le nom du célèbre philosophe ne sert que de couverture’.

[20] ‘les références les plus explicites de Foucault sur l’espace entretiennent donc un étroit rapport avec des projets que nous n’avons pas eu jusqu’ici l’habitude de designer comme postmodernes’.

[21] ‘cette conception d’une pensée nouvelle mobilisant la ressource spatiale est à peine formulée’.

[22] ‘En France, on s’interroge sur les limites de la raison et de la modernité, comme s’il ne pouvait y avoir rien au-delà; c’est ce qui explique par exemple que des penseurs comme Foucault ou Barthes sont ici, en France, des modernes qui, dans une tradition philosophique issue d’une philosophie sociale, questionnent les limites de la raison, les limites de l’organisation d’une société par la raison, par l’État. Alors qu’aux États-Unis, leurs écrits sont pris comme une démonstration de la rupture, du moins théorique.’

[23] ‘symétriquement, les géographes ont trop peu abordés l’œuvre de Michel Foucault’.

[24] ‘il l’a abondamment pris en compte dans son oeuvre, sans le réduire à une forme produite inerte ou à un support neutre. On peut donc nourrir une pensée de l’espace via le détour par Foucault.’

[25] Further details on the epistemological history of French geography can be found in Olivier Orain’s excellent thesis (2003) *Le plain-pied du monde: postures épistémologiques et pratiques d’écriture dans la géographie française au 20e siècle*, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne. The title is mildly misleading since many of the authors invoked belong to the French-speaking world in the wider sense, in particular from universities in the Suisse Romande.

[26] ‘sa production a le caractère d’une mosaïque lentement échafaudée, dans laquelle chaque texte prend place comme *pièce*, d’un dispositif et d’un processus. Dispositif, car chaque écrit renvoie à d’autres, contemporains, qu’il

relaie et qu'il complète, avec des redites partielles qui permettent un *empiècement* assez aisé.'

[27] 'Le pouvoir, nom commun, se cache derrière le Pouvoir, nom propre. Il se cache d'autant mieux qu'il est présent partout. Présent dans chaque relation, au détour de chaque action : insidieux, il profite de toutes les fissures sociales pour s'infiltrer jusqu'au cœur de l'homme. Ambiguïté donc puisqu'il y a le 'Pouvoir' et le 'pouvoir'. Mais le premier est plus facile à cerner car il se manifeste à travers des appareils complexes qui enserrent le territoire, contrôlent la population et dominent les ressources. C'est le pouvoir visible, massif, identifiable. Il est dangereux et inquiétant, par conséquent, mais il inspire la méfiance par la menace même qu'il représente. Mais le plus dangereux c'est celui qu'on ne voit pas ou qu'on voit plus parce qu'on a cru s'en débarrasser en l'assignant à résidence surveillée. Ce serait trop simple que le Pouvoir soit le Minotaure enfermé dans son labyrinthe qu'un Thésée pourrait aller tuer une fois pour toutes. Le pouvoir renaît, plus terrible encore, dans la rencontre de Thésée et du Minotaure : le Pouvoir est mort, vive le pouvoir. Dès lors, le pouvoir est assure de pérennité car il n'est plus visible, il est consubstantiel de toutes les relations.'

[28] 'tout point d'exercice du pouvoir est en même temps un lieu de formation du savoir' (Quoted by Raffestin 1980: 48, but not referenced).

[29] 'j'ai été très critiqué pour cette utilisation de Foucault et la seule consolation que j'ai, c'est que les Américains et notamment les géographes californiens découvrent ou redécouvrent Foucault aujourd'hui'.

[30] 'malgré leur grand intérêt, ces deux ouvrages ont peu fait école, peut-être parce qu'ils cumulaient deux handicaps pourtant opposés. D'un côté, ils étaient trop avancés pour leurs lecteurs, maniant des concepts perçus comme trop abstraits, trop lointain des champs de recherche habituels; de l'autre, ils continuaient d'aborder de biais le politique, véritable point aveugle de la *Weltanshauung* des géographes, renonçant à fonder une géographie politique sur des bases épistémologiques et théoriques claires. Du moins en France et dans les pays latins, car dans le monde anglophone, la géographie politique a, au cours des années 1980, conquis en douceur une place significative dans la

discipline.'

[31] 'pourrait être taxé de pratiquer un certain déterminisme politique quand il affirme que le pouvoir est consubstantiel de toute relation'.

[32] See for instance the contributors to the *Colloque* on 'Territorialité, une théorie à construire' organised on the occasion of Raffestin's retirement from the University of Geneva. Available online.

[33] 'C'est parce qu'il y a des réseaux de pratiques qu'il y a de la nécessité normative, réglementaire et légale et non pas l'inverse. De la même manière, c'est parce qu'il y a de l'historicité qu'il y a de la nécessité dans les sciences de l'homme dont la construction est toujours confrontée avec les réseaux de pratiques. C'est probablement la grande leçon, léguée par Michel Foucault, que Paul Veyne a su mettre en perspective, d'abord pour les historiens mais aussi pour tous les chercheurs en sciences de l'homme quand bien même peu s'en sont réclamés en géographie. Mais c'est une autre histoire […]'.

[34] 'il n'empêche que ce sont à ce jour les sociologues et les anthropologues qui ont sans doute le plus théorisé sur les rapports des pratiques spatiales et de la territorialité'. Di Méo also listed Frémont et al. (1984) as another example of a foucaldian approach to space but, on reading it, I was pushed to find any explicit hint of Foucault. This, of course, also raises the question of the implicit or non-refereed use of authors in the Francophone world, another trait distinguising the two writing styles.

[35] 'dans l'hétérotopie que définit Foucault, chacune des frontières de l'espace, réelle ou fictive, ne revêt qu'une signification fort limitée, anecdotique. C'est l'espace global qui fait sens. […] En lisant Foucault, l'on mesure bien de quelle façon la territorialité peut jaillir d'un espace géographique forgé par des cheminements répétitifs'. Note that the term 'territorialité' in French has a much denser meaning than 'territoriality' as used commonally within the Anglophone literature. For an analysis of 'territoire' and 'territorialité' within the two traditions, see Debarbieux 1999.

[36] ‘une annonce de développements ultérieurs et manifestait une série d’intuitions qu’il est dommage que Foucault n’ait pas plus développés’.

[37] ‘à un moment où la voix marginalisée et dominée est tenue en quelque sorte tenue pour être seule détentrice de vérité, il y a tout intérêt à démontrer et à conserver une position d’où il est censé être légitime de parler’.

[38] ‘il doit bien y avoir aussi dans la constitution des savoirs féminins quelque chose qui est de l’ordre du pouvoir’

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