
H-France Review Vol. 20 (October 2020), No. 187

Catherine M. Soussloff ed., *Foucault on the Arts and Letters: Perspectives for the 21st Century*. London and New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016. xviii + 229 pp. Notes, illustrations, bibliographies, and index. \$133.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-1-7834-8573-5; \$45.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-178348-574-1.

Review by Sarah Wilson, Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London.

Foucault on the Arts and Letters. Perspectives for the 21st Century, is the fruit of a conference in 2014, anticipating Catherine M. Soussloff's *Foucault on Painting*, 2017.^[1] Richly intersectional and transdisciplinary, it sets out to avoid any chronological presentation and is divided into four sections: "Visual Articulations," "Bodily Experience in Dance and Music," "Heroic and Tragic Subjectivities," and "Aesthetics Transformed."

There is a curious attitude to previous publications, footnoted as "exceptions" in Soussloff's preface (p. xviii), although these include Joseph T. Tanke's *Foucault's Philosophy of Art*, and Philippe Artière's collection, *Michel Foucault, La Littérature et les Arts*.^[2] This is despite extraordinary resonances between those works and this volume. Pierre Lascoumes's "La Perpendicularisation de la société. Soldats, Danseurs, Carroussels et Ballets de Cour" published in Artière's volume, for example, complements and anticipates Frédéric Pouillaude on dance here, in an essay subtitled "On Some Uses of Foucault's concepts in the Choreographic Field," or Brandon Konoval's virtuoso piece, "Discipline and Pianist" on the *Étude*, which discusses piano exercises, and pianistic virtuosity itself, as the ultimate disciplined display (Franz Liszt's body fusing almost monstrously with his piano).

The collection also endeavours to reconcile anglophone and francophone scholarship—but the divide between those approaches goes far beyond language, to the very heart of Foucault's enterprise. I well remember the late Roy Porter's take on English madness that could in no way be correlated to Foucauldian models of the "Great Confinement." Porter is acknowledged, but this essential Anglo-French divide does not feature as it might in Dana Arnold's opening essay on Hogarth's *Rake's Progress* in the context of the grandiose architecture of the Bedlam lunatic asylum in London.^[3] A prelude discusses different French and English editions of *Folie et déraison*, involving R.D. Laing and the "antipsychiatry" context (p. 6). Surely this perspective should interrogate Arnold's persistent use of the word "madness" (pp. 3-7) with no distinctions made here between schizophrenia, senile dementia, alcoholism or sheer destitution, let alone "ruin" (Tom Rakewell's situation) (p. 15)?

Anton Lee firmly places Duane Michals in the burgeoning 1980's French photography world, in his discussion of Foucault's essay "Thought and emotion," written for the American photographer's 1982 Paris retrospective. Foucault was suggested to curator Philippe Stoeckel via the novelist and photographer Hervé Guibert. This is not really Foucault's "sole treaty on photography" (p. 27), as the essay on Gérard Fromanger, "Photogenic Painting" is at least half historical in focus.[4] Lee's focus on Foucault's term *pensée-emotions*, "thought-emotions," as a post-Cartesian tool with which to explore more than visual responses, is tellingly juxtaposed with Barthes's concept of the *punctum*. Homoerotic dimensions are downplayed here: Guibert, the friend of Roland Barthes as well as Foucault, was a beautiful young man, at a time when Barthes, too, was deliberately exploring art world fauna; it is the illustrated photo *Narcissus* (1974) that attracts Foucault. Inadvertently, the essay marks the passage from the dominance of Narrative Figuration as a painterly movement to conceptual and post-conceptual art in Paris, with a central role for photography and photography in series: the essay includes seven captioned images of Michel's *The Man in the Room* (1975).

This mode segues easily to Sophie Berrebi's accomplished text on Jean-Luc Moulène, based on her book, *The Shape of Evidence*, 2014.[5] She emphasises the impact of the 1977 translation, *Discipline and Punish*, on photography historians Alain Sekula and John Tagg in the mid-1980s.[6] The chiasmic relationship between monument and document from Foucault's *Archeology of Knowledge* introduces Jean-Luc Moulène's projet *Le Monde, Le Louvre* (2005-2006): twenty-four relatively humble museum objects were exhibited as his photographs on plinths, as well as in the take-away *Le Monde* supplement.[7] Chris Marker appears rather than André Malraux amongst other rich references, anticipating contemporary practice. Berrebi (who points back to the fact that Moulène was gay conceptual artist Michel Journiac's assistant) writes the most future-oriented essay in the collection.

Moving to part two, "Body Techniques and Techniques of the Self," Frédéric Pouillade turns to dance, whose ethos does not align with the disciplinary structures of army, school or factory, yet where the "ethics of subjectivity" may also confront in-house power conflicts. Is the gap now closing, he asks, between *Discipline and Punish* and the last two volumes of the *History of Sexuality*? Richard Schusterman's *Body Consciousness. A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somasthetics* is challenged for its normative aims.[8] Yet a "Foucauldian notion of heterotopian dance" outside the institution, "breaking its enclosure (p. 76)," seems to beg the question of conceptor, choreographer, narrative and the dancer as actor and tool, as well as the disciplined yet individual body/performer.

It is at this point that Brandon Konoval introduces and concludes "Discipline and the Pianist" with Claude Debussy's 1915 wartime *Étude* for piano. (It is the *justesse* of this chapter I found so delightful, made to suffer piano competitions as a child.) From the fusion of military and musical institutions into the Conservatoire de Paris, to the discipline of the metronome or the sadism of Chopin's larger-than-octave elevenths forced upon the practising pianist, far larger questions are raised. Konoval's *longue durée* indeed extends from the earliest Christian asceticism to topical patriotism.

In part three, one moves from the era of Debussy's piano to Jean-Michel Jarre's 1970's synthesisers—or one might, if Foucault's actual context of writing were more evident. *Foucault on Art and Letters* offers a new generation no intimation of Foucault's Paris, nor his relationship with its art world. Sima Godfrey, in "Foucault's Baudelaire," argues: "the truth is that from the

1970s on Foucault's literary space had shrunk.... Baudelaire's appearance coincides with the discovery--or rediscovery--of Walter Benjamin in France in the early 1980s, a result, most notably, of Jean Lacoste's translation of Benjamin's *Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Age of High Capitalism* in 1979" (pp. 110-111).[9] Foucault's reading of Kant through Baudelaire and thus modernity is interesting here, and Godfrey mentions precursors, from Sartre to the Jakobsen-Lévi-Strauss analysis of "Les Chats" of 1962 (though not its republication in 1977). However, in 1971, *Sur le dandysme* reprinted Baudelaire's "Painter of modern life" essay in the sexy 10/18 format, and following Baudelaire's *Pléiade* re-edition of 1975 came Roger Kempf's *Dandies, Baudelaire et Cie*, and more.[10] Jean-François Lyotard used the trope of the dandy and the confrontation of Marx and Baudelaire within a capitalist-libidinal analysis in his text on painter Jacques Monory as early as 1972 and with the widest literary range.[11] Dandyism signifies the turn to an *après-mai des faunes* after 1968, the FHAR movement for homosexual liberation, and Parisian exhibitions of the Pre-Raphaelites and Symbolists--along with catalogues, re-editions, press, and discussions.[12] Long hair, velvet jackets, ruffled shirts and bell bottoms were the norm; while Foucault could not compete sartorially with this androgynous 1970s dandyism he was certainly affected.

"Foucault's Beckett" follows "Foucault's Baudelaire;"; (he saw *Waiting for Godot* at the Théâtre de Babylone 1953, cited "What matter who's speaking, someone said, what matter who's speaking?" when questioning authorship in 1969, while for the Collège de France inaugural lecture, he misquoted *The Unnameable*: "I must go on, I can't go on I must go on," misattributing the passage to Beckett's Molloy. Marisa C. Sánchez's passionate exercise in intertextuality ends with Foucault's evocation of the philosopher Jean Hyppolite, who had first proposed him for the Collège de France chair. Thence we move back in time to Arianna Sforzini's "The Role of Parrhêsia in King Lear," which looks at Foucault's earliest doctoral work on madness, a 1970 interview in Japan, with Lear as the embodiment of truth, preceding reflections upon the suffocation of Lear's extravagance in the classical period. Lear reappears in the last Collège de France course, "The Courage of the Truth" (1983-1984), following Foucault's "Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling" course at the University of Louvain in 1981, where Shakespeare, Corneille, Racine and Schiller "put into question of the modern form of the state" (p. 43). Nothing could be more topical.

Catherine Soussloff's own contribution, "Deleuze on Foucault. The Recourse to Painting," focusses on Deleuze's *Foucault* and "visibilities" in Foucault's thought (p. 150). Introductory passages recapitulate Foucault's mentions of Van Gogh or Artaud and illustrate the Hieronymous Bosch triptych that impressed him before resting on Gérard Fromanger, where Foucault's text "Photogenic painting" throws us back to Henry Fox-Talbot. But the *passage* from Fox Talbot's "shadow images" to Foucault on the photographic "shadow" in Fromanger (p. 153), misunderstands Foucault's reference to the presence of the artist's silhouette cast by the slide projector throughout the previous "Painter and Model" series.[13] The painting "left to exist 'all by itself'", actually refers to the moment the slide projector is switched off; the projected photograph vanishes from the painting's surface to which *its image has been transferred*. (p. 153) "In what might be called its ontological status, then, the completed painted canvas did not directly reference or index the prior image projection" (p. 153). This statement is entirely at odds with Fromanger's political commitment. His painted police vans, his crowds, owe their on-the-street "look," with its photographic perspectives to the photographer's work, catapulted as images through different media: what Foucault called the "frond des images," or "sling-shot".[14] It is in the third out of five chapters of Deleuze's posthumous *Foucault* (1986), "Les

strates en formations historiques, le visible et l'énonçable (savoir)," that the visible and the articulable *as contributing to knowledge formation* are discussed in terms of Foucault's archaeological metaphors.[15] The names Delaunay (not "Delauney" (p. 155)), Cézanne or Magritte appear glancingly--Delaunay with respect, implicitly, to Orphic paintings such as the "Windows" series that dissolved motifs into prismatic light. Soussloff then pursues other texts such as Foucault's *Manet*. The "recourse to painting" is indeed central--as I argued in our bilingual publishing project as long ago as 1999--but whether Deleuze's *Foucault* is the place to for compelling evidence, as per this essay's title, is debatable.

Both Foucault's Magritte and Manet projects begin during the crucial sojourn from 1966-1968 in Tunisia. Ilka Kressner emphasises the criticality of the period: Foucault's violent "March of '68" in the former French protectorate, just over a decade into independence. The intensity of his political baptism of fire is substantiated with vivid detail: Foucault's off-campus lecture on structuralism and "madness and civilisation", and his student courses on Quattrocento painting, were delivered in a context of revolts and repression. The organisation of rooftop police forces around the "Red Square" inner courtyard of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences was striking. Foucault would evolve "discourses of mobility and... strategies of a mobile challenging of established systems of power," attacking a prevalent "limp humanism" ("humanisme mou" (p. 171)). It is here that Foucault also studies "the physical reality of speech acts" (p. 172)--though we need to read Dominique Ségler's "Foucault à Tunis" to learn that the philosophy department was directed by Gérard Déledalle, who introduced Foucault to Austen.[16] The lecture on Manet's painting and two others are sourced to *Les Cahiers de Tunisie* (1989)--but the genesis of the rediscovery of the texts is entirely missing, downplaying previous scholarship. Foucault's disciple Fathi Triki set up the research group whose "Foucault study day" in 1987 revealed the original recordings of Foucault's lectures, and both Triki and his wife, Rachida Boubaker-Triki, the feminist philosopher, art historian and curator, have published subsequently on the subject.[17]

Finally, to the remaking of the self--first with Deleuze and Guattari's idea of "making deserts of ourselves," according to Andrew Ballantyne, who reverts to Saint Anthony, the model for Flaubert and hence Foucault, and offers the contemporary parallel of Michel Tounier's *Friday or the Other Island*. [18] Henry Thoreau's two years in the woods offer another trope. Finally--via Gilbert Simondon and Bernard Stiegler--one circles back to the heterotopias of mountain and desert island, the opposite of prisons, madhouses and schools. Frédéric Gros's "The Aesthetics of *Bios*" focuses on Foucault's concepts of the aesthetics of existence and how to make oneself a work of art, attempting to redeem Foucault from charges of decadence and depoliticization. He emphasizes the espousal of Nietzsche's paradigm of creation rather than contemplation (p. 203), Foucault's classical masters and rigorous work ethic. Self-mastery, self-care is, nonetheless always that of a man in a man's world. In terms of today's focus on identity politics, one would not necessarily seek more on gender or minorities in this collection, but it certainly eschews any impression of the polymorphous desires of Foucault's 1970s; he shared his world of art and letters, after all, with Guy Hocquenghem, Catherine Millet, Monique Wittig and the *doyens* of *écriture féminine*.

Why not *Foucault, Arts and Letters*? This well-edited and informative volume, misleadingly titled, one might argue, with so much research and moments of great perspicacity, indeed offers a new *élan* for twentieth-century perspectives on Foucault. It would have been more gracious, and indeed more useful, to have added at least a chronology detailing Foucault's actual engagement

with the arts, the posthumous republishing of his relevant texts and significant subsequent scholarship.

NOTES

[1] Catherine M. Soussloff, *Foucault on Painting* (Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 2017), preceded by her Collège de France lectures of 2015 see <https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/john-scheid/guestlecturer-2015-05-05-14h30.htm>, consulted 4 October 2020.

[2] Philippe Artières, *Michel Foucault, La Littérature et les Arts* (Paris: Kimé, 2004), based on the Colloque de Cerisy of June 2001; Joseph T Tanke, *Foucault's Philosophy of Art* (London, Continuum, 2009). Notably, Soussloff does not mention Matthew Barr, *Michel Foucault and Visual Art, 1954-1988* (Ph.D dissertation, University of London, 2007), under my supervision, or Sarah Wilson, "Deleuze, Foucault, Guattari. Periodisations: Gérard Fromanger," in *The Visual World of French Theory: Figurations* (London: Yale University Press), pp. 127-155, notes 1-107, pp. 232-237, involving extensive work with the artists and citing Barr, notes 65, 66 (revised, translated version, Les Presses du Réel, 2018).

[3] Dana Arnold's *The Spaces of the Hospital: Spatiality and Urban Change in London, 1680-1820* (London: Routledge, 2013) follows Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British Hospital and Asylum Architecture, 1660-1815* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

[4] Foucault, "La Peinture photogénique," in *Le Désir est partout* (Paris, Galerie Jeanne Bucher, 1975); and in Sarah Wilson, ed., *Gilles Deleuze, Michel Foucault, Gérard Fromanger, Photogenic Painting* (London: Black Dog, 1999), pp. 83-104.

[5] Sophie Berrebi, *The Shape of Evidence* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2014).

[6] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977); Alain Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3-64; John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (London: Macmillan, 1988).

[7] Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Vintage, 2010), p. 6.

[8] Richard Schusterman, *Body Consciousness. A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somasthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[9] Walter Benjamin, *Baudelaire, un poète lyrique à l'apogée du capitalisme*, Jean Lacoste, ed. (Paris: Payot, 1979).

[10] See for example Roman Jakobsen, *Huit Questions de Poétique* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), pp. 163-188; Roger Kempf, ed., *Sur le dandysme: traité de la vie élégante par Balzac; Du dandysme et de George Brummell par Barbey D'Aurevilly; La peinture de la vie moderne par Baudelaire; précédé de Du délire et du rien par Roger Kempf* (all Paris: Union Générale des Éditions, 1971); *Dandies, Baudelaire et Cie* (Paris: Seuil, 1977); Michel Lemaire, *Le Dandysme de Baudelaire à Mallarmé* (Montreal: University of Montreal Press, 1978).

[11] Jean-François Lyotard, "Economie libidinale du Dandy," in Sarah Wilson, ed., *The Assassination of Experience, by Painting, Monory* (London: Black Dog, 1998), pp. 88-190.

[12] See Guy Hocquenghem, leader of the FHAR (Front Homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire), *L'après-mai des faunes, Volutions* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1974); *La Peinture romantique anglaise et les préraphaélites* (Paris: Petit Palais, 1972); *Le symbolisme en Europe* (Paris: Grand Palais, 1976).

[13] See Sarah Wilson, ed., Gilles Deleuze, "Cold and Heat/Le Froid et le Chaud," in *Gérard Fromanger, Photogenic Painting*, Sarah Wilson ed., London: Black Dog (1999), pp. 63-77.

[14] Michel Foucault, "Photogenic Painting", in Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault, *Gérard Fromanger*, Sarah Wilson, ed., Daffyd Roberts, trans. (London, Black Dog, 1999), p. 95. See Jacques Prévert, Alain Jouffroy, *Fromanger, Boulevard des Italiens* (Paris: Georges Fall, 1971). Eli Kagan's black and white photographs feature, one by one, in the context of their respective paintings.

[15] Deleuze, *Foucault* (Paris: Minuit, 1986).

[16] Dominique Séglaard, "Foucault à Tunis, à propos de deux conférences," *Foucault Studies* 4 (2007): 7-18.

[17] Rachida Boubaker-Triki, "Notes sur Michel Foucault à l'université de Tunis," *Rue Descartes* 3/61 (2008): 111-113. This supplements "Foucault en Tunisie," with its description of Foucault's slide lectures, in Maryvonne Saison ed., Michel Foucault, *La Peinture de Manet* (Paris: Seuil, 2004), pp. 51-63. See also a version for the Société Française d'Esthétique (2001), and her first account, "L'exemplarité de la peinture" in *Les Cahiers de Tunisie* 39 (1989): 149-150. See also CELAAN, "Michel Foucault En Tunisie (1966-1968)," special issue 12/1 & 2 (Spring 2015) (including Fathi Triki), and Kathryn Medien, "Foucault in Tunisia : the encounter with intolerable power," *SRF The Sociological Review Foundation* 68, 3 (August 27, 2019): 492-507.

[18] Michel Tournier, *Vendredi ou les limbes du Pacifique* (Paris, Gallimard, 1967).

LIST OF ESSAYS

Catherine M. Sousloff, "Introduction: Perspectives on Foucault and the Arts and Letters"

Part one, Visual Articulations

Dana Arnold, "Unreason and the Ambiguities of Silence"

Anton Lee, "The Photogenic Invention of Thought-Emotion: Duane Michals and Michel Foucault"

Sophie Berrebi, "Documents, Monuments and Photographs: Jean-Luc Moulène with Michel Foucault"

Part two, Bodily Experience in Dance and Music

Frédéric Pouillaude, “Body Techniques and Techniques of the Self: On Some Uses of Foucault’s Concepts in the Choreographic Field”

Brandon Konoval, “Discipline and Pianist: Foucault and the Genealogy of the Étude”

Part three, Heroic and Tragic Subjectivities

Sima Godfrey, “Foucault’s Baudelaire”

Marisa C. Sánchez, “Foucault’s Beckett”

Arianna Sforzini, “The Role of Parrhēsía in *King Lear*”

Part four, Aesthetics Transformed

Catherine M. Soussloff, “Deleuze on Foucault: The Recourse to Painting”

Ilka Kressner, “Critical Travels, Discursive Practices: Foucault in Tunis”

Andrew Ballantyne, “Remaking the Self in Hererotopia”

Frédéric Gros, translated by Sima Godfrey, “The Aesthetics of *Bios*”

Sarah Wilson

Courtauld Institute of Art

University of London

sarah.wilson@courtauld.ac.uk

Copyright © 2020 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution of individual reviews for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the H-France website. The Society for French Historical Studies reserves the right to withdraw the license for edistribution/republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. Neither bulk redistribution/republication in electronic form of more than five percent of the contents of *H-France Review* nor republication of any amount in print form will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. The views posted on *H-France Review* are not necessarily the views of the Society for French Historical Studies.

ISSN 1553-9172