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REVIEW

Chris Philo, *A Geographical History of Institutional Provision for the Insane from Medieval Times to the 1860s in England and Wales: The Space Reserved for Insanity* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellon Press, 2004). 712 pp. $159.95/£94.95. ISBN 0-7734-6509-X

In his *History of Madness* Foucault talks of "the space reserved by society for insanity".[1] This telling phrase, implying both an imagined and material space for the marginalisation or containment of the mad, outlines the topic of Chris Philo's magisterial study of the 'mad-business' in England and Wales. This is a hugely ambitious undertaking, covering several centuries of history and a focused yet still broad geographical area. In his preface, Philo notes that this project was twenty years in the making, dating from an interest in this question as an undergraduate student, through his undergraduate dissertation to his doctoral thesis. Some twelve years after that thesis was submitted, the full ambition of his project is realised in this book, stretching over almost 700 pages of closely argued and scrupulously referenced text. Both the dissertation and thesis bore the same title, one which recurs as the subtitle to this book, "the space reserved for insanity".

Philo is a Professor of Geography at the University of Glasgow, and although he has published a range of studies on other aspects of geography, such as, notably, animal geographies and methodological issues, he is predominantly known for his work in two fields: the historical geography of madness and mental illness; and as an interpreter and exponent of Foucault's work. Indeed, Philo's pioneering 1992 essay "Foucault's Geographies" remains a key reference work within the field, reprinted in a major collection on the topic of *Thinking Space*.[2] This book is the culmination of the historical study, although neither the end of his interest in the topic of mental illness, nor, as evidenced by his review essay in this volume of *Foucault Studies* among other works, of his appropriation and critique of Foucault.

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1 Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation*, translated by Richard Howard, (London: Routledge, 1989), 251.

2 Chris Philo, "Foucault's Geographies", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol 10, 1992, 137-61, reprinted in Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (eds). *Thinking Space* (London, Routledge, 2000), 205-38.

Those interested in Foucault's work will find much of interest here, and this will naturally be the focus of my review for this journal. Philo's approach is multi-faceted, but three key elements stand out. First, he provides a detailed analysis of Foucault's book on madness, translated in abridged form as *Madness and Civilisation*.[3] While Philo analyses the English-language debate, particularly initiated by Colin Gordon, about how much is lost in this abridgement, and the translation more generally (see, for example, 34-35), his reading is largely of the briefer version.[4] Given that the full text has now, finally, been translated into English,[5] it will be of great interest to see what Philo makes of this longer and much richer account. Nonetheless, Philo rightly contends that much of even the abridged text is largely unknown and unmapped territory (7, 34) and he provides a detailed and meticulous analysis of its claims. He clearly demonstrates Foucault's attentiveness to spatial issues within this text, challenging in part Lawrence Stone's claim that Foucault was "abstract and metaphoric in expression, *unconcerned with historical detail of time and place* [Philo's emphasis] or with rigorous documentation" (quoted 651).[6] Such a reading of the inherent spatial awareness of Foucault's histories seems to me to give far more credibility to geographers' continued interest in Foucault than the shorter texts such as 'Of Other Spaces' where he more explicitly spoke of these topics.[7]

The second key element is the way in which Foucault's claims are brought into productive conflict with other accounts of the history of madness – of "madhouses, mad-doctors and mad people" (6). Philo's survey of the literature here is extensive, and his positioning of Foucault within the debates on this topic, both those initiated by Foucault's work and more tangential, such as the anti-psychiatry movement, is exemplary. The third element is the empirical richness of this study, which provides a means of testing and challenging Foucault's claims within a sometimes rather different context from the overtly Francophone concerns of *History of Madness*.

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3 The original text is *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Plon, 1961), subsequently reprinted in various forms – abridged (1964), with appendices and with a replaced preface (1972), and then without the new appendices but still with the replaced preface (1976). The last is the version still in print today: *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1976).

4 A comprehensive sampling of the debate initiated by Gordon can be found in Arthur Still & Irving Velody (eds.), *Rewriting the History of Madness: Studies in Foucault's Histoire de la Folie* (London, Routledge, 1992).

5 Michel Foucault, *History of Madness*, translated by Jean Khalfa (London: Routledge, 2005).

6 Lawrence Stone, *The Past and Present Revisited* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), 274.

7 For the range of interests of geographers in Foucault, see Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden (eds.) *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), to which Philo is a contributor.

The treatment of Foucault is by no means uncritical, and this is where Philo retains some sympathy for Stone (652), as Foucault is particularly taken to task for his generalisation across historical periods which at times takes only limited account of 'areal differentiation', or the differences between places which cannot simply be plotted on a linear historical scale (6-7). The danger in this approach is that some places are seen as being 'behind' and some more 'advanced' along a path of change (627 n. 141; more generally Chapter Two). Spatial variation is collapsed into historical progress. In this Philo is in part rehearsing a reasonably familiar critique about Foucault's lack of geographical precision, something advanced, as Philo acknowledges, by the geographers of the *Hérodote* journal in 1976.[8] In contrast to Foucault's 'spatial nomadism' Philo calls for much greater 'spatial precision' (43). Philo notes that

> I am acutely conscious of the weaknesses within *Madness and Civilisation*, especially the problem that the dazzling 'spatial history' depicted therein – a spatial history of the chasm that gradually opens up between reason and madness as the latter is banished, imaginatively and then materially, to those wastes beyond the city once occupied by Medieval lepers – undeniably does risk imposing too bold and inflexible an account on the fragile peculiarities of period and place (653).

These are critiques which of course do not apply simply to Foucault, and Philo's most effective demonstration of this critique is not, of course, in its mere statement, but in its detailed deployment throughout his own study. More Foucauldian, but just as critical of much of the literature on this topic is the through-going spatialisation of the history. As the quotation above indicates, Philo characterises Foucault's history of madness as a 'spatial history', a term he takes from the work of Paul Carter.[9] What this requires, as Philo effectively demonstrates, is not merely a study of the architectural design of asylums or other spatial practices, which as he notes have been extensively treated elsewhere (5), but to situate these within a much wider enquiry that historically examines the spaces of madness at the same time that it spatialises the history of madness. Space or geography becomes not merely an object of analysis, but a tool of analysis.[10] In such a mode of analysis both

8 The interview appears as Michel Foucault, "Questions on Geography", in *Power/Knowledge*, edited by Colin Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), 63-77.

9 Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987).

10 This is an approach I have discussed in relation to Foucault in *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History* (London: Continuum, 2001). As Philo acknowledges (69 n. 163), there I provide a reading of *Histoire de la folie* as a

geography and history are transformed through their mutual interaction. No longer the aspatial analyses of traditional diachronic histories, nor the frozen-in-time snapshot that structuralism, with its predilection for spatial metaphors (i.e., in Althusser), proposed of synchronic analysis. Rather, here there is a lively study of the spaces in which these historical events take place, and of the impact of spatial factors on such chronologies. The focus is on the non-domestic spaces (4-5), the spaces of the public sphere in which the mad were active and acted upon.

Thus, Philo rewrites the history of madness within his own geographical and temporal constraints from the dual perspectives of areal differentiation and attentiveness to spatial relations (7, 31). It is a Foucauldian history in other ways too, developing claims from Foucault's study of discourses and their concomitant power relations; and the reading of *Madness and Civilisation* is conditioned by Philo's own "familiarity with Foucault's overall *oeuvre*" (34). In its empirical breadth and depth it very clearly demonstrates Foucault's claim that genealogical work "requires patience and a knowledge of details, and it depends on a vast accumulation of source material".[11] The full array of the historical geographer's armoury is on display here, from the clearly extensive archival work to the way in which this is demonstrated and put into practice. The mapping on display is both the conceptual mapping inherent in a spatialisation of history and the more conventional mapping of spatial variability. The text is extensively illustrated with maps, tables, graphs and diagrams, as well as some nicely chosen images, reminiscent of those Foucault included in *Surveiller et punir*, although the English translation *Discipline and Punish* reprints only a fraction of those in the French original.

Philo notes that Foucault says "virtually nothing about public asylums *per se*", since his analysis ends with the work of Tuke and Pinel (534). If Foucault does address some of this in the *Psychiatric Power* course, Philo's analysis of them is much more extensive. There is some very useful contextualisation through its empirical breadth of the distinctions between charitable, private and public asylums (Chapters Five to Seven, summarised 657), as well as subjecting them to sustained geographical analysis. Philo is also very good on elaborating Foucault's claims about the various expulsions and incorporations of the mad in different historical periods, particularly looking at the use of landscape, gardens and farms. The role of nature is particularly interesting in its comparison with Foucault's treatment (i.e., 588-9).

'spatial history'. Given that this runs for 14 pages of the published text and some 8,000 words including notes, it is perhaps only someone of Philo's scope and ambition who could note that I only "briefly explore" this text in this relation.

11 Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History", in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 76-7, quoted by Philo, 32.

Some minor grumbles would include the use of *op. cit.* in the endnotes to each chapter. There is no separate bibliography, so this can require much searching to pinpoint a precise reference as there are between 400-500 notes to most chapters. Equally it is sometimes a little frustrating – especially in a work of this size – to be referred to other works by Philo for further elaboration of points or ideas. This is of course standard practice among academics, but while references to his extensive publications are acceptable and demonstrate just how broadly the project evidenced in this book is situated within his overall career, the references to the aforementioned dissertation and thesis are perhaps harder to justify.

Somewhat more serious, especially given the importance of the geographical specification of phenomena, is the sometimes confusing use of historical periods. This is perhaps most evident in the use of Dark Ages, Middle Ages, and the Medieval period (though see 86). The transition from this time, or times, to the 'Early Modern' period could have used a little more explanation – not in terms of the detail of the subject, which is extensive – but in the use of the terms. Generally, it seems to me that the specificity of dating is much more detailed in the later parts of this study, doubtless due in part to the greater availability of the historical record. It is also obvious too that the period of the "Dark Ages to the Restoration" is treated in one chapter (Chapter Three), whereas the later period is the subject of Chapters Four to Seven. In addition, the different terms of 'spatial history', 'historical geography' and 'geographical history' are perhaps not as conceptually specified as might be useful. We find, for example, the claim that Foucault's work is a 'spatial history' but not "a fully fledged *historical geography* of the mad-business" (42). While this claim is thoroughly vindicated by Philo's incorporation of areal differentiation into his analysis, the difference between this term and the broader project of a spatial history Philo is advancing, or the title's claim of a 'geographical history,'' could have been more fully explored. This is perhaps particularly demonstrated by the book's concluding claim that he has offered a "Foucauldian historical geography of the mad-business" (662).

However, perhaps the greatest shame about this book is its prohibitive price at £94.95 in the UK and $159.95 in the US. Unless and until this work appears in paperback, presumably with another publisher, it will largely be accessible only through libraries. You should order it for your institution without delay, so that you, your colleagues and students can read it: it is a text of fundamental importance in the English language appropriation of Foucault and a first-class pioneering study in the history of madness and historical geography.

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