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Book Review: Michel Foucault: Clare O'Farrell London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2005, xiv + 184 pp (paperback)

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constructed the idea of citizens in this country being only white.' Although such structures were removed by the 1967 referendum, still a full recognition of Indigenous people as equals, with the same rights as non-Indigenous people, is illusory in some quarters. The notion of human rights has been discussed and argued over in detail in other literatures, but Natalie Gray's chapter on 'Human Rights' provides a different view of how this policy has been practised in Australia. The author argues that the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, due to its limited power, is unable to hear cases against and make decisions on government breaches of human rights on health.

Finally, each chapter in the book ends with a summary and discussion questions which could be used in various units of studies at the university level. The short bullet points in the summaries direct the students to the main issues raised in each chapter, and a few stimulating and sometimes difficult questions give the reader a chance to test their understanding and comprehension of each chapter.

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MICHEL FOUCAULT

Clare O'Farrell

London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2005, xiv + 184 pp (paperback).

Designed specifically as an introduction for cultural studies students to the writings of Michel Foucault, this very lucid and well presented text is nonetheless an equally valuable resource for students of sociology, political science and philosophy – whether attempting to apply Foucault's historical/analytic techniques to a particular site of knowledge/power relations or gain an under-

standing of the breadth of Foucault's contemporary cultural and philosophical significance. After presenting a brief overview of Foucault's cultural context and his major works, and having distanced herself from the often racy, scandalizing implications of previous postmodern-style introductions and biographies, O'Farrell concentrates more particularly on elucidating five basic principles or tools of socio-cultural analysis, which, she argues, undergird Foucault's entire *oeuvre*. Indeed, the second half of her text is given over to a more extended discussion of each of those principles of socio-cultural interrogation; in short, an examination of social and discursive orders, of historical discontinuities, of truth and its limits, of power/knowledge relations, and of ethical values with respect to issues of social injustice. O'Farrell is quick to distance herself, however, from the implication that these principles might in some way be construed as grounding principles for an integrated system of philosophical thought or as a methodologically fixed grid common to scientific and positivistic modes of sociological and literary analysis. For, as she puts it,

Most actual applications of Foucault's method really amount to the transfer, via a process of analogy, of his concrete ideas about specific historical situations to other situations ... These kinds of applications do not involve the imposition of an abstract universal or scientific template, rather they involve argument by analogy and comparison. (p. 53)

Similarly to Foucault, O'Farrell further argues that this methodological apparatus is experimental, and that specific elements may not perhaps be necessary or appropriate in the analysis of particular socio-cultural sites. Nevertheless it is also evident in the course of O'Farrell's discussion that each of these modes of

analysis interweaves or overlaps with the others in a rich and complex mosaic.

What further marks this book as a significant resource for students are its two appendices, which concern respectively a detailed chronology of Foucault's life and times and an expansive glossary of key concepts, along with references to their various occurrences in Foucault's writings. For example, on the concept of 'apparatus' (*dispositif*) O'Farrell states:

Foucault generally uses this term to indicate the various institutional, physical and administrative mechanisms and knowledge structures, which enhance and maintain the exercise of power within the social body. It first appears in his work in the mid-1970s (see 151). He also uses it in PP. 7, 28 Nov 1973. (p. 129)

She goes on to give a detailed list of references indicating precisely where Foucault uses this term. Examples of other similarly referenced concepts include biopower, confession, crime and the criminal, discourse, dreams, ethics, heterotopia, madness, parrhesia, problematisations, regimes of truth, terrorism, and women and feminism. In her exhaustive bibliography of Foucault's works, O'Farrell also includes recent translations of Foucault's lecture series such as *Abnormal* (2003) and *Society must be Defended* (2003), along with the as yet untranslated lectures on *Sécurité, territoire, population* (2004). She also provides a list of internet sites devoted specifically to Foucault.

Now what is also striking is the manner in which, while upholding Foucault's articulation of historical discontinuities against the humanist and essentialist implications of historical continuity, and while acknowledging the decisive breaks in Foucault's methodological focus from archaeological to genealogical and thence to ethical issues of self-transfiguration, O'Farrell nonetheless argues for an identifiable

coherence of certain concerns and issues at work in Foucault's *oeuvre*. Is this perhaps an unintended echo of Foucault's archaeological ambiguity between the empirical record of discursive formations and their archival rules, rules which not only function as quasi-transcendental conditions of possibility for discursive expression but which are unavoidably constructed through the linguistic regularities, repetitions and omissions of that same discursive regime? Or does O'Farrell suggest the coherence of ambiguity evident in Foucault's *oeuvre*, like that of domination and resistance in the genealogy of knowledge/power relations where each becomes the other in the reproductive immanence of our cultural, ontological condition; and where the difference between freedom and unfreedom disappears in the agonistic ethics of an ironic, self-affirming dandy?

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SOCIAL POLICY IN AUSTRALIA: UNDERSTANDING FOR ACTION

Alison McClelland and Paul Smyth (eds)

*Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2006,
iii + 280 pp., \$59.95 (paperback).*

This book, written when the Howard government was in office, and published before the last federal election, was (unintentionally) timely with regard to the election of the new Rudd Labor government in late 2007. There are already signs that ideas and recommendations flagged in this book might in fact be taken up by the new government, an indication of the influential status enjoyed by some of the authors in policy circles and, of course, the changing mood of Australian politics.