Humanity does not gradually progress from combat to combat until it arrives at universal reciprocity, where the rule of law finally replaces warfare; humanity installs each of its violences in a system of rules and thus proceeds from domination to domination. (Foucault, 1986a: 85)

**The Distant Roar of Battle**

The projected publication of Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France in the 1970s and early 1980s (Foucault taught at the Collège, where he held the chair in Histoire des systèmes de pensée from 1971 until 1984) adds a major dimension to the understanding and the usefulness of his work. As things stand, only two full years of lectures have been published, Les Anormaux, from 1974–5, and Il faut défendre la société, from the academic year 1975–6. It is not an accident that the 1975–6 lectures were chosen as the first publication of the projected series, standing as they do approximately in the middle of Foucault's period of teaching at the Collège. They represent the beginning of a shift in orientation in Foucault's thought, an honest reassessment of the work he has done so far, and a pointer to future projects.

In his own summary of the lecture course, published in the Annuaire of the Collège, Foucault presents the central theme as the question of war as a principle of historical understanding. How did it become possible to think of peace and order as permeated and underpinned by continuous elements of combat and struggle? As Foucault puts it: 'Who has sought in the noise and confusion of war, in the grime of battle, the principle of intelligibility, of order, of institutions, of history?' (1989: 87). Delivered weekly from 7 January to 17 March 1976, the lectures stand between the publication.
of Surveiller et punir (February 1975) and La Volonté de savoir (October 1976). In the former, later translated as Discipline and Punish (1977), Foucault famously describes the historical emergence of a ‘disciplinary’ society. In the latter publication, translated as The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Foucault describes the development of ‘biopower’ which is superimposed on the disciplinary grid. Disciplinary power has as its target the individual, employing surveillance, normalizing techniques and a ‘panoptic’ grid of institutions. Biopower, on the other hand, has as its target the population as a whole. Biopower is the central element in Foucault’s later work on governmentality (1991: 85–104). Translated and abridged versions of the first two lectures of the year were published in the Power/Knowledge collection (see Foucault, 1980: 78–108). However, these extracts only give an incomplete impression of the full import of the lecture course.

First, it should be noted the lectures from 1975–6 also stand at the beginning of a period in which Foucault worked at some length on political theory, a body of work which only found its way into his major publications in a fragmentary, sometimes confusing, manner. In other words, they form part of a period which is something like a ‘missing link’ in Foucault’s thought. In fact, according to Pasquale Pasquino (1993: 77), Foucault intended to return to the study of political thought – using the research he had presented in his lectures between 1975 and 1980 – after he had completed his Histoire de la sexualité project.

The lectures also tell us much about Foucault’s working methods. As François Ewald and Alessandro Fontana argue in their general preface, they have a status which sets them apart from the main body of Foucault’s work, being literally an example of ‘work in progress’. The reader follows the unfolding of a complex, at times perplexing, narrative, which is constructed, as Ewald and Fontana argue, from three elements: historical erudition, a personal engagement and a reflection on current events. Foucault may be talking about apparently obscure and forgotten discourses, but he always manipulates them in order to cast light on current events, creating what Deleuze calls a ‘diagonal’ line between history and the present day. This ability to intertwine historical work with elements of autobiography and reflections upon actuality is evident throughout the course of Foucault’s lectures at the Collège. For example, in his 1979 series, Naissance de la biopolitique, he starts with a historical analysis of ‘governmentality’, tracing the genealogy of governmental rationality in Europe but, as the year progresses, he provides an intellectual engagement with the economic and political liberalism which was about to become so important in Europe and North America. In the same way that his contemporary and friend Gilles Deleuze blends his own voice with Hume or Spinoza to create a new voice, so Foucault inhabits and brings to life buried discourses from the past. James Miller, one of Foucault’s biographers, is particularly struck by this form of indirect discourse in the 1975–6 lectures, describing them as ‘an astonishing feat of intellectual ventriloquy’. Miller also suggests that they convey a strong ‘sense of self-analysis’ (1993: 289). Foucault’s lectures represent a
particularly vivid example of a feature that characterizes much of his writing, which is to say the ability to create a fruitful dynamic from the tensions which exist within his work. For Gilles Deleuze (1995: 101), this tendency to create ‘strange dialogues with himself’ is one of the elements which makes him a ‘great stylist’.

Methodologically, the lectures provide perhaps the clearest example of Foucault’s historical analysis of discourse or, as his title at the Collège de France would have it, the ‘history of systems of thought’. The discourses that he traces are never the property of a particular subject position, that of a group or of an individual, but rather a set of rules for the production of statements. From a purely methodological point of view, Foucault is at pains to show how the production of opposing points of view, of controversy and conflict – in this case in the field of historical knowledge – depends upon the very regularity and homogeneity of the rules which organize the production of discourse (1997: 184–5). In simple terms, real controversy and disagreement can only be produced when discourses are produced by the same or similar rules and focus upon the same or similar objects. Ann Laura Stoller, in one of the few existing pieces of commentary on the lectures, claims that they illustrate the subtlety and richness of Foucault’s genealogical method, in that they show that Foucault is not merely a thinker of discontinuity, but is concerned with the way in which discourse is broken and also ‘recovered, reinscribed, modified, encased, and encrusted’ (Stoller, 1995: 61). In this way Foucault, as a historian of the ‘history of systems of thought’, analyses the historical process of discursive bricolage:

The discourse of race will play out these ‘different games’ with ‘polyvalent mobility,’ at one moment seized in the seventeenth century by ‘levellers’ in their struggle against the British monarchy, in the eighteenth century by French aristocratic opponents to absolutism, and yet again in the nineteenth century in ‘reversal’, as a primary weapon replayed through the genocidal technologies of racial states. (Stoller, 1995: 61)

However, the interest of these lectures goes beyond the internal development of Foucault’s work. Jean-Claude Girardin (1998: 179), describing Il faut défendre la société as a ‘livre-symptôme’ which has a ‘whiff of sulphur’ about it, claims that it is an essential addition to the understanding of contemporary society (‘un rouage essentiel à la compréhension de notre société’), particularly the persistence of racism. Nearly 25 years on, one can discern coded messages in Foucault’s weekly public lectures, a series of arrows aimed at the heart of the French polity. His targets include the conventional narrative of French history, the claim to ‘universalism’ which emerges from the Revolution, the legitimation of violence by the militant Left, and, crucially, his own intellectual position.
Nietzsche, Genealogy, History

In the main body of the lectures, Foucault traces the counter-history of a discourse of war or battle. According to this discourse, the neutral, objective subject does not exist, since the subject always finds itself faced with an adversary. Similarly, it is a discourse which depends upon the notion that a 'binary structure' traverses society: there are always two classes, two races. In this way, it posits a permanent 'guerre des races'. Obviously, Nietzsche is the figure in Western thought who is most closely associated with this discourse, but Foucault offers a detailed genealogy of the belief that elements of war are woven into the fabric of peace and order. Hobbes and Machiavelli are taken as representatives of the 'official' discourses of order. Hobbes offers an imaginary, or theoretical, point of contact which allows us to construct a State, and Machiavelli offers tactical advice for the Prince. Foucault also attacks a Hegelian reading of history. The discourse of battle, when not subsumed by more respectable juridical theories, has been 'tamed', domesticated by the figure of the dialectic. He regards the dialectic as a sort of false representation, the 'pacification' of the model of war (1997: 50). The discourse of war is, in this way, a counter-history. It emerges as a form of historical discourse which no longer has as its function the ritual celebration of established sovereign power, and yet it is not an anti-historical appeal to a contractual theory of the State. It is rather a discourse which is preoccupied with the questions related to Nietzsche's use of the terms Entstehung and Herkunft: 'Herkunft is the equivalent of stock or descent; it is the ancient affiliation to a group, sustained by the bonds of blood, tradition, or social class. The analysis of Herkunft often involves a consideration of race or social type' (Foucault, 1986a: 80–1). In short, Nietzsche's genealogy provides a blueprint for the most sophisticated modern expression of this counter-history of war.

'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', originally published in French in 1971, might be taken as Foucault's definitive statement of 'war in a filigree of peace' (1986a: 76–100). It is worth briefly recalling the main arguments of the essay. Essentially, a 'genealogical' or 'effective' history is opposed to the search for identities or origins. Belief in the notion of the 'origin' is a belief that things conceal a 'timeless and essential secret', but genealogical analysis reveals only disparity and dispersion, the fact that the 'essence' is actually constructed from heterogeneous 'alien' forms (Foucault, 1986a: 78–9). Entstehung recasts the question of origin as that of the 'moment of arising', an 'emergence' which depends upon a play of forces. The 'metaphysician' places present needs at the origin, so that punishment is seen as being invented for the sole purpose of setting an example, just as the eye is made for contemplation. However, for Nietzsche, the history of a thing, a law or a custom is a chain of interpretation and appropriation, a theatre of domination. The meanings of punishment are multiple, and are created in a space of domination. In other words, behind the conventions of law it is always possible to hear the 'distant roar of battle' which underpins lofty theories of sovereignty and contract, the 'blood that has dried on the codes of law'. Rules
are empty in themselves, ‘violent and unfinalised’, waiting to be bent to any purpose:

Following traditional beliefs, it would be false to think that total war exhausts itself in its own contradiction and ends by renouncing violence and submitting to civil laws. On the contrary, the law is a calculated and relentless pleasure, delight in the promised blood, which permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes of violence. (Foucault, 1986a: 85)

In this way, genealogy is concerned with the singularity of discursive ‘events’, which are closer to the Deleuzian ‘event’, rather than treaties or famous battles. Genealogy is the patient and erudite reconstruction of ‘haphazard’ discursive battles (Foucault, 1986a: 88). The genealogical method also has a fictional, ‘parodic’, even ‘farcical’ element. Rather than taking the search for origins and identities seriously, it is a question of trying on masks. Genealogy recognizes that truth is linked inextricably to an ‘ancient proliferation of errors’. Truth is simply an error which has become hardened by the ‘long baking process of history’ (Foucault, 1986a: 79). In short, truth itself has a history, which is underpinned by violence. The central metaphor of ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, then, is that of battle, whether it is the ‘invasions, struggles, plundering, disguises, ploys’ which take place within the ‘world of speech’ (Foucault, 1986a: 76), or the real dominations of warfare. In fact, from the start of his interest in Nietzsche in the 1960s, Foucault brings out the violence which is implicit in Nietzsche’s emphasis on the fact that interpretation is always incomplete:

There is never, if you like, an interpretandum that is not already interpretans, so that it is as much a relationship of violence as of elucidation that is established in interpretation. Indeed, interpretation does not clarify a matter to be interpreted, which offers itself passively; it can only seize, and violently, an already-present interpretation, which it must overthrow, upset, shatter with the blows of a hammer. (Foucault, 1998: 275)

However, it is important to understand that ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ is itself a parodic piece, a sustained homage to Nietzsche’s combative style. In his later work Foucault, although remaining avowedly Nietzschean, calls into question a ‘theatrical’ polemics which mimics ‘war, battles, annihilations’ (1986b: 383). In short, the metaphorical language of violence which is present in the ‘genealogical’ period is replaced in later work by notions of ‘problematization’ and ‘agonism’.

Foucault’s genealogical approach is expressed most clearly in Discipline and Punish. He takes Nietzsche’s brief comments on the ‘origins’ of punishment in The Genealogy of Morals and uses them as a methodological template for a genealogy of modern disciplinary institutions. Similarly, the notion of a disciplinary society is precisely an attempt to show how the social fabric in the 17th and 18th centuries is increasingly traversed by a grid of
new mechanisms of surveillance and incitements to normalization which are incompatible with the system of sovereignty, and which consequently evoke the ‘distant roar of battle’. In the closing – rarely cited – paragraphs of Discipline and Punish Foucault emphasizes this point by quoting from an ‘anonymous text’, a letter published in La Phalange in 1836 (1977: 306–7). The correspondent imagines a plan of Paris which satirizes the ideal panoptic city of ‘philosophers, legislators, flatterers of civilization’. This plan, in which ‘all like things are gathered together’ moves outwards from hospitals and prisons, through barracks and police stations, then coming to less ordered domains of gambling, industry and prostitution, and finally, an area which encompasses ‘the ruthless war of all against all’ (1977: 307). For Foucault, this anonymous correspondent reminds us that the mechanisms of the ‘carceral’ or disciplinary system depend not on a unitary institution of law or sovereignty, but rather ‘the necessity of combat and the rules of strategy’ (1977: 308). The noise of battle is never far away:

In this central and centralized humanity, the effect and instrument of complex power relations, bodies and forces subjected by multiple mechanisms of ‘incarceration’, objects for discourses that are in themselves elements for this strategy, we must hear the distant roar of battle. (1977: 308)

The 1975–6 lectures, however, provide crucial new insights into the way in which the ‘distant roar of battle’ fits into Foucault’s overall project. First, they provide, as mentioned already, a useful case-study of Foucault’s sometimes neglected work as a historian of ideas. Foucault carefully reconstructs the genealogy of this marginalized discourse of war, finding obscure tributaries in figures like Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634), John Lilburne (1614–57) and Henri de Boulainvilliers (1658–1722), minor figures who, in this reading, seem to pre-figure Nietzsche. In the course of this work on ‘documents that have been scratched over and recopied many times’ (1986a: 76), Foucault uncovers a forgotten ‘origin’, in the shape of a preoccupation with ‘la guerre des races’ in pre-revolutionary and revolutionary France and England at the time of the civil war. He then goes on to show how this counter-history does not always remain a critical discourse. It may be integrated into ‘official’, institutionalized discourses, or reinvent itself as a mythic demagogic form which, nourishing the ‘crazy’ desire for revenge of the ‘first race’, sees itself as displaced by invaders. In this way, it is a discourse which brings together a displaced aristocracy, popular myth and a popular desire for revenge. It underpins the desire for a Third Reich, and a new Führer who will act as a sort of historical avenger (1997: 49). It is, quite simply, one of the énoncés which feeds into the discursive resources of National Socialism. So, for example, at the end of the 19th century, ‘la guerre des races’ undergoes, in one guise, a ‘socio-biological’ transformation and becomes an explicitly racist discourse. Following on from this, Foucault also claims, more controversially, that socialism in the 19th and 20th centuries has accepted this socio-biological transformation uncritically at the level of
the State. In fact, he goes further to say that every time that socialism has emphasized the notion of struggle, it has lapsed into a sort of racism.

In this way, Foucault attempts to construct the genealogy of his own genealogical perspective and, in doing so, he takes the ideas expressed in ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ further, attempting to go beyond the model of ‘war in a filigree of peace’:

It is obvious that all my work in recent years has been couched in the schema of struggle-repression, and it is this - which I have hitherto been attempting to apply - which I have now been forced to reconsider, both because it is still insufficiently elaborated at a whole number of points, and because I believe that these two notions of repression and war must themselves be considerably modified if not ultimately abandoned. In any case, I believe that they must be submitted to closer scrutiny. (1980: 92)

Gilles Deleuze argues that Foucault was, in fact, reaching an acute point of crisis, whereby he felt himself to be trapped within an all-encompassing web of power:

He was, you might say, mesmerized by and trapped in something he hated. And it was no use telling himself that coming up against power relations was the lot of modern (that is, infamous) man, that it’s power that makes us speak and see, it wasn’t enough, he needed ‘some opening’. . . . He couldn’t stay locked in what he’d discovered. (1995: 109)

Ultimately, in carrying out a sort of ‘auto-genealogy’, Foucault begins to move away from genealogy itself as a method precisely because, as James D. Faubion suggests in a recent piece, as an expression of la volonté de savoir, it is, ‘conceptually ill-formed, a very poor instrument’, primarily because it is limited to a reductive image of history as battle (Faubion, 1998: xxxiv). In the ‘strange dialogue’ that Foucault establishes with himself, he also shows that genealogy, a development of the discourse of war that he traces, is itself intimately linked with racism, initially in the form of a dissident form of historical discourse, and ultimately as State racism.

**The Lectures: A Summary**

Foucault begins his first lecture (7 January 1976) by expressing his dissatisfaction with the previous five years of lectures. They were, he admits, fragmentary, dispersed, repetitive, stuck in a ‘rut’, lacking in organization (1997: 5). They had covered such diverse subjects as evolution, the institutionalization of psychiatry in the 19th century and a general outline for a history of sexuality, based on the practice of confession in the 17th century and the control of infant sexuality in the 19th century. Now, Foucault acknowledges, he must reconfigure these fragments of research in order to move forward. The best way to understand what he was doing in these lectures, he claims, is to see them as in some way in tune with the environment in which they were prepared and delivered (1997: 6–7). In short, they were
his intellectual contribution to a period – running roughly from the begin-
ning of the 1960s to the mid-1970s – which was characterized by a prolif-
eration of localized, particular, ‘minor’ discourses which set themselves
against established, ‘totalizing’ discourses. He regards Deleuze and Guat-
tari’s Anti-Oedipus as a key text in this generalized movement (1997: 7). This
proliferation of localized critiques also has the unintended consequence of
highlighting the ‘inhibiting effect’ [‘l’effet inhibiteur’] of ‘global’ theories
such as Marxism and psychoanalysis. In short, these 15 years or so estab-
lish the importance of the ‘localized character’ of critique. The period wit-
nesses a general proliferation, which is both intellectual and to a certain
extent popular, of ‘savoirs assujettis’; that is to say, discourses which were
previously overlooked, disqualified as naïve, unscientific, non-conceptual.
This localized, regional ‘savoir des gens’ is linked, Foucault claims, to
‘buried, erudite knowledge’ with which he has been preoccupied for the past
five years. Both express the history of struggle and battles, ‘savoir historique
des luttes’ (1997: 9). This coupling of ‘des connaissances érudites et des
mémoires locales’ is ‘genealogical’. If archaeology offers a method for
analysing the local nature of discourse, genealogy is a tactic which aims to
liberate the marginalized and disqualified knowledges which pertain to these
‘local discursivities’ (1997: 10–11). Of course, the ultimate aim of this
genealogical analysis is to answer the question that preoccupies Foucault
throughout his career: ‘What is power?’ Foucault outlines two models for
the analysis of power: the ‘contract-oppression’ model, and the ‘war-repres-
sion’ model (1997: 17). Lectures in the preceding years have used the ‘war-
repression’ model, and it is this model which must now be thoroughly
reconsidered. Foucault is confident at this stage that he has already moved
away from the schema of repression, and will concentrate this year on a
reconsideration of the schema of war: ‘Is power, quite simply, a war con-
tinued by means other than arms and battles?’ (1997: 18).

The second lecture (14 January 1976) covers ground which is similar to
the broad argument of Discipline and Punish. First, Foucault sets five
methodological principles for analysing power: analyse power at the extremi-
ties rather than the centre; consider the constitution of subjects, rather than
the ‘central soul’ or Leviathan; analyse power as it passes through individuals
and not as it is applied to them; analyse power from below and not as domi-
nation from above; analyse power as the accumulation and circulation of know-
ledge rather than the production of ideology (1997: 25–30). Importantly,
Foucault also claims historical justification for this rejection of the contrac-
tual, economic model of sovereignty and repression. Throughout the 17th and
18th centuries a new ‘disciplinary’ mechanism of power overlays and supple-
ments the old order of sovereignty. This disciplinary power is based on sur-
veillance, close control of individuals and the patient construction of subjects,
and is accompanied by, among other things, the ascendance of the bourgeoisie,
the development of industrial capitalism and the growth of the human sciences
(1997: 32–3). The discourse of discipline relates to the concept of the norm,
In the third lecture (21 January 1976) Foucault effectively gives an overview of the trajectory he will trace. Initially, he focuses on what he calls a 'historical paradox': as the State grows in importance, from the Middle Ages to the threshold of the modern era, the institutions of war are increasingly concentrated in the hands of a central power. At the same time the ‘daily’ war ['la guerre quotidienne'] of the social body is, apparently, swept away, and the army emerges as a State institution (Foucault, 1997: 41–2). However, at the very moment that war becomes the property of the State, and is expelled from the social fabric, a new counter-discourse emerges which is premised upon the notion that war remains at the heart of the social structure, often in the form of an unresolved ‘racial’ conflict. This is the discourse elaborated by Coke and Lilburne in England, Boulainvilliers and Freret in France, which plays an important role in the French Revolution. It is a discourse of ‘perspective’, which revives the memory that law is born of real battles, towns burnt to the ground, ravaged territories and the slaughter of innocents (Foucault, 1997: 43). At this point the unstated dynamic of the lectures – a reflexive genealogy of Nietzschean genealogy – can be seen quite clearly. Genealogy, Foucault seems to be suggesting, has itself overlaid real battles, and the discursive knowledge of real battles, with the accumulated baggage of discursive combat. Also, in seeking to keep alive the counter-memory of binary structure that traverses society, this discourse is eventually 'recoded' in racist terms. Foucault outlines two racist ‘transcriptions’, the first of which is the historico-biological theory of race which underpins European colonization and which underpins the construction of ethnic nationalisms in modern Europe. In the second transcription the ‘guerre des races’ is reconfigured in the 19th century as class struggle, and ultimately feeds into a sort of internal State racism, which no longer thinks in terms of two distinct races, but rather the constant danger that society will be undermined by its own tendency towards degeneration. The essential statement of this State racism is: ‘We must defend society against all of the biological perils of this other race, this sub-race, this counter-race which we are, in spite of ourselves, in the process of constituting’ (1997: 53). In this way, a lecture course which apparently offers a methodological reconsideration of previous analytical models also reveals itself to be highly provocative. Foucault suggests that the notion of class struggle is itself intimately linked to forms of racism.

In a lengthy parenthesis in the fifth lecture (4 February 1976), Foucault emphasizes that, although Thomas Hobbes is the thinker normally associated with the idea that the ‘natural’ state of society is a permanent state of war, he is not part of the genealogy that Foucault is tracing. Foucault opposes the conventional view of Hobbes on several counts. First, Hobbes's state of war is not a conflict of strong versus weak; it is rather the case that this state of war emerges from equality, or rather from an ‘anarchy of small differences’ (1997: 78). The weak individual is never weak enough to accept subordination. Second, Foucault claims that the Leviathan does not emerge from a real state of war, but from a play of representations. Hobbes does not
conceive of a real, bloody battle, but rather a system of signs, ruses, threats, desires, uneasy and shifting alliances. This ‘theatre’ of representations constitutes a sort of ‘infinite diplomacy’ (1997: 79–80).

Foucault locates the emergence of the ‘counter-history’ of war with the Levellers in England around the date 1630. The discourse, which promoted popular and petit-bourgeois interests against the monarchy, had its intellectual roots in figures such as Coke and Lilburne. Fifty years later, the discourse also emerges in France at the end of the reign of Louis XIV, but this time promoting the interests of the aristocracy against the monarchy. After this ‘double birth’, the counter-history fairly quickly establishes itself around the notion that the social body is divided between two, warring, races. ‘La guerre des races’ constitutes a thread of war that is woven into the social fabric (1997: 51–2). The discourse circles around a basic question concerning the origins of the French nation and, in particular, the status of the Germanic invasion by the Franks in the 5th century. Foucault will go on to show how this largely mythical conflict between a ‘foreign’ Frankish nobility and an indigenous population of Gauls is nothing less than an interpretative key to understanding many of the discourses which underpin the French Revolution and the century which follows. This conflict between Franks and Gauls is, in methodological terms, a basic epistemological rule, organizing what are in fact a series of discourses which are sometimes in opposition. The fact of invasion gives rise, in both England and France, to a mythic ‘guerre des races’ which provides competing discourses with a common object.

The discourses which have this Frankish invasion as their epistemological basis occupy a variety of positions, and may not even express explicitly the notion of conflict. For example, in his Franco-Gallia, which dates from 1573, François Hotman argues that the Germanic tribes did not come as invaders, but as comrades, ‘un peuple frère’ helping to displace original Roman invaders (1997: 105). Hotman wishes to create a unity which Foucault describes as ‘germano-française, franco-gauloise, franco-gallienne’ (1997: 106). This enables Hotman to promote the model of a ‘Germanic’ constitution, which would limit royal absolutism. In contrast to Hotman’s thesis on Germanic origins, a sort of radical ‘gallo-centrism’, as represented by Audigier and Tarault, emerges in the 17th century. Here, it is a question of seeking to diminish the importance of the Germanic invasion in French history. According to this discourse the Gauls were the original European race, the ‘substratum’ of the European races, and the Franks who invaded in the 5th and 6th centuries were simply the returning offspring of a primitive Gaul (1997: 107–8).

Foucault emphasizes that this preoccupation with the Frankish invasion of Gaul delineates an essentially historical discourse, which is particularly conspicuous from the end of the 17th century onwards. This invasion holds the key to the nature and the limits of the power of the monarchy, to the position of the nobility, and the rights of the nobility in relation to the monarchy. In short, the invasion by the Franks is the crucial reference point
for the formulation of the principles of public law. At the same time that Grotius, Hobbes and Pufendorf sought the principles for the constitution of a just State in the domain of natural law, another discourse worked in 'counterpoint', seeking the origin and validity of existing rights in a particular historical episode, running from the 5th to the 9th century (1997: 109). The theme of a 'national dualism' – of two warring races within the French nation – is, Foucault claims, given prominence by what might at first appear to be a tangential 'rearguard' struggle ('combat d'arrière-garde') concerning the knowledge which pertains to the monarchy, or more specifically, the prince (1997: 111). The particular episode referred to here concerns the exhaustive exercise of national stocktaking ('Bilan de France') which Louis XIV commissioned for his grandson the Duc de Bourgogne, who was at that stage destined to take over the throne. Boulainvilliers, a member of the French nobility, was charged by the entourage of the Duc de Bourgogne with the task of summarizing the original reports on the economic system, the institutions and the customs of France. For Foucault, it is significant that the text which Boulainvilliers attaches to this summary refers to the history of government in France up until Hugues Capet and the beginning of the Capetian dynasty (1997: 112). Boulainvilliers uses his text to protest against a state of affairs which is unfavourable to the nobility, and attempts to drive a wedge between the knowledge ('le savoir') of the monarch and the administrative system which provides the monarch with knowledge. In this way, Boulainvilliers' real target is the system of 'power-knowledge' ('le savoir-pouvoir') which links the administrative apparatus to royal absolutism. The strategic object that Boulainvilliers sets for the nobility is not 'la faveur du prince', but rather 'le savoir du roi'. Foucault is careful to emphasize that his analysis of Boulainvilliers' intervention does not constitute a conventional 'history of ideas'. Rather than the promotion of a cause, it is a question of a specific intervention in the field of power-knowledge (1997: 118). The nobility seeks to intervene in the field of history which, up to this point, has been the narrative which power recounts to itself. Boulainvilliers wishes to interrupt the ritual reinforcement of the exercising of power by history. In this way, the nobility seeks to introduce a new subject into the narration of history; a new 'I' which will speak within the historical field, and also a new historical object to talk about (1997: 116-17). This new historical subject/object is, in the language of the period, a 'society' or a 'nation'. A nation in this sense obviously has no frontiers and no defined system of power, being rather a specific social grouping – in this case the nobility – which has shared values and a particular status, and which operates within the State (1997: 117). As far as Foucault is concerned, this conception of the nation is the genealogical root of the fundamental concepts of nationalism which operated in the 19th century. This new enunciating subject within the field of history also reawakens buried objects, the 'murky' history of alliances, betrayals, debts, deceptions and loyalties. In short, the murmur of battle which operates in the gaps left by the order of the State and law. It is no longer
a question of the ‘glorious’ history of power, but rather of what Foucault
calls power at the level of its ‘dregs’ (‘ses bas-fonds’) (1997: 118).

In the seventh lecture of the year Foucault moves on to discuss in more
detail the significance in the 18th century of Bouainvilliers, whom Foucault
chooses as a representative example from a group of like-minded ‘noble’ his-
torians. Bouainvilliers makes the bold assertion that the Germanic invasion
provided France with its noble class, and that this invasion in itself justified
the power of this noble class. It is obviously important to understand that,
as an intervention in the field of power-knowledge, the discourse that
Bouainvilliers constructs does not necessarily make a claim to historical
veracity, but is rather an example of the ‘parodic’ mode that Foucault intro-
duces in ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’ (1986a: 93–4). Foucault underlines
the complexity of Bouainvilliers’ argument, which must deal with the dual
enemy of the bourgeoisie – the Tiers État – and the monarchy. Basically, the
nobility will claim its position as absolute victor, with the unlimited politi-
cal rights that this implies, and will make a claim to constitutional legiti-
macy in relation to the monarchy (1997: 127). In relation to the Tiers État
Bouainvilliers seeks to establish the existence of a ‘warrior aristocracy’ of
Franks, which invades Gaul. The liberty which this warrior race enjoys is
essentially a ‘liberty of egoism’, a liberty based on ferocity (1997: 128). Simi-
larly, Hannah Arendt in The Origins of Totalitarianism (1958: 162–3),
emphasizes that Bouainvilliers bases his doctrine quite unashamedly on
rights gained by historical conquest. Arendt assesses Bouainvilliers’ claims
in the light of his ‘might-right’ reading of Spinoza:

Bouainvilliers was deeply influenced by the seventeenth-century might-right
doctrines and he certainly was one of the most consistent contemporary dis-
ciples of Spinoza, whose Ethics he translated and whose Traité théologico-
politique he analyzed. In his reception and application of Spinoza’s political
ideas, might was changed into conquest and conquest acted as a kind of
unique judgement on the natural qualities and human privileges of men and
nations. (Arendt, 1958: 163)

Foucault shows that, for Bouainvilliers, the primary criterion of liberty
is that it deprives others of liberty. In this way, liberty is quite simply incom-
patible with equality, since history occurs according to a law of inequality.
Bouainvilliers admits that it is possible to conceive of a sort of primitive
liberty which exists prior to any form of domination, power or war. However,
this would be an abstract, fictive liberty, without real force or content (1997:
139). As Foucault argues in ‘Nietzsche, Genealogy, History’, liberty is the
invention of those who have seized liberty: ‘Further, genealogical analysis
shows that the concept of liberty is “an invention of the ruling classes” and
not fundamental to man’s nature or at the root of his attachment to being and
truth’ (1986a: 78–9). In short, Bouainvilliers claims that war is not merely
an episode, an interruption, in the flow of history: on the contrary, history is
itself war (1997: 140). In this way, Bouainvilliers introduces a thread of war
into the fabric of society. Boulainvilliers is also credited with the innovation of considering power as relational and, in general terms, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that Foucault presents Boulainvilliers as a possible precursor of Nietzsche. Foucault claims that Boulainvilliers constructs for the first time a politico-historical continuum, in that he shows how the attempt to construct historical truth means that one necessarily occupies a strategic position within this continuum (1997: 152).

To summarize, in analysing the duality at the heart of the French nation, Boulainvilliers has to do three things: establish an initial, ‘fundamental’ conflict; trace the complex genealogy of the alliances, betrayals and so on, which dilute this ‘lutte fondamentale’; and posit a historical return to this original position, which might constitute a certain historical truth (1997: 171–2). In this way, he introduces the element of ‘revolution’, in the sense of a return to a more ‘authentic’ equilibrium of historical forces. This is the search for a ‘constitution’, not in the juridical sense, but in the sense of an originary event. Finally, Boulainvilliers introduces the idea that history is cyclical, since this must be the case if it is possible to return to an original ‘constitution’. For Foucault, Boulainvilliers combines the millenary theme of a cyclical return, or revolution, with a new conception of historical knowledge.

As mentioned above, Foucault seems to portray Boulainvilliers as a precursor to Nietzsche, particularly in his opposition to both the juridical-contractual and ‘natural’ notions of society. Boulainvilliers is avowedly antinaturalist, in that he rejects the notion of natural ‘savage’ (‘le sauvage antérieur’) who emerges from the wild state in order to create a contract, and to exchange, with others. Rather than the ‘savage’, the figure that emerges in Boulainvilliers’ thought is the ‘barbarian’ (‘le barbare’). Whereas the savage emerges from the state of nature in order to establish a contract with others, at which point he ceases to be a savage, the barbarian can only be defined in opposition to civilization. Rather than being a vector of exchange, the barbarian is a vector of domination (1997: 174–5).

This notion of the barbarian then undergoes three transformations, or ‘filterings’, as Foucault puts it. In outlining these filterings he wishes, in part, to emphasize his main methodological point, showing how a number of opposed theses can function according to a fairly limited set of discursive rules which underpin them (1997: 185). First, monarchist historians such as Dubois and Moreau claim that the Frankish invasion is in large part a myth, since the Franks were invited to come to the aid of the Gauls against the invasion of Goths and Burgundians. These Frankish allies were far too few in number to impose their customs on the Gauls, and the essential Gallo-Roman culture of Gaul was not disturbed. The Franks were simply absorbed into this culture, providing a king for what was already an absolute monarchy (1997: 178–9). According to Dubois and Moreau, the French nobility were not barbarians, but rather political ‘crooks’. Second, historians such as Mably and Bonneville are ‘tactically close’ to Boulainvilliers, in that they claim that the Franks introduced a sort of brutal, ‘barbarian democracy’ into
Gaul. This Frankish democracy is then superseded by a monarchy and an aristocracy which, although they will eventually come into conflict with each other, were originally allies of a sort (1997: 180–1). Third, Bréquigny and Chapsal distinguish between a ‘bad’ Germanic barbarism and a ‘good’ Gaulish barbarism. They argue that Roman Gaul, obviously part of the absolutist Roman Empire, was also thoroughly permeated by old Gaulish or Celtic liberties which the Romans left in place. This Gaulish liberty is essentially an urban phenomenon, since the Frankish invaders largely settled in the countryside (1997: 182–3). This third ‘filtering’ of the notion of a barbarian invasion, based as it is on a notion of urban liberties, lays the foundations for a new, bourgeois history, such as that of Augustin, Thierry and Guizot in the 19th century. However, the discursive position occupied by the bourgeoisie ultimately becomes anti-historical, turning in the second half of the 18th century to theories of natural law, a sort of ‘rousseauisme’ (1997: 186).

In the penultimate lecture of the year (10 March 1976) Foucault shows how, in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the importance of the element of war in historical discourse is reduced, and in a way ‘colonized’ (1997: 193). In fact, he talks of an ‘auto-dialectization’ which takes place within the discourse of history. History and philosophy move away from questions of an originary battle, and move towards questions which focus on the present. Within the field of historical discourse described by Foucault in the 18th century, the present represented a moment that was essentially negative, in that it was a moment of forgetting. The point of history was to reawaken, as Boulainvilliers attempts to do, a consciousness of the significance of the past. However, in the 19th century the present moment becomes the point of significance (1997: 203). The most pertinent question that history and philosophy can pose concerns the ‘universal’ which reveals itself in the present (1997: 211–12). This element of universality relates to the construction of the State.

In his last lecture of the year (17 March 1976) Foucault shows how the theme of race completes the journey from counter-memory to official discourse, when it appears in the 20th century in the form of a sort of ‘State racism’ (1997: 213). He links this State racism to the development of a form of power which is no longer based on contract or discipline. For all the differences between sovereign (contractual) and disciplinary forms of power, both focus on the individual; either as the subject and object of a contract, or as a body which is subject to training, control, surveillance, etc. The new power, referred to by Foucault as ‘biopower’, which emerges at the end of the 18th century as a supplement to disciplinary power, has a new object; the ‘multiple-body’ of the population (1997: 218). In his 1978 lectures at the Collège de France Foucault shows how the population is central as both the subject and object of the modern political project of governmentality:

The population now represents more the end of government than the power of the sovereign; the population is the subject of needs, of aspirations, but it is
Whereas disciplinary power intervenes at the level of the individual, ‘biopower’ intervenes at a general, global level. Similarly, whereas the sovereign model was based on the power to ‘kill and allow to live’ (‘faire mourir et laisser vivre’), biopower – which will also be reformulated as ‘governmentality’ in Foucault’s later work – reverses this formula, having the power to ‘foster life and allow to die’ (‘faire vivre et laisser mourir’) (1997: 220). Biopower is ‘regularizing’, frequently preoccupied with the question of insurance, and based on a sort of ‘homeostasis’ which seeks to achieve an overall balance in society. Foucault takes as an example the ‘cité ouvrière’, as it exists in the 19th century, which combines disciplinary mechanisms – localization of families, individuals, etc. – with a whole range of ‘regularizing’ techniques, such as insurance against illness, incitements to hygiene, education, etc. (1997: 223-4). Similarly, sexuality is a focus for both forms of power (1997: 224). The norm becomes the ideal of both discipline and biopower. Foucault then goes on to ask how this form of power, which is committed to promoting, maintaining and prolonging life, can claim the right to kill. His answer is that racism intervenes at this point, introducing the possibility of a break in the biological continuum, which is the focus of biopower (1997: 227). The right to kill takes on a biological imperative: the death of the other will ensure security, make life more ‘healthy’, purer (1997: 228). Foucault argues that the National Socialist State represents ultimate ‘development to the point of paroxysm’ of three types of power: ‘disciplinary’, ‘regularizing’ and ‘murderous’ (1997: 232). This statement is important for two reasons. First, it is at this point that Foucault suggests that modern racism is not the product of a mentality or an ideology, but that it is linked to a specific technology of power (1997: 230). Second, Foucault acknowledges here that mechanisms of sovereignty, discipline and biopower, although they are linked to distinct historical periods, can also function by means of overlappings and interactions. Nazism combines techniques of discipline and insurance with a suicidal drive towards the revival of the original ‘guerre des races’, which leads both to the ‘final solution’ and Hitler’s order for the effective destruction of the infrastructure of German society in April 1945 (1997: 232).

At this point, in the closing remarks of the lecture course, Foucault returns to the provocative assertions he had prefigured in the third lecture. He is unsure whether his analysis of Nazism can take him further with the general question of modern, capitalist States. However, he does claim that socialism and socialist States have a ‘racist’ component. It is, he says, difficult for him to speak on this subject, and he recognizes that he really needs a whole new series of lectures to work out his position. He will, though, say that socialist States have, at the level of the State, developed an internal biological racism directed against criminals, political adversaries, etc. Beyond this, he claims that the socialist project itself has demonstrated ‘racist’
tendencies each time that it has emphasized class struggle rather than the transformation of economic conditions. For Foucault, the most ‘racist’ forms of socialism in Europe have been the movement around Auguste Blanqui (1805–81), the Paris Commune of 1871 and anarchism. The Dreyfus affair and the rise of a reformist social democracy were key elements in a move away, in Europe, from this socialist racism. As James Miller puts it, ‘a surprising climax to a surprising series of lectures’ (1993: 291).

In summary, then, Foucault shows how, from the 16th century to the 19th century, the invasion of Gaul by the Franks becomes a central preoccupation of French historiography. In the 18th century Boulainvilliers creates a new historical discourse, whereby a thread of war is introduced into the fabric of peace, and French history can be read as an ongoing internal conflict. Boulainvilliers uses the mythical history of the Franks and the Gauls as a means of establishing the nobility as a ‘race’ or ‘nation’ which is distinct from the bourgeoisie. Then, in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary period, the bourgeoisie takes up the theme and turns it back on both the nobility and the monarchy, presenting itself as a new ‘nation’. Finally, the discourse of an ethnic conflict at the heart of the French polity is transformed into the distinct discursive branches of biological racism and class conflict.

**Franks and Gauls: Hutu and Tutsi**

Before considering the lectures in the context of the development of Foucault’s overall project, it is worth considering Dominique Franche’s (1995) use of ‘le mythe Gaulois/Francs’ as a framework within which to understand the so-called ‘racial’ conflict which resulted in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Essentially, Franche argues that the notion of distinct racial ‘classes’ of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa is a legacy of Rwanda’s colonial past: in other words, the imposition of a European framework of understanding. Franche argues that the categories of Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, while having some validity as ‘categories of identity’, cannot be seen as either distinct racial groupings or as classes in a Marxian or Weberian sense. To see them in this way would imply a ‘European’ notion of class struggle (‘une lutte à l’européenne’) (1995: 4). While Franche emphasizes that the unity of pre-colonial Rwanda should not be overestimated, she does claim that the period of European intervention which begins around 1900 introduces an increasing element of conflict which did not necessarily exist previously. Throughout the 20th century, according to Franche, the historical understanding of Rwandan society was passed through the filter of the Bible and French history, which led to the Tutsi being presented as an ‘aristocracy’ which supposedly had European origins. It is in the 1950s, towards the end of the period of Belgian colonial rule, that the Tutsi fully integrate this European discourse on their own origins and on the existence of three races. From this moment on the situation in Rwanda is presented as ‘revolutionary’, with a Hutu tiers Etat in conflict with a Tutsi aristocracy. In this way, Franche suggests that interested elites within the two communities have taken on
discourses imported from Europe (1995: 25). Franche offers the following summary of 60 years of colonial history in Rwanda: the initial importation of a racist and Biblical anthropology in the early part of the century; the ‘deformation’ of categories of identity into races; the gradual integration of imported models by local elites; and the ‘feudalization’ of Rwandan society by the colonial system of administration (1995: 26). In short, Franche shows how this European discourse or struggle rapidly reveals its murderous potential when transplanted into a non-European context. In doing so, Franche emphasizes the drive to disrupt conventional narratives of French, and by extension European, ‘universalism’ which is implicit in Foucault’s lecture course.

**Problematizations**

Returning to the lectures, they are obviously pivotal in the trajectory of Foucault’s work, and also provide important indications of Foucault’s engagement with French history and political life. For example, it seems clear here that he was sending out a message to the more extreme elements of the French Left, from whom he was in the process of distancing himself. This is certainly the opinion of James Miller (1993: 290), who argues that Foucault’s closing remarks on Blanqui, the Communards and the anarchists were obviously directed at contemporary ‘styles of militant revolt’. As mentioned already, Miller suggests that Foucault uses the lectures as a form of ‘self-analysis’. He attempts to break down his own reliance on the discourse of war, and sends a thinly veiled message to the political left that he is no longer satisfied with the model of violent conflict (Miller, 1993: 291). Miller also suggests that the project of governmentality did little to move Foucault away from the notion of the ‘distant roar of battle’ that lies behind peace. According to Miller, in the course that followed in 1977–8 (Foucault had taken a sabbatical in the academic year 1976–7), which deals with the ostensibly new subject of ‘governmentality’, Foucault finds he cannot advance:

> Despite the deployment of fresh historical evidence and the marshalling of a new battery of concepts, the disposition of forces described at the end of his research into ‘governmentality’ is essentially the same as that described in the pages of *Discipline and Punish*. On one side stands an all but omnipotent machine of government, meticulously designed to etch the Law into the ‘very grain of the individual’; while on the other side stands the solitary human being, its instinct for freedom pushed back, incarcerated, and ‘finally able to vent itself only on itself’ – just as the Genealogy of Morals had suggested. (1993: 301)

This is the same problem that Deleuze sees in Foucault’s work at this stage: Foucault has become trapped in his own network of power.

However, Foucault did attempt to bring together his work on modern political thought and his better known late work on practices of the self in antiquity under the general rubric of ‘governmentality’. As part of this shift,
in the later part of his career Foucault did in some ways find a model to replace the discourse of war, in the shape of agonism, a sort of stylized mode of combat from which elements of violence and parody have been removed:

At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an ‘agonism’ - of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle: less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation. (Foucault, 1982: 221–2)

Jon Simons (1995: 21–2) claims that Foucault takes what is originally an ethos aimed at fashioning an aesthetic life from Nietzsche, and turns it into a political ethos. An agonistic relationship is not a relationship of dominance, since the autonomy and liberty of the individuals involved in the relationship must be protected. It is, in fact, a strategic game between liberties. Alain Pottage (1998: 22–3) locates the significance of the agonistic relationship in the notion of power as ‘emergent’, something which only exists in actu. It is only when the autonomy of the ‘players’ is protected in this way that a relationship of power can be distinguished from a relationship of violence. This move towards the figure of the agon means that the language of battle which is frequently present in Foucault's earlier work is now absent, and he rejects the practice of polemics (see Foucault, 1986b: 373–90). Polemics necessarily conceives of the other as an enemy who must be defeated. Foucault's work takes on a sombre tone when compared to his earlier promotion of a parodic, carnival approach to history:

There is something even more serious here: in this comedy, one mimics war, battles, annihilations, or unconditional surrenders, putting forward as much of one's killer instinct as possible. But it is really dangerous to make anyone believe that he can gain access to the truth by such paths, and thus to validate, even if in a merely symbolic form, the real political practices that could be warranted by it. (1986b: 383)

The agonistic relationship is defined by Foucault as a relationship of ‘governmentality’. It is no longer the case that, as with Boulainvilliers' historicist and perspectivist discourse, liberty is only ever won at the expense of another's liberty. Liberty is now a 'practice':

I say that governmentality implies the relationship of self to self, which means exactly that, in the idea of governmentality, I am aiming at the totality of practices, by which one can constitute, define, organize, instrumentalize the strategies which individuals in their liberty can have in regard to each other. It is free individuals who try to control, to determine, to delimit the liberty of others and, in order to do that, they dispose of certain instruments to govern others. (1988: 19–20)
Colin Gordon (1991: 48) contends that Foucault seems to be proposing in his later work, as the consequence of a 'Sisyphean optimism', a new relation of government between the governed and the governing which is a kind of 'moral judo'. So, Foucault is, in some ways, extrapolating a normative model of political practice from his historical research. However, as Gordon points out, Foucault's interest in governmentality was not only motivated by the conviction that liberty is an essential element of power relations. He was also attempting to respond to the political success of New Right 'liberal' political projects in the late 1970s and early 1980s in Europe and North America (Gordon, 1991: 6). Foucault did not by any means advocate a neo-liberal politics, but he was clearly intrigued by the capacity of neo-liberalism to construct a distinctive form of governmentality.

Along with this move towards agonism, the approach that replaces genealogy as Foucault's dominant 'methodological' approach is 'problematization'. James D. Faubion argues that Foucault is influenced in this move by Paul Veyne's historiographical 'nominalism', a quasi-textualist approach which acknowledges that history lacks essential facts and must focus on multiple 'plots'. In short, history must evoke other relations rather than simply those of battle (Faubion, 1998: xxxv). Genealogy is replaced by a pluralist history of 'problematizations'. Faubion emphasizes that the concept of problematization was still in a state of construction at the time of Foucault's death, given the 'historical hodgepodge' of the concept at this point:

It includes the will to know, the will to truth, and the will to become. It includes the urge to administer both men and things. It includes the failure of the best-laid plans and the unexpected success of irresponsible frivolities. It includes the always-nagging inevitability of death, war, contagion. It includes demographic explosion and decline, rationalization, bureaucratization, industrialization, moral paradox, and experiential anomaly. (1998: xxxvi)

The enduring interest of Foucault's work is in part due to the fact that he was able to create theoretical and historical work which emerges from, and also dramatizes, tensions which lie at the very heart of his motivations for writing. Il faut défendre la société offers an insight into a particularly acute point of tension in his overall project.

Notes
1. For a lucid introduction to Foucault's work on governmentality see Colin Gordon's (1991) comprehensive essay 'Governmental Rationality: An Introduction'.
2. Jean-Loup Amselle makes a similar point in a review of Il faut défendre la société (1997). He argues that the discourse of war functions in a similar way to Putnam's notion of the cluster concept.
3. See Dominique Franche (1995: 35). Franche claims that 'le mythe Gaulois/Francs' has been rapidly forgotten in the 20th century, whereas some of the most important French writers of the 19th century - Nerval, Gautier, Flaubert, Balzac and Zola - allude to this conflict.
Bibliography


John Marks is Reader in French in the Department of Modern Languages at Nottingham Trent University. He has recently published Gilles Deleuze: Vitalism and Multiplicity for the Pluto Press ‘Modern European Thinkers’ series. A co-edited volume, Deleuze and Literature is forthcoming from Edinburgh University Press.