

# “One must eliminate the effects of ... diffuse circulation [and] their unstable and dangerous coagulation”: Foucault and beyond the stopping of mobilities

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## **Abstract**

Foucault spent time investigating the stopping of mobilities, notably when studying carceral spaces such as asylums and prisons which effectively immobilise their inmates at a societal scale. In *Discipline and Punish*, he speculates on how such spaces are designed to put a stop to casual ‘nomadisms’. The purpose here is to inspect this aspect of Foucault’s thinking, particularly to recover what he also said about the regulation and cultivation of mobilities within the depths of immobility. Attention is also drawn to an engagement with mobility-immobility appearing in Foucault’s little-discussed *Psychiatric Power* lectures (2006b), prompted by the ideas-and-practices of Edouard Seguin, an educator of ‘idiot’ children, whose own words provide additional ‘empirical’ weight to an emerging argument. Reading the unabridged English translation of *Madness and Civilization* (2006a), a final claim is that Foucault’s phenomenology of ‘madness’ depends upon unruly mobilities *within* the asylum, the very stuff of “unstable and dangerous coagulation”. The overall ambition is to furnish an alternative account of Foucault and mobilities, concentrating on those Foucauldian texts initially seeming the least promising for scholars of mobilities.

## **Keywords**

Foucault; mobility; immobility; ‘idiocy’; Seguin; *Madness and Discipline*; *Psychiatric Power*

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## **Introduction: ‘Willie’, institutions and mobilities within immobilities**

Let me begin with ‘Willie’ or ‘Wullie’, a long-term patient resident in the now-closed Craig Dunain Hospital, previously known as the Inverness District Hospital (originally opened 1864), in the Highlands of Scotland, northern Britain.<sup>1</sup> As just one among so many withdrawn, barely communicating and largely forgotten dwellers living out their days in isolated mental institutions, the ‘lunatic asylums’ peppering the landscapes of Britain and elsewhere from the later-eighteenth through into the later-twentieth century, Willie was nonetheless distinctive in how he moved around ‘the Craig’. Jim Neville, a psychiatric nurse, wrote about him:

I saw Willie as having the same routine every day ... . He usually passed me in the mornings running his finger along the picture-rail above his head. It seemed to be paramount to him not to allow his finger to drop or stray from its wall-hugging contour. He only let go when the rail ended at the front door. To me, it were as if he was on rails. (Neville, n.d., 5)

Neville (2000; also Philo, 2007a) crafted a story about Willie, calling it *Trolley-buses*, after buses powered by electric current picked up from overhead wires with which they need to

keep in constant contact, much like Willie with his finger reaching up the picture-rail. Neville (n.d, 5) also conjured other mobility metaphors to convey Willie's patterned movements:

He's usually walking towards me on my right, his left forefinger running along the architrave [picture-rail] that runs the length of the corridor just above his head, hooked on to it as heads to and from his ward. That architrave must be spotless, maybe even worn. No rust on those rails ... . "Oor Wullie," ... he's always on the move, restless, rustless. I've often wondered what picture you could get if you put a tag on him and traced his movements over a week or so. I'm absolutely sure that there would be a real pattern like the marks that old drovers' roads and sheep tracks make from years of use, and that you can see from the air.

Willie's movements had boundaries, parts of the hospital where the picture-rails stopped or which were simply *not* 'in' his world: for instance, he never ventured 'east' of the hospital's central entrance hall, what Neville called 'Square One', which was hence *terra incognitae* for Willie. Such boundaries were imposed upon him, or at least 'suggested' to him, by both the specific lay-out of the Craig and the basal spatial logic of what was ultimately a carceral institution: one designed to separate out the likes of Willie, the troubled and troubling, from the rest of 'us'. Quite how he configured his own movements within the institution, what they meant to him and possibly to any others who cared to notice, is then another matter: the strange phenomenon of mobilities within *immobilities*.

The specific resonance of this vignette for what follows will be amplified shortly, but first it is worth underlining that questions about immobilities have long been registered, if not always foregrounded, within contributions to the so-called 'new mobilities paradigm' (Cresswell, 2010). Cresswell's pioneering text *In Place/Out of Place* (Cresswell, 1996, esp. Chap.4) acknowledged the 'deviancy' of mobilities enacted by groupings who seemingly have no 'fixed abode', such as 'Gypsies' and New Age Travellers, noting the sustained efforts of the UK police (driven by politicians' diktat) to block off 'Hippy Convoys' from moving when and where they wanted. Once he had more formally framed his concern with mobilities, as in his landmark *On the Move* text (Cresswell, 2006a), the production of differential mobilities – of different speeds, for different people, in different contexts – became pivotal alongside the recognition that in some instances the outcome is indeed immobility ('some mobilities are dependent on the immobilities of others': Cresswell, 2006b, 22). Subsequently, he has stated that in such inquiries "moorings' are often as important as 'mobilities'," adding that "[s]peeds, slowness and immobilities are all related in ways that are thoroughly infused with power and its distribution" (Cresswell, 2010, 18, 21). That research on mobilities should take seriously the realities and impositions of immobilities was recognised in the editorial introduction to the first issue of the journal *Mobilities* (Hannam *et al*, 2006; also Adey, 2006; Salter, 2013), while a theme issue of the journal *M/C* has appeared specifically tackling the phenomenon of 'Still' (Bissell and Fuller, 2009). An expanded collection of essays, *Stillness in a Mobile World* (Bissell and Fuller, 2011a), sharpens this consideration by proposing the need for 'a sensitivity to still [to stillness, to being still, to experiencing being still] as a relation-to-the-world that moves beyond the dualisms of mobility and immobility' (Bissell and Fuller, 2011b, 12; also Bissell and Fuller,

2009b). The claim is not merely that some peoples or objects are rendered immobile, enjoying or enduring a 'cessation' of their movement, it is rather that being still has its own logics, dynamics, affective qualities and 'potentials' (not least for movements that are always, as it were, germinating in the heart of the still: also Murphie, 2011) or 'productivities' (perhaps for enhancing processes such as scholarly learning: also Watkins and Noble, 2011). I confess that in what follows I continue to conceive matters in terms of a relation (if not dualism) between mobility and immobility, but it should become apparent that just such an enlivened sense of stillness – while understood through a Foucauldian optic virtually absent from the *Stillness* collection – is absolutely crucial to my unfolding argument.

To return to Willie, however, what his vignette also specifically highlights is the problematic of how mobilities and immobilities intersect in and around the 'closed spaces' (Wolpert, 1976) comprised by carceral institutions of various kinds. As Cresswell (2006b, 17) noted, 'there are the modernist and reactionary forces of 'confinement' – education, nationalism, *hospitals, asylums* and the military' (my emphases) wherein mobilities are purposefully curtailed for varying reasons, as we can suppose, of maintaining good order, preserving boundary integrity, ensuring 'treatment' continuity or even as a form of punishment. Carceral institutions such as asylums and prisons thus do not seem the most obvious foci for mobilities research, given that their ostensible rationale is precisely the stopping of mobilities, and so traffic between the 'new mobilities paradigm' and work on the likes of asylum or prison geographies is unsurprisingly limited. That said, exactly this issue has been addressed by Moran *et al* with reference to prisons (2012, 449):

Prison seems inherently spatially 'fixed', and prisoners in turn immobile by virtue of their imprisonment, and in the same way that the mobilities turn has overlooked disciplined mobility, carceral geography is at risk of neglecting mobility. ... [P]risons may seem to be the epitome of immobility, with inmates incarcerated within a static physical space of detention.

Moran *et al* argue for attention to what they term 'disciplined mobility', which in their own research means the commencement of disciplinary techniques – understood in a loosely Foucauldian frame (see below) – *during* the often remarkably long journeys of 'prisoner transport' from their home regions to prisons sited in Russia's remote 'penal peripheries' (also Pallot, 2005; and on 'journeys to asylum' see Philo, 1995). They nonetheless acknowledge that there are also mobilities *within* individual prisons that can and should draw the eye of the researcher, mentioning 'the micro-scale mobility of inmates and staff within a penal institution' (Moran *et al*, 2012, 449; also Minke and Lemonne, 2013) and citing as evidence my own paper on 'Accumulating populations' in prison environments (Philo, 2001). I did indeed devote some passages in that paper to discussing varieties of movements around prison spaces, and in small measure anticipated the broader themes of the present paper, but I was not addressing the subject-matter through a lens explicitly attuned to mobilities or, more pointedly, to the interplay *between* mobilities and immobilities. In the spirit of Moran *et al*'s provocation,<sup>2</sup> then, let me now train my sights squarely on just this interplay, and at the same time endeavour to prize open its mysteries

through pursuing in greater depth what Foucault has to say, chiefly in his carceral studies, about and beyond ‘the stopping of mobilities’.

### **Foucault and the war on ‘nomadic’ multitudes**

The thematic of this paper is thus how the mobility-immobility relations runs throughout the *oeuvre* of Michel Foucault, even in his writings which ostensibly prioritise the immobile, still and sedentary. I will explore this thematic as a mini-task of detection, travelling a circuitous route through Foucault’s *oeuvre*, sometimes on by-ways rather than main roads, and gradually revealing rather than pre-announcing a line of argument. Moreover, rather than alighting where he most obviously addresses mobilities, perhaps his lectures on ‘biopolitics’ when discussing the ‘circulations’ central to the ‘metabolism’ of a city or nation-state (eg. Foucault, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2008; also Baerenholdt, 2013; Ek and Hultman, 2008; Nally, 2010), I will concentrate on texts that might initially seem the least promising for the scholar of mobilities. Indeed, if we contemplate Foucault’s major book-length works of social-institutional history, *Madness and Civilization* (Foucault, 1961, 1965, 2006a) and *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault, 1975, 1976), a first thought must be that at a macro-scale they chart the emergence of secure or carceral spaces – specialist spaces of immobility – designed to curtail the mobilities of certain problematic populations (the ‘mad’ and the ‘bad’) reckoned in one way or another to compromise the smooth functioning of a given society. They are spaces supposed to prevent the ready co-mingling of these populations with, and hence their disturbing or even contaminating influence upon, the allegedly ‘normal’ (‘not-mad’ and ‘not-bad’) members of everyday social spaces. Certain qualifications might be lent to this starkly binary vision, maybe echoing Foucault’s own scrambling – at the outset of the *Abnormal* lecture series (Foucault, 1999, 2003b) – of a simple inclusion-exclusion dyad in favour of a more nuanced portrayal, inspired by Canguilhem (1973: see Philo, 2007b), of how the ‘normal’ deploy a variety of spatial strategies to operate upon the ‘abnormal’ (if possible to ‘normalise’ them).

The emphasis on immobility cannot be denied, even so, and it is tracked forensically down to micro-levels of engagement in *Discipline and Punish*, and positioned as integral to the ‘micro-physics of power’ which this book so famously ushered into Western social-theoretical consciousness. Modern ‘disciplinary power’, from the later-1700s, is seemingly all about ‘fixing’ things and people in space, immobilising them, with Foucault (1976, 218) stating that ‘one of the primary objects of discipline is to fix; it is an anti-nomadic technique.’ It is decisively anti-mobility, or rather opposed to all *unsanctioned* mobilities which foster promiscuous associations among the ‘nomadic’ multitudes:

Avoid distributions in groups; break up collective dispositions; analyse confused, massive or transient pluralities. ... One must eliminate the effects of imprecise distributions, the uncontrolled disappearance of individuals, their diffuse circulation, their unstable and dangerous coagulation ... . Its aim [is] to establish presences and absences, to know how to locate individuals, and to set up useful communications, to interrupt others ... . (Foucault, 1976, 143)

The vocabulary implies a bridge across to Deleuze and Guattari (2004a, 2004b), with their claims about the ‘territorialisation’ (or ‘striating’) of space to ‘fix’ the threatening

'smoothness' of 'nomadic' slip-sliding by things and people risking an escape from the 'apparatuses of capture' demanded by the imperatives of Capital, State and Society. It thereby signals a wider terrain of academic debate about what Foucault owes to Deleuze and his co-workers, and *vice versa*, but for my purposes it usefully heralds a horizon (even a spatial imagination) that can, if implicitly, animate the remainder of this paper.

To make some obvious points, when Foucault describes 'the art of distributions' integral to modern 'disciplinary power' – noting that, 'in the first instance, discipline proceeds from the distribution of individuals in space' (Foucault, 1976, 150; also Driver, 1994; Hannah, 1997) – he spells out both the macro- and the micro-level immobilities inscribed by modern prisons and related institutions. The first principle here is *enclosure*, the placing of target populations in closed-off spaces, exactly that immobilising of these populations mentioned above to prevent easy traffic with the rest of 'us' *and* better to facilitate tightly-regulated programmes of disciplinary control. The second is *partitioning*, the dividing up or sub-sectioning of institutional spaces, individualising inmates in their own 'cells' or at least breaking up collectivities into smaller groupings, thereby reducing 'contagion' (physical and moral) between inmates while rendering them more easily manageable within institutional routines. These principles clearly informed Bentham's infamous late-eighteenth century 'Panopticon' design for an ideal prison-house, a keystone if over-emphasised element of Foucault's reasoning in *Discipline and Punish* (Elden, 2003); but they also featured, if more subtly, in the nineteenth-century reformatory for boys at Mettray, an equally salient if less-noted element infusing the later pages of the same text (Driver, 1990). This much is familiar, and has been documented in countless empirical studies inspired by *Discipline and Punish*,<sup>3</sup> but a close reading reveals that Foucault's account is also about the careful regulation, even promotion, of (intended, sanctioned) mobilities. Traced empirically through what he calls 'a History of Detail' (Foucault, 1976, 140), he elaborates 'a general theory of dressage' (Foucault, 1976, 136) pertaining to the intimate shaping of human posture, gesture and capacity for movement. Usually conceived in terms of equine dressage, the highly choreographed movements of horse-with-human-rider, Foucault (1976, 155) speaks of how '[a] new body was being formed,' less a mechanical body of 'assigned movements' and more an organic body in harmony with supposedly natural forces. It was to be a body trained through repetitive but *non*-artificial exercises: thus, not the artificial mobility of a body instructed in particular, maybe singular actions ('fire that cannon!'), but more the natural mobility of a body moving rhythmically with the affordances of bone, joint, nerve, muscle and sinew, a thoroughly embodied and not en-minded knowledge. As Foucault (1976, 152) also puts it:

Disciplinary control does not consist simply in teaching or imposing a series of particular gestures; it imposes the best relation between a gesture and the overall position of the body, which is its condition of efficiency and speed.

The reference to 'speed' underscores that he is talking here about mobilities, but such a connection is implied by *any* consideration of a 'relation' between 'gesture' and overall bodily comportment, as will be further explained presently.

The military body is highly relevant in this context, not least because Foucault (1976, 135) opens the third major part of *Discipline and Punish* (entitled 'Discipline' and starting a

chapter called 'Docile Bodies') by taking his reader to the parade-ground of marching soldier-recruits:

By the late-eighteenth century, the soldier has become something that can be made; out of a formless clay, an inapt body ...; posture is gradually corrected; a calculated constraint runs slowly through each part of the body, mastering it, making it pliable, ready at all times turning silently into the automatism of habit.

Marching – striding rhythmically, purposely forwards; arms, legs and torso in complete harmony; a disciplining of natural mobility, conformable with how these body-parts naturally move in co-ordination one with the other – is thereby presented by Foucault, if I may be allowed to express it so, as a 'phenomenology' of mobility mastered.<sup>4</sup> This mobility is nonetheless set in juxtaposition with immobility, in part the relative immobility of the recruits in their set-apart military camp,<sup>5</sup> but more immediately the immobility of standing stock-still. As required by a French ordinance of 1764: 'Recruits become accustomed to ... "standing upright ... [T]hey will be taught ... *to remain motionless until the order is given*, without moving the head, the hands or the feet ... .'" (Foucault, 1976, 136, my emphasis). In this condition, recruits should be poised, wholly immobile *but* on the brink of movement, able to switch in an instant from immobility to mobility as a natural, not forced, act, with all the 'efficiency and speed' that can be mustered. The significance of putting matters like this will become apparent later, but for the moment the simple conclusion is that, here at the heart of the text where Foucault is itemising the 'fixative' practices of an 'anti-nomadic' modern disciplinary power, the productive shaping of mobilities – and, moreover, of what might be cast as a 'dialectics'<sup>6</sup> between mobilities and immobilities – remains provocatively at issue.

### ***Psychiatric Power: some little-known Foucauldian diversions***

I propose now to pursue such themes through Foucault's somewhat neglected *Psychiatric Power* lectures, delivered in 1973-1974 as part of the overall Collège de France lecture series, recomposed and published in French in 2003 before being translated and published in English in 2006 (Foucault, 2003a, 2006b; also Philo, 2007c, 2012, 2013; Elden, 2006). These lectures may be cast as Foucault returning to (some of) the ground covered by *Madness and Civilization*, but now framed through lenses provided by his conceptual and substantive work for *Discipline and Punish*. He had already trialled much of this work in the two lecture series preceding the 1973-1974 series, and it is probable that much if not all of *Discipline and Punish*, published in French in 1975, was written before he delivered the lectures that were subsequently entitled *Psychiatric Power*. These lectures differ from *Madness and Civilization* in narrowing the focus from the latter's epochal surveying of grand shifts in the perception and treatment of 'madness' across the *longe durée* of European history from Medieval times to the later-nineteenth century. Relatedly, they lose that epic sense of charting an historical geography of Madness and Reason – this binary structure of world-shaping forces or phenomena – dancing around each other down the ages, with the latter progressively acquiring the instruments (symbolic, discursive and material) for excluding the former, whether chasing it into the wilderness, capturing it in the carceral

embrace of the asylum or compelling it to be silent except insofar as permitted to speak in 'the clinic' using authorised vocabularies of mental science (psychoanalysis included). Instead, the *Psychiatric Power* lectures provide a sustained inquiry into the micro-physics of power as exerted in the claustrophobic spaces of nineteenth-century lunatic asylums, what I have elsewhere (Philo, 2007c) called a detailed 'scenography' played out across countless tiny empirical scenes of 'psychiatric power'.<sup>7</sup> In each such scene, we learn about asylum medical superintendents (and their staff) striving to achieve practical control – itself scantily-authorised by any reliable 'medical' or 'scientific' knowledge – over their more-or-less disordered and unbiddable lunatic charges; and many of the tactics deployed were clearly interventions in the embodied (im)mobilities of these massed inmates.

'[P]sychiatric power is above all a certain way of managing, of administering, before being a cure or therapeutic intervention,' writes Foucault (2006b, 173), and a pivotal assertion of these lectures is that psychiatry (and the broader terrain of the emergent 'psy-'disciplines) was an offshoot, a by-product, even a *post hoc* rationalisation of 'psychiatric power': an assemblage of nosologies, aetiologies, diagnoses and prognoses largely arising *after* the event of asylum personnel finding ways to regulate the mind-bodies of their disturbed inmates. This power – or variable array of powers – came to be understood as 'medical' primarily by virtue of being exercised by individuals who occupied a 'space' analogous to that of doctors and nurses in places of medical treatment for the physically unwell, an unstable relationship dating back centuries but now given solidity by the very spatial form of the asylum as an imitation of the hospital.<sup>8</sup> What Foucault (2006b, 181) particularly stresses, however, is the figure of the asylum's medical superintendent or doctor/physician, and how his – it was always *his* – embodied presence necessarily impressed itself upon 'asylum space':

It seems to me that the interior of the asylum is given a medical stamp by the presence of the doctor; it is through his omnipresence, the assimilation, if you like, of asylum space to the psychiatrist's body. The asylum is the psychiatrist's body, stretched and distended to dimensions of an establishment, extended to the point that his power is exerted as if every part of the asylum is a part of his own body, controlled by his nerves. More precisely, I would say that this assimilation, psychiatrist's body-asylum space, is revealed in different ways.

Arguably, what arises is much more than the anonymous occularcentricism of the Panopticon, although Bentham's progeny is occasionally name-checked in *Psychiatric Power*; rather, it is a more embodied, organic inhabitation of asylum space by an inspecting and intervening figure – very different from the distanced, disembodied observer in the Panopticon tower – constantly criss-crossing asylum space for disciplinary purposes. '[T]he psychiatrist's body is the asylum itself,' continues Foucault (2006b, 182), and, 'ultimately, the asylum machinery and the psychiatrist's organism must form one and the same thing.' This physician must always be on the move around the asylum, 'communicating' his will to every corner of the establishment, strolling through, glancing, encountering, directing, commenting and affecting all that transpires. It is as if he is the 'vital' force that travels the 'nerves' vibrating from one location to another in the asylum-organism, effectively constituting those 'nerves', and the impression is tangibly of a carceral facility full of

movement, of membranes in motion, in contrast to the static bricks-and-bars geometry of the Panopticon.

*Psychiatric Power* hence offers an excitingly different take on the phenomenon of mobilities within immobilities, even when only considering the movements of the resident physician. Once the movements of the inmates are acknowledged, the picture becomes even more intriguing, at which point we return (if only partially) to the shadowy moving worlds of Willie and others on the receiving end of institutionalised asylum regimes. Crucial here is Lecture 9 of the *Psychiatric Power* series, given on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1974, which addresses how ‘psychiatric power’ began to travel, to leak from dedicated asylum spaces, seeping into wider domains of social life. One direction of this leakage was into embryonic treatments of so-called ‘idiocy’, especially as linked into practices arising in institutions for children labelled as ‘idiots’, ‘imbeciles’ and ‘feeble-minded’ (later terms would be ‘mental retardation’ and ‘mental handicap’, with more recent versions being ‘learning’, ‘intellectual’ or ‘developmental disability’).<sup>9</sup> An irony is that ‘idiocy’ was principally understood as an organic condition, an object of physical rather than ‘mental’ medicine, and yet it became a site for colonisation and experiment by ‘psychiatric power’. Foucault considers the work of Edouard (later Edward) Seguin (1812-1880), a famous figure in the history of ‘idiocy’,<sup>10</sup> demonstrating from Seguin’s ideas and practices how, ‘once placed within the asylum space, the power exercised on idiot children is precisely psychiatric power in the pure state’ (Foucault, 2006b, 214) – ‘pure’ precisely because there was then *no* meaningful ‘psy’ knowledge with anything helpful to say about ‘idiocy’, only a suite of embodied practices.

Seguin’s approach rested squarely on such practices: indeed, he came to describe his approach as ‘the physiological method’ (Seguin, 1866), seeking to train the ‘idiot’s’ body rather than reason with his or her mind,<sup>11</sup> although he initially did write of a *traitment moral* (‘moral treatment’) also associated with ‘hygienic’ and ‘educational’ responses to the challenge of ‘idiocy’ (Seguin, 1846). Foucault suggests that Seguin conceived of ‘[t]he struggle of two wills’ (in Foucault, 2006b, 215), the teacher’s (or doctor’s) and the ‘idiot’ pupil’s, with the resources of the former ranged against the ‘stubbornness’ of the latter’s instinctive ‘will not to will’ (to be entirely embodied and beyond cognitive control). What particularly gripped my attention – in fact, the primary spur for the present paper – was Foucault’s (2006b, 217) illustration of this struggle using the following detail, quoting directly from Seguin’s 1846 text:

Seguin produced the theory and practice of this physical clinch of idiot child and omnipotent master. For example, he tells how he succeeded in subduing an unruly child: “A.H. was uncontrollably lively; climbing like a cat, slipping away like a mouse, one shouldn’t have thought of getting him to stand upright and still for three seconds. I put him on a chair and sat opposite him, holding his feet and knees behind mine; one of my hands held his two on his knees while the other constantly brought his mobile face back in front of me. Apart from eating and sleeping, we stayed like that for five weeks.”

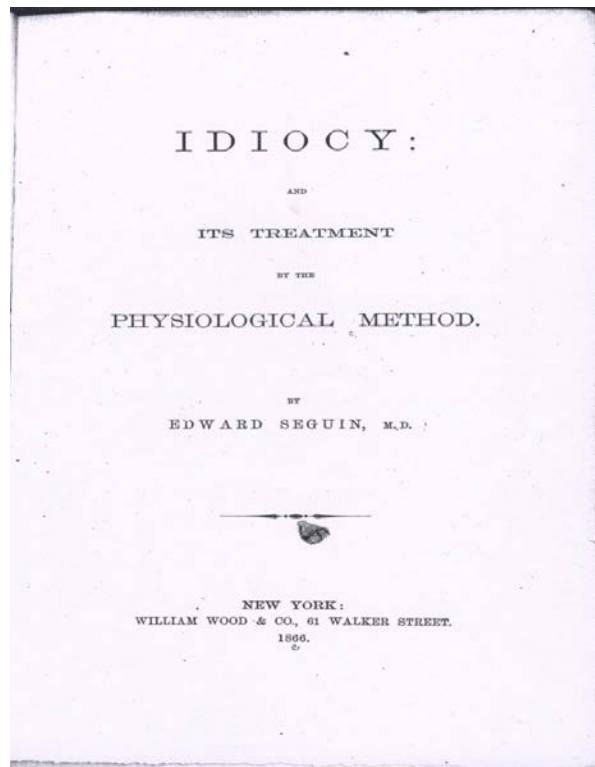
As should be obvious, this example hinges on the relation between mobility and immobility, the objective being to still the restless mobility of A.H., the constant motion of his body, flailing of legs, flapping of arms and spinning of head, and instead to create a state of



complete immobility, a stillness of body coupled to a steadiness of gaze (of A.H. upon Seguin). As a minuscule instance of a thoroughly embodied micro-physics of power, with two bodies locked together for five weeks, there can perhaps be no more striking manifestation of *immobility*, the ‘fixing’ of bodies in space, central to Foucault’s exposition of modern disciplinary power. Yet, as this instance also makes plain, it is the bodily interface between rebel mobilities and imposed immobility that is at stake: the will to move being subdued by the will to (make someone else) keep still. To me, in profound fashion, this instance encompasses the whole dynamic between ‘vital’ disruptions and ‘biopolitical’ control (or simply ‘biopower’) that, with caveats, runs the length and breadth of Foucault’s *oeuvre*, scorning those critics who *only* see here dominating power, discursive construction and no place for what resists (also Philo, 2012).<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the relation between mobilities and immobilities has always been clawing its way into this dynamic, even in those moments when Foucault’s focus seems resolutely on ‘immobilising’ rather than on ‘making mobile’.

### **More lessons from Seguin on mobilities and immobilities**

That said, we can arguably deepen this claim if we depart from what Foucault himself writes about Seguin, and instead offer a brief Foucauldian engagement with passages to be found in Seguin’s 1866 text, *Idiocy and its Treatment by the Physiological Method* (see **Figure 1**). Unapologetically, then, the following section will comprise a slab of empirical material, dependent on lengthy quotation, wherein the quotes themselves can, in large measure, carry the weight of a gradually unfolding argument. Seguin (1866, 16) characterised the task before the physician-educator of ‘idiocy’ as ‘finding modes of training, natural and yet powerful enough, to bring into physiological activity impaired functions, and even atrophied organisms.’ Borrowing Foucault’s term, much of the 1866 text prescribed a minutely-detailed ‘dressage’ of the ‘idiot’ body, best accomplished in the context of a specialist ‘idiot institution’, asylum or school (Seguin was agnostic about the best nomenclature) wherein, at this macro-level, the institution’s residents were to be separated from the remainder of everyday society (thereby effectively immobilised at a societal scale). Page after page itemised the training of muscles, nerves, reflexes and functions, all through sustained micro-management of (using Seguin’s own words) ‘movement’, ‘locomotion’, ‘prehension’, ‘manipulation’, ‘imitation’ and then ‘communication’. Several of these terms immediately signal the training of embodied mobilities, but all of the bodily capacities listed here, and many more besides, depended intimately upon getting these mobilities ‘right’; and most were also linked to a fastidious regulation of how the young ‘idiots’ were to move around their institution and through its many component spaces (also Philo, 2014). Specifically, Seguin discussed ‘calisthenics’ or even ‘gymnastics’, with the latter term even used when speaking of, for example, a ‘gymnastics of the hands’ (Seguin, 1866: 125), with wonderfully precise instructions about hand movements and how they might be trained. If ever there was a book about bodily mobilities and, as we will see shortly, immobilities, a book worthy of attention in a journal called *Mobilities*, then this is it.



**Figure 1: Frontispiece of Edward Seguin, *Idiocy: and its Treatment by the Physiological Method* (William Wood & Co., 61 Walker Street, New York, 1866). (Out of copyright)**

More generally, Seguin (1866, 195) described the goal as being to convert ‘the rather immovable or ungovernable mass called an idiot’ into an organised, movable body of matter with a range of new capacities, a highly organic and ‘vitalist’ vision. Crucially, unlike with the restless A.H., discussed above, the ‘idiot’ body was portrayed here as ‘immovable’, as being too immobile as opposed to too mobile, but the apparent contradiction can be quickly dispelled by addressing a handful of longer quotations where the mobility-immobility axis was explicitly foregrounded, noticing how ‘immovability’ of both bodies and wills entered the analysis. As Seguin (1866, 71) wrote:

We meet ... frequently with the partial loss of movement expressed by the fixedness of the child where and as he [*sic.*] is placed, standing, lying, seated any way, or by the impossibility of his hands taking hold of anything, even carrying food to the mouth; he is immovable of his own will, movable only by another’s as by an external spring.

Here the stubborn mass that may be the ‘idiot’ child was indeed understood simply as *too* resolutely immobile:

This relative immovability of the idiot, ... the result of inertia, has no parentage whatever with the immobility by which a man [*sic.*] or an animal assembles his forces to throw them into action; this is a positive, the other a negative attitude. From *positive immobility* springs an active determination; in *negative immovability* resides the power to ... neutralise any external inducement or any internal motive to action. This immovability is therefore the first expression we meet with of the radical elements of idiocy, the negative will.

Henceforth we shall find many and the most varied incapacities, all doubled, made nearly indomitable by the silent protean “I will not” of the negative will. Impossible now to forget it, and whenever found it has to be treated, as we will do presently, where it would perpetuate, with incapacity of motion, the whole train of idiocy. (Seguin, 1866, 71, my emphases)

In effect, Seguin wished to foster exactly that readiness to spring from still-standing into purposeful, efficient and speedy motion which Foucault spies in the training of the parade-ground recruit, recounted earlier, the secret being to cultivate the bodily state of preparedness to move, of being poised on the threshold of movement, so as to counter an individual’s determination *never* to move. The dialectic of mobility and immobility, with the one always on the brink of becoming the other, was hence, for Seguin, of supreme import; as too was the significance of regarding stillness as the baseline, the ‘potential-filled’ resource, for movement (also Murphie, 2011 [and linking to the wider concerns of Bissell and Fuller, 2009b, 2011b]).

In order to cultivate this ‘positive immobility’, though, Seguin knew that his ‘idiot’ charges absolutely had to know, or at least sense, how to be completely still, returning him to the problem of how to stop the mobilities – the ‘automatic, mechanical or spasmodic motions’ (Seguin, 1866, 71) – of children like A.H.:

As long as these motions exist with or without negative immobility of the rest of the body, we cannot expect to see the child improve in willed action nor in active immobility; therefore it is our duty to try to overcome it all at once when we can, or as soon as possible. ... Happily the exercises undertaken in view of destroying the disordered motions may be at the same time calculated to promote willed immobility and orderly movements; consequently, both objects may be attained at once, and described at the same time.

In effect, ‘positive immobility’ *and* ‘orderly movements’ should be taught at the same time, and Seguin formulated numerous ‘exercises’ designed to combat different species of restless movement in an ‘idiot’ child. He even explained how one might proceed in training a child who combined within a single body simultaneous deficiencies with respect to *both* mobility and immobility, reporting a case where he countered immobility in one arm but hyper-mobility in the other using a complicated assemblage of bodies (his and the child’s), limbs (hands on knees), chairs and a dumb-bell weight. He reflected:

The case presented here is one in which partial immobility was the prominent aim; conversely in another case, immobility shall be secondary, and movement the principal object, as when we keep the whole body quite motionless to concentrate the attention upon delicate exercises of a single part. But we cannot forget that our final object is to teach complete immobility; and to come to it, no pains [and] no time must be spared, because our reward will be the harmony and usefulness of all the subsequent movements. (Seguin, 1866, 73-74)

Put thus, it transpires that stopping mobilities was, after all, *the* ultimate goal for this particular species of ‘biopolitical’ intervention, albeit that the resulting immobility was taken as *the* condition for all of the more positive movements which the ‘idiot’ child might

subsequently be able to make, from the closest-in movements of hands and feet to the scaled-up movements around (and possibly even beyond) the environs of an institution. 'As immobility is in nature the fulcrum of movement,' observed Seguin (1866, 74), 'so in our training it will precede and close every exercise, and serve as transition and as repose between the various modes of active training.' To translate back to Foucault, in all of his texts stressing the imposition of immobility, even behind walls and bars, there are also many occasions where this immobility is clearly being trained as 'the fulcrum of movement': when negativity shifts into the positivity, or when 'repressive' power is on the cusp of converting into 'productive' power, not just stopping things but making things happen (and, of course, move: also Watkins and Noble, 2011). That does not obviate an ethico-political critique of such power; and Foucault is not celebrating Seguin, to be sure, but rather deploying him as a vehicle for critically appraising how mid-nineteenth century 'psychiatric power' (and the 'psychiatrist's body-asylum space') began to capture 'idiocy' in its disciplinary grip. By recovering Seguin's remarkable deliberations about the mobility-immobility dialectic, however, I hope to add new texture to our understanding of what a Foucauldian social-institutional history can disclose – when operating at the most intimate scale of embodied incarceration – that shifts us far beyond the brute fact of merely curtailing mobilities.

### **Foucault and mobilities in old asylums: a mildly heretical postscript**

To an extent, my job is now done, and the need to explore Foucault's attention to mobilities within immobilities amply demonstrated, even when reading his ostensibly least mobility-aware texts and amplifying one of the least-known of these texts, *Psychiatric Power*. I wish to offer a final plot-twist to my reasoning, however, by returning now to the version of *Madness and Civilization* that Foucault himself in part disowned. As is fairly well-known, the original French version of this text (Foucault, 1961) – followed by the full-length English re-translation simply entitled *History of Madness* (Foucault, 2006a) – embraced, particularly but not exclusively in its original preface, various phenomenological undertones that hinted at a romanticisation of 'madness' as a real and special domain of human being-and-truth. These facets were present, if muted, in the abridged English translation of 1965, the version principally used by Anglophone readers (Foucault, 1965; see commentary in Still and Velody, 1992; also Gordon, 1990), and they were more fully purged in later French editions, which carried an entirely new preface, as well as in various qualifications and retractions from other of Foucault's later writings. Maybe piqued by Derrida's (1981 [initially in French 1963]) critique but also emerging from his own later 'structuralist' encounters, Foucault lost the romantic phenomenology of the original book, arguably creating, in consequence, certain instabilities for the book's overall narrative logic and arc (Philo, 2013). Maybe overstating the case, Hacking (2006, xii) nonetheless speaks of two essentially different books:

One of these books is governed by an idea of *déraison*, in which there lurks a dream of madness in the wild, as something pre-discursive, inaccessible, pure. The other book is what the first became, stripped of romantic illusion.

On the one hand, 'madness' is pictured as full of frenzied, unknowable and unpredictable

motion; on the other, as indeed 'fixed', rendered knowable and predictable, immobile on every count.



**Figure 2: *Yard with Lunatics*, a painting by Francisco de Goya, probably from c.1793-1794, reproduced on the jacket front cover of Foucault, M., *History of Madness* (Routledge, London, 2006). (Permission being sought)**

To elaborate this claim, it might be said that the imagery permeating the original French version and the full English translation, reinforced by cover illustrations of different editions, is that of 'the madhouse' as painted several times by the Spanish Romanticist artist, Francisco de Goya (1746-1828). *Yard with Lunatics*, informed by scenes from institutions witnessed by the young Goya in Zaragoza, is the English title of the image deployed on the jacket of *History of Madness* (Foucault, 2006a) (see **Figure 2**). With Goya, writes Foucault (2006a, 361), '[a] whole imaginary landscape re-emerges, animated by the great fear that confinement now evokes.' It was in the early European asylums – often little more than converted fortresses, full of cells, bars, locks and all the accoutrements of punitive incarceration – that 'madness' came to reside in its many different faces; and here, 'lurking in the shadows, was the dark power of an imaginary that many hoped had been exorcised for good.' The precise connections between such allusive statements and the actual longer-run history of 'madness' and asylums, including the extent to which 'the mad' were ever really confined, cannot now be addressed,<sup>13</sup> but the existential point for Foucault (the author of the original text) was that here – in the darkened cellars of these Early Modern madhouses – lay the animal truths of what it is to be 'human'. They housed an expression of the 'madness' within, prior to the superficial veneers of human civilization; they hosted 'a great space of murmuring' rebounding from wall to wall, a 'language' unintelligible to most

listeners but still the 'charred root of meaning', in sum the barely-human chaosmos from which semblances of a human order are hewn in such a fragile, reversible manner (paraphrasing Foucault, 2006a, xxxi-xxxiii). Echoing claims made earlier, it is the 'vital' foundation, the unworded, instinctual bedrock of life, from which 'biopolitical' edifices composed of rationally calculated human words-and-deeds are so precariously raised. At the same time, it is a foundation that mocks and constantly threatens to be the point of return for a humanity denying its 'madness', the point where 'the anthropological circle' indeed turns full circle.<sup>14</sup>

Such is the extraordinary subtext of *Madness and Civilization* 'uncut', one that a more 'structural', less grand-standing, older and wiser Foucault probably found a touch embarrassing, and from which he effectively recanted. Yet, for me, it cannot now be unwritten, not least because of what it does to our reconstruction of Foucault's thinking about the mobility-immobility relation. In one respect, this subtext is all about immobility, the incarceration of 'madness' in prison-like structures, penned in behind high walls and seemingly cut-off from interactions with an everyday social world outside. In another, though, it is all about mobilities within immobility. As evoked in **Figure 2**, it is to envisage 'flesh swarming in the void' (Foucault, 2006a, 530), a carceral micro-world full of pulsating, writhing bodies, crazily admixed and in constant agitated motion, with 'mad' occupants relatively free to move, if not chained, to initiate and to resist bodily contacts, all the while speaking, shouting, screaming, crying and buzzing 'the murmur of dark insects' (Foucault, 2006a, xxxiii). Again, the truth of what really occurred in many Early Modern asylums is beyond the scope of my paper, although evidence from archival sources such as inmate accounts or parliamentary inquiries suggests that *some* 'madhouses' (in Britain meaning private asylums or pauper lunatic wings of poorhouses: Philo, 2004, Chaps.4 and 5) probably *did* equate with a Goya-esque imagery. For my purposes, what matters is that this subtext of *Madness and Civilization* implies something very different from what has chiefly been discussed above: namely, not the mastering or even deliberate cultivation of mobilities (embodied movements) within the immobilising confines of carceral space, but instead the *unmastered*, unruly, restless, listless and maybe aimless mobilities of inmates who resist or at least transgress the imposition of human orders.

While of a tamer, more minor register to the raging 'mad' folk of Goya's paintings and Foucault's romantic phenomenology, Willie's trolley-bus wanderings around Craig Dunain – unscripted and unsanctioned, if largely ignored, by the hospital's authorities – nonetheless sit on the opposite, distaff, side of the disciplined mobility practices (and programmes) explored elsewhere by Foucault. Even so, it is precisely *because* there is this distaff side, this domain of discrepant mobilities, that everything then written by Foucault about the ordering of mobilities makes sense: without them, there would be nothing to regulate, no 'vital' errancy calling for 'biopolitical' correction, no dangerous 'nomadism' whose 'effects' must be 'eliminated', no 'mad' motions calling forth 'civilized' fixes; in short, no real reason why Foucault should ever have bothered thinking about mobilities in the first place. That he did think about mobilities has hopefully been shown by this paper, even on the rather unpromising canvases comprised by texts where, to the initial glance at least, the story is overwhelmingly about immobilities and immobilisation. Why and how he did think about

mobilities in these texts has, just maybe, also now become a shade clearer.

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### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For a longer discussion of Neville's observations about Willie, see Philo (2007b). We encountered Neville's writings about Willie in the course of research on the social geographies of people with mental health problems living in remote, rural parts of Highland Scotland (eg. Parr *et al*, 2004), and we are very grateful to him for letting us have a sight of papers that he prepared when taking a Master of Arts in 'Advanced Professional Practice in Health Care'. Unfortunately, we never met Willie ourselves, and neither do we know what became of him following the closure of 'the Craig'.

<sup>2</sup> See also the very recent edited collection, *Carceral Spaces: Mobility and Detention in Imprisonment and Migrant Detention* (Moran *et al*, 2013), where a number of essays explore precisely the relations between mobilities – at scales from journeys across national space to (if less covered) the scale of intra-institutional movements – and blockages of or friction on such mobilities, notably traffic *across* institutional boundaries.

<sup>3</sup> From my own disciplinary home of 'Geography', a *far* from complete list would include studies of asylums and other psychiatric in-patient facilities (Philo, 1989), prisons (Ferrant, 1997; Ogborn, 1995; Philo, 2001), workhouses (Driver, 1993), reformatories (Driver, 1990; Ploszajska, 1994) and factories or mills (Stein, 1994; Wainwright, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> There may be parallels to be drawn here to claims now familiar in the recent literature of human geography energised by Thrift's (2004, 2008; also Amin and Thrift, 2013) ideas about the 'engineering' of embodied, affective (human) responses to the world. Indeed, while beyond the scope of this paper, there could be scope for utilising these materials to reconsider the apparent interpretative-empirical gulf between Foucault and Thrift (see Thrift, 2007; Philo, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Foucault (1976, 151-152) actually discusses the military camp as his first and prime exemplar of enclosure in the relevant few paragraphs tackling this principle distributional art.

<sup>6</sup> There should always be a hesitation about speaking of 'dialectics' when discussing Foucault, who was often scornful of traditional dialectical thinking, regarding it as too simplistic, too homogenising, too ready to smooth away the jagged edges of contradiction and combat.

<sup>7</sup> Caution is needed with the term 'psychiatry', given that it did not enjoy wide currency until late in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Foucault's claims in these lectures are essentially about the 'proto-psychiatry' or the pre-history of what we now take as modern, medicalised psychiatry (itself, of course, a far from singular animal).

<sup>8</sup> Matters were actually somewhat more complex than these statements imply, not least in that forms of medical – as in physical, somatic – treatment of 'madness' *do* have deep roots, dating at least to Ancient Greece. The later-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries in Europe and North America nonetheless witnessed a daring shift *away* from medical towards 'moral' justifications for the asylum, with medical authority over the latter genuinely seen as a minor or contested issue. One way of appreciating the nineteenth-century history of 'madness' is therefore to see it as the medical

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progressively re-colonising, annexing to its own, the 'moral' principles for treating 'madness', many of which had precisely amounted to practical-situational solutions for persuading the insane to act sane (a key message of *Madness and Civilization* [Foucault, 1965] when discussing experimental reforms by the likes of Tuke and Pinel). *Psychiatric Power* is hence in some respects a detailed account precisely of how said solutions became progressively configured as 'medical' (or 'psychiatric') simply by virtue of being applied by 'medical men' in spaces imitating hospitals for the physically sick. For a detailed exploration of 'medical' and 'moral' stances in this historical geography of 'madness' and asylums, see Philo (2004).

<sup>9</sup> A small body of historical scholarship on 'idiocy' can be identified, but I would particularly cite recent critical accounts by Goodey (2012) and Simpson (2014). It should also be added that there are significant linguistic differences in the terminology for this supposedly 'other' state of being-in-the-world, perhaps reflecting conceptual divergences too, between different world regions.

<sup>10</sup> Seguin was a French physician who initially worked under Jean Gaspar Itard, another key figure in histories of 'idiocy', before opening his own Parisian private training school for 'idiots' in 1840. A child of the French Revolution, influenced by the Utopian socialist Henri de Saint-Simon, Seguin's political sensibilities made him vulnerable as anti-Revolutionary forces re-established themselves, and in 1848 (the 'Year of Revolutions' across Europe) he was forced to flee possible denunciation at home by emigrating to the US. 'Eduoard' duly became 'Edward', and he became involved with various public asylums for 'idiots' in the US, eventually opening his own training school for feeble-minded children (and their nurses and teachers) in New York City, as well as becoming the first President of the US Association for Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-Minded Children.

<sup>11</sup> Much could be made of Seguin's wish for his physical or 'physiological' approach to break from a prior mental or 'psychological' approach when treating 'idiocy', as associated with his one-time influence, Itard.

<sup>12</sup> A crucial caveat is that I follow Foucault in effectively scrambling the otherwise neat periodisations of power – 'sovereign', 'disciplinary' and 'biopower' – sometimes implied in his earlier writings. Rather, I follow his portrayal of differing and overlapping *series* of power, notably from the closing pages of the "*Society must be Defended*" lectures (Foucault, 2003c), and I am also prepared to speak of 'biopower' at work whenever (and wherever) there is a clear 'biopolitical' impression upon the 'vitalities' of human existence, whether at the level of population planning, say, or that of promoting embodied capacities (as in Seguin's approach to 'idiocy').

<sup>13</sup> There is of course a very substantial literature on the histories of 'madness, mad people, mad-doctors and madhouses', with some authors downplaying the extent and significance of 'mad' people being confined in either general or specialist institutional settings, but with others regarding such confinement as historically decisive. For the latter, the argument may be framed less in terms of the actual numbers ever confined, albeit the numbers globally have been huge throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and more in terms of establishing an *imagined* division – to echo Said (1978), a massive 'imaginative geography' of us/here (the 'sane') who are (and seemingly should be) kept apart from them/there (the 'insane') – with multiple implications for diverse realms of policy, practice and everyday social attitudes and expectations. For geographically-inflected discussion, see Philo (2004) and Parr (2008).

<sup>14</sup> The title of the concluding chapter (Part 3, V) of Foucault (2006a).

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