Confession and Avowal in Foucault's early work, 1954-1972
Andrea Teti

Introduction[1]

One of Foucault's most famous claims is that "Western man has become a confessing animal (*bête d'aveu*)" (Foucault, 1978, page 59). It is also one of his most misunderstood. This paper traces the evolution in Foucault's use of confession (*confession*) and avowal (*aveu*) in his early work with two general objectives in mind: first, to obtain a better picture of the evolution of Foucault's own thinking, particularly the roots of his better-known late work on these issues; and second, contribute towards the analytical development of these two concepts in and beyond Foucault's own work.

The established approach to *confession* and *aveu* in Foucault's work suggests these are conceptually and analytically interchangeable inasmuch as both terms are interpreted as indexing forms of power through which the self is enjoined upon to continuously monitor and speak truth about itself. Emblematic of this approach is the account by Dreyfus and Rabinow (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983, pages 119, 141, 145–146, 168–169, 173–183, 186, 198, 203). This conception has made possible rich work, including Burchell's analysis of subjection/subjectivation and resistance (Burchell, 2009, pages 159–177) and Elden's important reconstruction of the problem confession posed for Foucault in the genealogy of his work (Elden, 2005, pages 23–41). It has also proven extraordinarily popular in its application across multiple subfields, including Philosophy (Taylor, 2008), Political Theory (Bevir, 1999), Education Studies (Fejes and Dahlstedt, 2013; Fejes and Nicoll, 2015), History (Karma, 1997), Legal Studies (Tadros, 1998), Nursing and Psychiatry (Roberts, 2005), International Relations (Salter, 2007), Anthropology (Van Maanen, 1988; cf. Webster, 2008), and Sociology (Rail, 2012).

That being said, current scholarship offers no systematic analysis of these concepts' evolution in Foucault's work. The current conflation of *aveu* and *confession* results from a combination of Foucault's own sometimes ambiguous usage (e.g. in the Dartmouth lectures he uses 'confession' in English in a way reminiscent of his use of *aveu* in Louvain rather than *confession* in *Government of the Living* (hereinafter *GotL*)) and of differences in

the way the semantic fields of *aveu*/*confession* overlap in French compared to avowal/ confession.[2] However, this state of affairs is unsatisfactory; for example, *GotL* describes *confession* as having distinct properties (Foucault, 2014a, page 84) in which a source of pathological deviance is located at the core of the self, while in Dartmouth (1980) and Louvain (1981) Foucault focus on the avowal as the moment of the *mise en discours* of the subject, omitting references to a deviant alterity. The implied economies of power in these two cases will be shown to be profoundly different.

To trace Foucault's shifting usage, this article provides a systematic overview of his use of the two terms, adopting a roughly chronological approach and drawing from all published English and French sources. Given the magnitude of the task, this first contribution will focus on Foucault's production between 1954 and 1972. The latter cut-off point was chosen based on the fact that currently available material suggests it is only after this point that Foucault starts thinking in more explicit and systematic terms about *aveu* and *confession*. His final lecture in the 1971-72 cycle offers important reflections on the avowal, but Foucault offers no explicit definition of avowal, nor does he relate it to confession. By contrast, by 1973, he offers a definition of the avowal, and in the 1974-75 *Abnormal* lectures he distinguishes between avowal and confession, and – to a degree – reflects on their articulation(s). The article therefore notes when and how Foucault's own usage varies, indicating when *aveu* and *confession* are being used in the sense of admission as in the more common English usage; when *confession* is used in a sacramental sense; and what conceptual and analytical value Foucault's texts give beyond common usage. Accordingly, French terms have been bracketed in order to better reflect the original and bring to light the distinction between confession (*confession*) and avowal (*aveu*).

As a meter of comparison, this article adopts Foucault's earliest definitions of *aveu* and *confession*. The first definition of confession (*confession*) in published work is given indirectly in the 1972-73 lectures entitled *La Société Punitive* (*The Punitive Society*), in which Foucault refers to sacramental confession, claiming that "catholic confession (*confession*) is ways in which [individual behaviour] is made to enter into a kind of discursivity [characterized] by the fact that it is the subject himself who speaks [about himself]; it never leaves an archive; and the discursivity to which confession (*confession*) gives rise falls within the frame of something like casuistry" (Foucault, 2013a). The first formal definition of avowal (*aveu*) Foucault gives dates from 1975: "the avowal (*aveu*) consists in the discourse of the subject on himself, in a situation of power in which it is dominated, constrained, and which, by [means of] the avowal (*par l'aveu*) it modifies" (Foucault, 2001e, page 1677). This definition is notably close to the one offered in the much more detailed examination of the avowal in the 1981 Louvain lectures, "a verbal act through which the subject affirms who he is, binds himself to this truth, places himself in a

---

[2] In French *aveu* is primarily associated with admission in a juridical context, and while *confession* can be used in that context it is primarily associated with Christian sacramental practice (Brion and Harcourt, 2014, pages 1–2n). However, the English usage of 'confession' is evenly split between the two contexts, and since 'to avow' is nearly archaic, the transposition of both French terms with a singular English counterpart is intuitively plausible.

relationship of dependence with regard to another, and modifies at the same time his relationship to himself" (Foucault, 2014b, page 17). On the other hand, the conceptual structures of both definitions are significantly different from the articulation of *confession* offered in the 1979-1980 *Government of the Living* lectures in which he presents confession as a particular kind of 'regime of truth,' and calls the avowal a 'reflexive truth act' located at the core of confession, while clearly distinguishing it from avowal. In the same lectures he defines avowal as "the purest and also historically most important form of this reflexive form of the truth act is what we call confession (*l'aveu*) […] a truth act in which the subject is at once actor of the alethurgy, […] he is witness […] and finally, third, […] he is its object" (Foucault, 2014a, page 82) where "the truth act (*acte de vérité*) […] may be defined (1) by the subject's role as operator of the alethurgy, (2) by the subject's role as spectator of it, and (3) by the subject's role as the object itself of the alethurgy" (Foucault, 2014a, page 81).

With these definitions in mind, this article makes two claims. First, during this period, by the standard of his late definitions, while all elements of *aveu* and *confession* are present in Foucault's early work, nowhere are they explicitly linked. Instead, references to *aveu* and *confession* broadly occupy the same semantic field as 'admission', being primarily linked to quasi-judicial procedures (e.g. in secular and religious justice, psychiatry, etc.).

Secondly, the article shows that Foucault's work during this period nonetheless displays discernible conceptual differentiation between *aveu* and *confession* which will emerge with greater clarity in his later work. The article argues that there are in fact not two but *three* economies of power which these terms cover. First, confession/avowal as admission of law-breaking, which entails a one-off interaction between the individual and a legal framework which expects an avowal but makes no assumptions about the nature of the avowing subject. Second, avowal in a space such as the asylum: a contingent act which entails a similarly singular event, which makes possible linear trajectory of emancipation from unreason towards reason understood as ontologically separate categories. Finally, third, something Foucault will later sometimes call 'sacramental confession', a relation of power articulated in a very specific way around the avowal in which the avowing subject's normalisation is undermined by a subjectivity already and necessarily marked by flawed, stained nature, i.e. a figure in which the other remains trapped by its ontological distinctiveness, undermining the putatively emancipatory transformation enjoined upon it by the listening subject who demands the avowal. These differences become increasingly pronounced throughout the 1970s until they culminate in the analyses outlined in the 1981 Louvain (Foucault, 2012b, 2014b), 1980 Dartmouth (Foucault, 1993), and 1980 *Government of the Living* (Foucault, 2012a, 2014a) lectures.

This article shows that while *avouer* in the sense of admission in a juridical context entails *mise en discours* of the subject, it does not necessarily entail a permanent imperative to do so. The latter requires an unstable, inscrutable, and ultimately dangerous selfhood, which emerges from Foucault's analysis of sacramental confession. As Foucault's later work argues, only a specific chain of historical events – the transformations of Christian

penitence from Tertullian through monastic practices to the Council of Trent, the problems of the abnormal, degeneration, delinquency, etc. – will produce figures such as the sinner or the delinquent, and it is only the permanence of these instabilities and dangers that can make the demand for the avowal – and thus the subject's *mise en discours* – *continuous*. It is only when this otherness is made pathological and placed into the innermost reaches of each individual that the demand for the avowal can become *permanent*. In this sense, confession describes a very different form of power from the avowal. In the conflation of *aveu* and *confession* both in general and specifically in English translation, it is precisely this role of pathology at an ontological level which is left unexamined.

Avowal as a Bridge between Reason and Unreason

Foucault's first book, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (Foucault, 1954),[3] contains no references to *aveu* or *confession*. In his second book, *History of Madness* (Foucault, 1961, 2006), the terms *aveu* and *confession* appear infrequently and with only traces of the analytical frameworks Foucault would attach to them in later work. In most instances, *confession* indicates the Christian ritual in the strict sense – i.e. not analysed as a more general schema of power relations – and in the development of avowal-based technologies of the self, which Foucault will from the mid-1970s sketch the spread of throughout the social body. This 'common sense' usage appears in the following passages:

As was the case in every other hospital in the Catholic world their only obligation was to make a mandatory confession (*confession*), as was required from all patients who entered the hospital (Foucault, 2006, pages 83–84).

There is first of all the weight of a tradition, the tradition of theologians and casuists, and also the tradition of lawmakers and judges. Provided he expresses a few of the external signs of penitence, a madman can receive confession (*confession*) and absolution (Foucault, 2006, page 208).

When the confessor encountered 'hypochondriac patients who went to confession (*confession*) too often', he either gave them as penance a severe punishment that 'diluted their thick, sluggish blood', or sent them on a long pilgrimage (Foucault, 2006, page 368).

Her confessor (*confesseur*), after advising her in vain to attach herself to God, showed her cases of firm, measured saintliness, counselling her 'to trust in the traditional remedies to the great passions – patience and time' (Foucault, 2006, page 493).

When not used in the strict sacramental sense, *aveu* and *confession* occupy the same semantic field as 'admission'. In these instances, Foucault uses *confession* and *aveu* in a sense he would later formally define as the statement by the speaker of a truth about

---

[3] *Maladie mentale et psychologie* (Foucault, 1962) is a re-edited version of this text which, however, also contains no references to either avowal or confession.

him/herself which would both bind the speaker to that truth and alter their position within relations of power. There are only two examples of such usage. The first is a seventeen-year-old girl 'raised with extreme indulgence' who had fallen into a 'gay, dreamy delirium', jolted out of it only with strict confrontation:

Faced with the rigours of this new threat, the patient felt herself to be deeply moved … and wound up admitting the error of her ways, and made a frank confession (*aveu*) that she had fallen into her unreasoned state as a result of heartbreak, even naming the person who had been its object. After that first confession (*aveu*), the cure became easy" (Foucault, 2006, page 507).

The second example occurs in a passage in which Foucault uses *aveu* and *confession* interchangeably:

In the fifteenth century, Gilles de Rais, accused of having been and of being still 'a relapsed heretic, a sorcerer, a sodomite, an invoker of evil spirits, a diviner, a killer of the innocent, an apostate, an idolater, and a man who refused to see the error of his ways', ended up admitting his crimes 'which were enough to send 10,000 people to their deaths' in an extra-judicial confession [*confession*]. He made his confession (*aveux*) again in Latin in court, and then asked of his own accord that the confession (*confession*) might be translated into the common language, so that everyone attending the court, most of whom did not understand Latin, might understand, and that for his shame the publication and confession (*confession*) of the aforementioned crimes might obtain more easily the remission of his sins, and the favour of God for the abolition of the sins he had committed. In the civil trial, the same confession (*confession*) was required before the assembled public: 'he was told by the judge that he should repeat his case in full out loud, and that the shame that he would feel would be an alleviation of the torments that he would experience in the next world'. Until the seventeenth century, evil, in all its violence and inhumanity, could only be compensated for and punished if it was brought out into the open. Only the light in which confession (*aveu*) and punishment are enacted can make up for the darkness in which evil was born. There was a cycle of accomplishment of evil, which necessarily involved public manifestation and avowal (*aveu*) before reaching the completion that eradicated it. Confinement, by contrast, betrays a consciousness where inhumanity can provoke nothing but shame. (Foucault, 2006, page 142).

Here clearly *aveu* and *confession* are synonymous with admission and are located in a specifically judicial context. Both cases satisfy the definition of avowal Foucault would later formalize as an utterance about the self by which the speaking subject modifies its position in relations of power, specifically a one-off relationship rooted in a violation of the law. On the other hand, although this judicial context does entail that *mise en discours* of the self to which Foucault refers in his early definition of confession, there is no trace of the pathological deviance associated with delinquency or sin he will trace in later historical developments, much less of the discursive economy of the avowal inserted into sacramental confession or its further permutations throughout the social body (direction of conscience, psychoanalysis, etc.). In both cases, nothing suggests these terms are being consciously deployed in an analytically significant manner.

That said, there are other aspects of *Folie et déraison* which appear significant in terms of the later analytical development of avowal and confession. First, although the immediate context of much of Foucault's discussion is the problem of luxury, sexuality generally, and of course unreason, it is fairly clear that the economy of power of a range of different domains is structured around the separation of the normal from the deviant. Second, these domains display a pathologisation of difference at the ontological level. For example, Foucault argues that:

In the classical age, poverty, laziness, vice and madness all blended into a single culpability inside unreason; the mad were locked up in the great confinement of poverty and unemployment, but all were promoted to the vicinity of sin, close to the essence of the Fall. But madness now became more of a social fall, confusedly perceived as its cause, model and limit. Within the space of half a century, mental illness would be treated as a form of degeneration. And from then on, the essential madness, and the real threat, was something that floated up from the lower depths of society (Foucault, 2006, page 495).

Disease, both physical and mental, become sign and result of a deeper deviance: marginality is associated with sin, with the essence of the Fall, with an "essential madness". Indeed, in light particularly of Foucault's later discussions of the shift from Greco-Roman avowal aimed at mastery of the self to the Christian avowal-confessional dispositive which at its heart has a soul necessarily and irredeemably marked by sin, it seems important to note that the text presents this pathology as ultimately buried in the deepest recesses of the soul. For example, Foucault notes that

[I]t is at the end of the Renaissance [sufferers of 'Naples Sickness'] began to be regarded with a new eye. Thierry de Héry was of the opinion that none of the causes usually advanced to explain the origins of the disease, like pestilential air or contaminated water, provided a sufficient explanation: "For which reason we consider the disease to have its origins in the divine indignation of the creator of all things, who when he considered the libidinous, lascivious, petulant lust of men allowed such ill to reign among them, as a revenge and punishment for the enormous sin of luxury" (Foucault, 2006, page 84).

The third aspect is the articulation of these two domains – norm and deviance – through the coupling of punishment/chastisement and avowal, a coupling in which Foucault awards a privileged position assigned to the avowal. Although unreason is utterly incommensurate with reason, the unreasonable/unreasoning subject's position is not *unalterable*: despite the monstrosity and otherness of deviance, healing is nonetheless possible, reason remains attainable. This makes it possible for the asylum, for confinement generally, to become the site of a possible cure, the interface between reason and unreason at which a 'moral synthesis' is possible despite reason's deafness to unreason. As Foucault observes:

Pinel's asylum was not to be a retreat from the world, a space of nature and immediate truth like that of Tuke, but a uniform domain of legislation, a place of moral syntheses where the

nascent alienation that came into being on the fringes of society was to be eliminated. The lives led by the internees, and their behaviour towards doctors and guards, were organised by Pinel in such manner that these moral syntheses should be carried out (Foucault, 2006, page 495).

The new asylum is a surface of contact between reason and unreason in which the normalization of deviance is made possible.

The final aspect, which derives from the previous, is the particular way in which reason and unreason interact in such a space of normalization. In the asylum, reason speaks not in dialogue, but to confront the threat of the abnormal: it demands a certain performance as the price of readmission, or at least as price of such dialogue that might lead to readmission. Unreason is ontologically different, but the madman is not necessarily permanently other, and if Thierry de Héry's conclusion suggests the emergence of the notion of an insidious force of deviance buried in the human soul, on the other hand there is always also the possibility of resisting being dragged into its darkest recesses and even of emerging permanently from them. The avowal, the vocalized admission of deviance and guilt – not to mention debt – is precisely that bridge between sanity and insanity, reason and unreason, a performance that makes passage possible:

In comparison to the incessant dialogue between reason and madness that had marked the Renaissance, classical confinement had been a silencing. But that silence was not total, and language was now engaged in things rather than totally suppressed. Confinement, prisons, dungeons, and even torture had set up a silent dialogue between reason and unreason, which was of the order of a struggle. That dialogue itself was now undone, and the silence was absolute; there was no longer any common language between madness and reason, and all that answered the language of delirium was an absence of language, for delirium was not a fragment of dialogue with reason, but no language at all; its only reference, in the consciousness finally silenced, was guilt. And it was only from that point on that a common language was once more possible, after guilt had been recognised and acknowledged. 'Finally, after a long period of hesitation, he was seen of his own accord to mingle with the society of the other patients...' The absence of language, as a fundamental structure of life in the asylums, had as its correlative the renewal of the act of confession (*aveu*) (Foucault, 2006, page 497).

But another component of what in *Government Of The Living* Foucault would call the confessional regime of truth, punishment, was also necessary to undertake this path towards normality:

From the earliest months of the great confinement, the venereal had their place in the Hôpital Général. […] The Hôpital Général was therefore to admit the 'corrupted', but not without formality: a debt had to be paid to public morality, and patients had to be prepared on the path of punishment and penance for their return to the communion from which sin had caused their expulsion. Entrance to the *grand mal* quarter was refused without the necessary paperwork: and the paper required was not a letter of confession (*confession*), but a certificate of punishment (*châtiment*) (Foucault, 2006, pages 83–84).

The performance of avowal/admission and of punishment/chastisement become the conditions for readmission and normalization. Although the ontological condition of deviance which will be one of the hallmarks of Foucault's analysis of confession in *Government of the Living* is present, the avowal still presents the possibility of a full and final emancipation – unlike for the sinner, who can never be permanently free of sin. In this sense, although Foucault does not present avowal in quite the formalized manner of his later work and although confession appears in nothing more than either a synonym of admission or in its strictest theological sense, *History of Madness* presents some which will be found among the conceptual groundwork for his later analysis.

As for other monographs in the 1960s, his book on Raymond Roussel (Foucault, 1963b, 1987), *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 1966, 1970), and *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1969, 2002) make no reference to either confession or avowal. Although it ignores confession specifically and the avowal generally, *Birth of the Clinic* (Foucault, 1963a, 1973) comes closest to the terrain Foucault will later draw on in his thinking about both, namely the question of the normal and the pathological and the way systems of medical knowledge are permitted/permit, organize/are organised around this distinction. This articulation will be important in the emergence of confession in the later Christian sense, which Foucault argues percolates throughout the social field in the period between the 16th and 19th centuries.

The Contingency of the Avowal: Law and Psychiatry

This being said, there are signs that Foucault was developing an interest in the speech about the self and its location in economies of power. Throughout the 1960s Foucault's texts become increasingly focused and nuanced on this point. Beyond book-length treatments, the avowal appears as early as 1962 – significantly, roughly contemporaneously with *History of Madness* – in his introduction to Rousseau's *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques*. In this essay, *aveu* is mentioned whereas *confession* –despite the link between Rousseau, Augustine, and Foucault's essay – does not appear. Avowal is presented in relation to what Foucault would later call the 'consumption of the avowal', or demand for the avowal, displayed by the judicial system, and thus with the question of how avowal could become a form of truth, even the privileged sign of truth.

In fact, judgment presumes the triumph (*éclat*) of the word (*parole*): its edifice is by no measure sturdy unless it culminates in the avowal (*aveu*) of the accused, in this spoken recognition of the crime by the criminal. No one has the right to spare anyone from judgment: it must be possible to be judged and condemned, for it is necessary to have spoken (*avoir parlé*) in order to be chastised. The ordeal always presupposes speech (*parole*). Ultimately, the closed world of the tribunal is less dangerous than the open space in which the accusing word encounters no

opposition because it propagates [itself] through silence (*silence*), and where the defense cannot convince because it responds to nothing but silence (*mutisme*)" (Foucault, 2001b, page 212).

Several features of Foucault's analysis here are relevant: first, there is a demand, an expectation placed on the accused; second, *aveu* here is clearly located in the semantic field of 'admission'; third, the judicial system is the surface of contact between legality and illegality (i.e. admissible and inadmissible, if not yet normal and deviant); fourth, the performance of such an admission is the price of the errant subject's normalization; and finally, the trial is in some sense analogue of the therapeutic process, ferrying the subject from a condition of exteriority to the community, to a re-established interiority. Foucault sees in this privilege of the accused's admission a demand for the avowal which turns the judicial system into a 'consumer of avowal' (Foucault, 2001a, page 659). However, it is important to emphasize that the introspective admission in question is an admission of law-breaking fact, not of deviant nature: the criminal is merely an offender, not yet the pathological other which Foucault identifies in figure of the delinquent. As such, in the case of the asylum, the transition from unreason to reason, to normality, remains always possible.

The link between avowal and production of truth is present again in a 1963 essay appearing in *Médicine et Hygiène* entitled "Water and Madness" (Foucault, 2001c). There are two elements which are significant in this article: first, this is the first of Foucault's publications in which he focuses on and elaborates specifically on the avowal, and secondly, Foucault focuses explicitly on the avowal's function in an economy of power. It is also interesting to note that the passage Foucault cites from Leuret is the same he will reprise in his 1981 Louvain lectures which focus specifically on the avowal in justice. Moreover, as he will remark in his later analysis of confession in *Abnormal* (Foucault, 2003) and in *History of Sexuality* (Foucault, 1978), Foucault emphasises that the act of confessing itself – in the sense of admission, avowal in this specific sacramental context – brings shame, just as water humiliates in patients' forced cold showers (Foucault, 2014b, pages 184, cf100, 109). It is worth noting that in his later descriptions of avowal in sacramental confession Foucault describes a process the four functions of which, like Leuret's cold showers, are to be painful, humiliating (mortifying), chastising (punishing), and reducing the patient to silence – silence as the moment of a sinner's acceptance that the willing recitation of sins, actions, and thoughts may begin so that in the Confessor may in turn produce its/the sinner's truth by assessing the sins and issuing penance/ satisfaction (cf. Foucault, 1976, pages 89–90, 1978, pages 66–67).

Again, in this essay, Foucault gives no formal definition of the avowal, and his emphasis throughout is on avowal as a mechanism through which one produces/ performs truth: Leuret inflicts cold showers the patient relentlessly until the painful water forces him to make an admission in words which the patient recognises as truth what he clearly believes to be false in fact, namely that he is mad. The patient performs the avowal of a truth about himself, but he does not necessarily believe it – nor is he expected to. The cold water's function is to extort the avowal: "water is the instrument of

avowal […] it forces madness to avow" (Foucault, 2001c, pages 297–298), and it is clear that the point of the punishment is purely to extract this performance: water "represents the instance of judgement in the asylum, [it is] the analogue of fire from the heavens (*feu du ciel*). But this is a unique judgment: it has no purpose but to make the diseased avow […] the madman must recognise he is mad" (Foucault, 2001c, pages 297–298). This leaves open the question of what kind of subjectivation might be taking place through this avowal: certainly subjection, subjugation of the speaker, certainly the production of a statement that functions as truth in wider economies of power, a modification of the speaker's own position within that economy, albeit simply to more fully justify his subjection to a certain process of 'normalization'. Whether there is subjectivation in the sense of a change in the speaker's own *self*-representation in the direction of the avowal's content is not necessarily clear, either in Foucault's work or indeed in principle (Burchell, 2009). Indeed, while the 'therapeutic process' which the avowal initiates purportedly is predicated precisely on changing that *internal* subjectivity, Foucault makes no mention of the latter among the functions of the cold showers. Significantly, the manner in which the avowal is extracted, the way water forces unreason to avow its own folly is that it surprises, it is breath-taking, it makes the patient lose all countenance: "water has four functions: it is painful (and returns the subject to the world of the immediacy of perception from which he has a tendency to escape[4]); it humiliates, by placing the diseased (*malade*) before his truly sodden (*détrempé*) condition; it reduces to silence […] and finally it chastises (*châtie*)" (Foucault, 2001c, pages 297–298).

It is important to note the difference in the way the avowal is configured in these two essays. In the introduction to Rousseau's volume, Foucault describes a judicial context in which the demand for the avowal is not permanent (unlike the avowal in confession described in *Government of the Living*) but rather is elicited only by a violation of the law. There is nothing permanent about the demand for the subject's *mise en discours*. On the other hand, in *Water and Madness* one finds the avowal – despite the method by which it is extracted – poised as bridge between Reason and Unreason in a manner strongly reminiscent of *History of Madness*, specifically as a transformation permitting the 'emancipation' of a patient, their 'normalisation', their return into the fold of Reason. But again, this is a one-off event: the demand for the avowal is permanent only so long as the individual remains in the field of Unreason, and it is always possible to move away from this condition thus removing the demand upon oneself to avow.

Outside of *History of Madness*, this article remains the only other reference of any conceptual or analytical depth in Foucault's writing throughout the 1960s. The only other reference dates to a well-known 1965 interview with Alain Badiou, which does not mention avowal but does mention confession, two years after *Water and Madness* and four years after the first edition of *History of Madness*. Here, Foucault draws a parallel between psychology and a number of other 'cultural forms' aiming at and structured around the telling of oneself, amongst which confession.

---

[4] This 'tendency to escape' is also the way Foucault describes sexuality as sin in *History of Sexuality*.

Q: What is psychology? A: I will say that I do not think that one should attempt to define psychology as a science, but perhaps [rather] as a cultural form. This [form] is inscribed in a whole series of phenomena which Western culture has known for a long time, and within which things like confession [*confession*] […] could appear (Foucault, 2001f, page 466).

This passage provides far too little to infer much at all about what conceptual sense or analytical characteristics Foucault might have been attaching to 'confession', but it is enough to suggest that a decade before *Abnormal* and *History of Sexuality*, he was thinking about it as a discrete economy of power – a 'cultural form' – worthy of analysis in its own right, and suggests Foucault may have been already thinking about more general processes of which confession and psychology were specific instances.

That being said, it does not seem that for Foucault any notion of a historical shift was warranted: four years later, in 1969, Foucault again refers to the avowal and confession, and in the context of judicial procedures, although this time to show that still at the end of the sixteenth century the avowal was in certain cases – e.g. sorcery – an admission of guilt was in itself not sufficient to determine punishment and as such had not yet taken on its role as a mechanism through which a uniquely privileged form of truth is produced.[5] His 1969 candidacy presentation at the Collège de France mentions neither avowal nor confession, but it does speak in terms of Foucault's analyses of exclusionary processes and the constitution of bodies of knowledge (*connaissance*, but also *savoir*) particularly bodies of knowledge under the rubric of science, and thus indirectly the question of the normal and the pathological he develops from Caguilheme or the question of the limit in Bataille (Foucault, 1994).

Avowal and Judgment in Law in the Early 1970s

Confession also makes an appearance as a solitary but again perhaps significant occurrence in Foucault's 1970 *The Order of Discourse*, the introductory lecture at the Collège de France in which he maps the main directions he intends to pursue in his research and teaching there. Here, in the context of what he calls "functions of exclusion" such as "the disjunction of madness and reason in the classical age" and "that concerning sexuality from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century," it was a question of "seeing not [so much] how it was progressively and – and happily – disappeared, but with the way it was displaced and rearticulated through a practice of confession (*confession*) following which the prohibited conducts were named, classified, organized hierarchically in the most explicit manner – up until the initially certainly timid and delayed appearance of the theme of sexuality in nineteenth century psychiatry" (Foucault, 1972, page 232).

---

[5] "the facts are established according to the rules, the avowal (*aveu*) was obtained, the accused – a young shepherd – himself gives further indications concerning his crime, [but] even the avowal is not considered [to be] sufficient" (Foucault, 2001d, page 784).

Here, still, confession appears in its theological guise as a site operating categorization and exclusion, explicitly in relation to sexuality rather than in more generalized forms, but also – implicitly – as that bridge between the state of abnormality (deviance or pathology) and normality.

Confession and avowal recur in the same text again in Foucault's lectures on *The Will to Know* (1970-71) (Foucault, 2011, 2013b) – his first course delivered at the Collège de France – which focuses much more clearly on this problem, and contains references, albeit sparse, to both avowal and confession. Although neither of these concepts is presented as central in the line of argument being developed, the cases recounted in *Will to Know* involve oath/vow/avowal as a yielding up to be judged as witnesses to themselves (though potentially also to others), to have the truth exposed/written/ established, and in any case being bound to and subjected to that truth. Foucault's text presents both avowal and confession as forms of truth-telling, with not only *aveu* but also *confession* still remaining within the semantic field of admission – albeit clearly in the sense of an admission with some juridical value and which is in some way costly to the speaker. Three kinds of truth telling are identified, all in judicial or quasi-judicial – rather than sacramental – contexts.

First, there is the ordeal, which guaranteed the truthfulness of the oath of adversaries equal in social rank when the oath of one was not acceptable, and likewise for women, exposed children, and slaves.

When two adversaries were not of equal rank and the oath (*serment*) of one was not acceptable, he was subject to the ordeal: this was the case with women (with the test of the *rock*), exposed children, and slaves. The physical danger with which one confronted them, their torture, was their oath of truth. It is curious to see how this test of truth by the torture of slaves was preserved throughout Greek judicial practice, but gradually taking on a different role: in the fourth century it involves getting a confession (*il s'agit de faire avouer*) from slaves who could have witnessed actions of their masters, but whose servile condition would prevent them from telling the truth (Foucault, 2013b, page 85).

Second, there is Christian inquisitorial practice and the link between torture and oath/ truth.

Glotz has maybe said the most important thing about the Greek ordeal [The martyr keeps the truth up to and including execution and with the uncertain possibility of God coming to save him. Note by MF], but the Inquisition should be studied in this perspective. There, the test of truth is complicated by the Christian behavior of confession (*l'aveu*). But the Inquisition is not purely and simply a matter of techniques for getting the confession (*aveu*). There is a whole network of disjunctions which support the inquisitorial test: - either you resist the test and do not confess to being a sorcerer; this means that that the devil has enabled you to bear the unbearable; therefore you are a fiend. […] – or you do not resist the test and confess (*tu avoues*): this mean that you are really Satan's henchman. Therefore you deserve to be punished. Punishment which

we promised you would escaped if you confessed (*si tu avouais*). But your confession (*aveu*) means that you are forgiven and will die absolved (Foucault, 2013b, pages 85–86).

And finally there is confession and avowal in the production of different kinds of truth, oracular as opposed to judicial, in *Oedipus Rex*:

In Oedipus the King there are two types of knowledge which fit together and finally form an *orthon epos*. Two types of knowledge which know the same thing (the murder and the incest), but one proclaiming it in the form of the oracle, of clairvoyance, of divination; a knowledge that nothing escapes, the seer's blindness equivalent to the god's light. The other is a knowledge extracted in the form of testimony, memory, and confession (*aveu*): he knows only what he has seen and done; beyond this he can say nothing (Foucault, 2013c, page 238).[6]

In *Will to Know*, Foucault's concern seems to have shifted back to a juridical dimension with particular attention to the question of the violation of law and away from the emphasis on the moral, emotional or mental deviance of unreason characteristic of his earlier book-length work. These two concerns will converge in his later work – e.g. the identification of the figure of the delinquent in *Discipline and Punish*.

In 1972, a full decade after his comments on Rousseau, there are two instances in which Foucault mentions avowal – although not confession – both again in the context of the judicial process' production of statements that can function as truth. The first is the well-known 'Dialogue with Maoists'. Here, Foucault refers to 'people's tribunals' in which "interrogations the purpose of which was to establish the 'truth' or obtain the 'avowal' (*aveu*)" (Foucault, 1980, page PAGE). Clearly the text puts forward no conceptualisation of the avowal. However, it does refer to the avowal in a (quasi)judicial context as a privileged sign of truth, a statement that functions as truth, but also a truth to which an individual binds itself in submission to an authority – in this case 'revolutionary tribunals'.

The second is the 1971-1972 lectures at the Collège de France, *Théories et institutions pénales* and the related course summary. Foucault's 1971-1972 course, seems to mark a transition point towards a more systematic attention to the avowal, while on the other hand mentioning confession rarely. The lectures go close to explicitly defining *aveu* as an act of justice rooted in the subject's statement of a truth about itself (Foucault, 2015, page 116)[7]; the final lecture of March 8th focuses on the transition point between ancient systems of justice based on the trial or test and modern systems based on investigation and inquisition (Foucault, 2015, pages 202–206); and it ultimately prefigures the "ethical and religious link between subject and truth" (Foucault, 2015, page 207) and the attendant complex economy of the avowal involving recognition, purification,

---

[6] *Oedipal Knowledge* is published as an appendix to *Will to Know* as it was based on a development of the March 17th lecture, delivered in turn at SUNY in March and Cornell in October 1972.

[7] "The idea that the act of justice passes through or rests on the enunciation of the truth is itself also a later phenomenon".

subjectivation, and truth. The same pages also reference Foucault's claim in his essay on Rousseau a decade earlier that the modern and contemporary justice system's demand for the avowal and thus torture is rooted in the avowals "allure as [equivalent of the] test (*épreuve*)" (Foucault, 2015, page 206). However, no explicit definition of the avowal is formulated. In addition, mentions of *confession* are rare and in any case strictly related to the semantic field of admission (Foucault, 2015, page 139), not to the sacramental economy of power which Foucault will focus on later, roughly from *Abnormal* onwards. This suggests that at this point Foucault has not yet identified confessional economies of power (sacramental confession, direction of conscience, etc.).

Confirming this configuration, the course summary makes no reference to confession, while the avowal, as in the lectures, is understood as personal pronouncement which both produces a statement functioning as truth and binds the individual to that truth and to a juridical, 'inquisitorial' system which demands it and extracts it:

It is from this set of practices that [the following] arise/emerge: the typical questions of the investigation (who did what? Is the fact of public interest? who saw it and can bear witness? What are the indications, what is the evidence? Has there been an avowal (*aveu*)?); the stages of the inquiry […]; the characters of the inquiry (he who pursues, he who denounces, he who has seen, he who denies or who avows; he who must judge and make the decision) […] We belong to an inquisitorial civilization which, for centuries maintained, practiced according to the most complex forms which [nonetheless] are rooted in the same model, the extraction, the displacement, the accumulation of knowledge (*savoir*). The inquisition: form of power-knowledge essential to our society. The truth of experience is the daughter of the inquisition – of the political, administrative, judicial power to ask questions, to extort responses, to gather testimony, to verify statements, to establish facts (Foucault, 2001g, page 1259).

While in a fully confessional economy of power the inquisition is the counterpart of confession, Foucault does not speak in these terms here, and the technology though which confession is demanded and extracted/extorted, the target of this 'extraction and accumulation of knowledge' is not an inner truth about the deviant nature of the self, but rather 'to establish facts'.

A further reference to confession – but not avowal – occurs in *Truth and Juridical Forms* (May 1973), in the context of an analysis of the emergence of modern juridical forms through judicial practices in the Church of the Middle Ages – specifically investigations into crimes conducted by a Bishop (*visitatio, inquisitio generalis, inquisitio specialis*) (Foucault, 2001h). In the context of these judicial practices, Foucault again speaks of confession in the sense of admission, as an act of truth-telling by the perpetrator of a crime. It is clear that already at this stage the demand for such an admission signalled the privileged position of the avowal in the sense of the accused's speech about himself: such was the value as evidence and truth assigned to this kind of speech that "a confession (*confession*) by the guilty [party] could interrupt the inquisition at any stage" of the inquiry (Foucault, 2001h, page 1450) bringing a Bishop's investigation into that crime to a close. It is also clear that Foucault does not claim that a pathologisation – as either law-breaker or sinner

– is at the heart of this system's understanding of the criminal, as he will much later claim for later judicial practice in *Discipline and Punish*. In this sense, as well as in the absence of a chastising or humiliating dimension of inquisitorial practice, the economy of power that arose around the avowal in Church judicial practice is fundamentally different from its nineteenth century temporal counterpart.

Thus, both in the 1970-71 *Will to Know* lectures and in the 1974 analysis of truth and juridical forms, once again Foucault's presentation is that of an avowal demanded by the judicial system, but in which this demand is only elicited by a violation of the law: again, there is nothing permanent about the *mise-en-discours* of the self through such truth-telling, much less is there a founding opposition such as that between Reason and Unreason structuring the social field and underpinning the demand for the avowal.

Conclusions: Three Figures of the Avowal and Confession

A close reading of Foucault's early work permits several conclusions. First, concerning the differentiation between *aveu* and *confession*, while it is clear that all the elements of the avowal and of confession are present, by the standards of Foucault's later formal definitions, not only does he not offer definitions of these, but nowhere are these elements explicitly linked together. Instead, there is a considerable overlap in Foucault's usage, with *aveu* and *confession* often occupying the same semantic field as 'admission', and being linked primarily to species of judicial procedures across a range of domains (secular and religious justice, psychiatry, etc.). During the 1960s, the central contributions Foucault makes are in the context of *History of Madness* and of the essay on *Water and Madness*, and even here, avowal and confession appear infrequently and are not the focus of sustained analytical development. Secondly, compared to the avowal, a specific epistemology of confession is nearly entirely absent: at this stage, confession remains underdeveloped, and certainly not autonomous, conceptually or analytically. Third, such an absence of a explicit analytical differentiation does not mean *aveu* and *confession* are interchangeable. Foucault's early work contains core elements which later emerge as the roots of a more distinct usage. First, while *confession* appears in both judicial and sacramental contexts, *aveu* always refers to the subject's utterance of a truth about itself and never designates the broader sacramental practice. Second, *aveu* is more closely associated with different kinds of judicial procedures, while *confession* appears in the sacramental context and in domains such as sexuality and psychiatry – which are structured by an ontological opposition between 'normal' and 'pathological' states – prefiguring the analysis of confession in *GotL*. Third, Foucault's texts develop a concern with the articulation of the avowal across different economies of power: while the avowal is a component of the confessional dispositive, it can also be found in several other dispositives (judicial procedures, therapeutic process, etc.) which do not necessarily display the characteristic of sacramental confession.

The difficulty in distinguishing between *aveu* and *confession* is rooted not simply in semantic complexities or even Foucault's occasionally overlapping usage, but in the fact that there are not one, nor two, but *three* figures which these terms cover in Foucault's work.

First, *confession/aveu* as admission of law-breaking, which makes no assumptions about the nature of the speaking subject. This relation has the characteristics of a one-off event: there are – in principle – no necessary forces leading to this point, much less to its repetition. Foucault's 1962 introduction to Rousseau's volume is exemplary in this respect. Semantically, *aveu* indicates 'admission', and conceptually the avowal becomes the point of contact between the (legally) admissible and the inadmissible. Alongside evidential proof and tariffed expiation, avowal of culpability and/or guilt is the price of readmission into the former, subtly transforming the justice system into a 'consumer of avowals'. But violation of the law is not yet reducible to a pathological alterity: the avowal changes the individual's status, but not its nature.

Second, in an ontologically 'bipolar' space structured around an incommensurable difference (e.g. the asylum) the event of the avowal makes possible a trajectory of emancipation (e.g. from unreason towards reason, etc.). The introspective admission in question is one of law-breaking fact, not of deviant nature: the criminal is merely an offender, not yet the pathological other which Foucault identifies in figure of the delinquent. Thus, in the case of the asylum, the transition from unreason to reason, to normality, remains always possible. Exemplary of this kind of economy of power are *History of Madness* and *Water and Madness*. Both texts present an ontological split between Reason and Madness in which the avowal functions as condition for normalization, with full transition from Unreason to Reason operated by the avowal and remaining always possible through a specified set of transformations.

Finally, a third type of economy of power is associated with what Foucault initially identifies as 'sacramental confession': in this space, ontological differences between the normal and the deviant are not only utterly different in nature, they are also irreconcilable. While the avowal lies at the heart of this economy of power also, here it is only nominally capable of affecting the subject's emancipation: the avowing subject's normalisation is undermined by a subjectivity already and necessarily flawed, trapped by its own alterity. In other words, the emancipation of the avowing subject is undermined by the formulation of a subjectivity marked by flawed nature (original sin, the delinquent, the degenerate, etc.). In *History of Madness*, it is possible to see the beginning of what will be the defining trait of a confessional economy of power: the emergence of the permanence of the demand for avowal rooted in an inescapably deviant alterity. here, Foucault notes a shift towards a pathologisation of difference in which forms of social marginality – poverty, laziness, vice, madness, unemployment, sin, etc. – become increasingly both sign and result of a deeper deviance (Foucault, 2006, pages 84, 495). This shift is what sets confession aside from the avowal: through Tertullian and monastic practices, Christianity comes to place sin at the heart of the individual, and in psychiatry Foucault detects a similar shift from error to fault and stain, a shift he will later

investigate in *Abnormal* and which will become a major theme of his later work (e.g. on avowal, confession, biopolitics, parrhesia).

The defining trait of confession turns precisely on the specification of the type of alterity which characterizes a punishable subjectivity – i.e. whether difference/deviance from the norm are pathological or perfectible – and whether bridging the two is possible. In the first two forms of the avowal, normalisation is always possible. In the third form, however, emancipation is undermined. There are therefore three different economies of avowal/confession: singular event, linear trajectory, and a cycle of struggle marked by an inevitable return. What makes it difficult to discern the specificity of confession as opposed to (forms of) avowal in Foucault is precisely the status of (pathological) alterity. With the qualified exception of *History of Madness*, Foucault's early texts do not point to a source of pathology as cause behind a fault/defect ingrained in the figure enjoined upon to avow/admit. Only later is the self both obscure (to itself, above all) and its source of deviance located precisely within that point of inscrutability, thus requiring constant scrutiny. Until the emergence of the figure of the delinquent, the judicial context focuses on violations of the law, not on deviance inscribed into the nature of the self. The hallmark of a properly confessional economy of power is precisely this play between demanded avowal, pathological alterity, and impossible emancipation: only under these conditions is it possible for the subject's *mise en discours* to be routinized. Yet it is precisely this interplay which is absent from the application of the idea of 'man as a confessing [*sic*] animal' that has proven so popular. If the analysis presented here is correct, those applications will need to be re-thought, either re-qualifying them as forms of a simpler avowal, or investigating the presence of a pathological alterity ensures their ability to reproduce over time.

<div align="right">Andrea Teti</div>

Confession and Avowal in Foucault's early work, 1954-1972

Confession is one of Foucault's best-known concepts, it is also one of his most misunderstood. While *confession* and *aveu* are usually translated as 'confession' and used interchangeably, this article begins to disentangle them by examining all material by Foucault published between 1954 and 1972, tracing their origin and development. This yields a number of preliminary conclusions. First, by the standards of later definitions, while all elements of the avowal and of confession are present, nowhere are they explicitly linked together. Specifically, although the idea of pathological 'deviance' set against 'normality' is present, only later will Foucault examine the importance of deviance in confessional dispositives. Instead, *aveu* and *confession* often occupy the

semantic field of 'admission', and are linked to judicial procedures. Secondly, as epistemic framework, while the avowal is part of the confessional dispositive, it is also found in other contexts with different characteristics. Thirdly, the difficulty in distinguishing between avowal (*aveu*) and confession (*confession*) is rooted in the fact that these terms cover not two but *three* economies of power: avowal as admission of law-breaking, which makes no assumptions about the nature of the speaking subject; avowal in a space such as the asylum, entailing a one-off emancipation from unreason towards reason; and confession, where the avowing subject's emancipation from alterity is undermined by a pathological subjectivity, flawed by nature. Consequently, applications of Foucault's extraordinarily popular 'confessing animal' will need to be re-examined.

Bibliography

Bevir M, 1999, *Foucault and critique: Deploying agency against autonomy*, in *Political Theory*, 27(1) 65–84.

Brion F, Harcourt B E, 2014, *Editor's Preface*, in *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: The Function of the Avowal in Justice* Eds M Foucault, F Brion and B E Harcourt (University of Chicago Press), 1–10

Burchell G, 2009, *Confession, resistance, subjectivity*, in *Journal for Cultural Research* 13(2) 159–177

Dreyfus H, Rabinow P, 1983 *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* 2nd edition (University of Chicago Press, Chicago)

Elden S, 2005, *The problem of confession: the productive failure of Foucault's History of Sexuality'* in *Journal for Cultural Research* 9(1) 23–41

Fejes A, Dahlstedt M, 2013 *The confessing society: Foucault, confession and practices of lifelong learning* (Routledge, London)

Fejes A, Nicoll K, 2015 *Foucault and a Politics of Confession in Education* (Routledge, London)

Foucault M, 1954 *Maladie mentale et personnalité* (PUF, Paris)

Foucault M, 1961 *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Plon, Paris)

Foucault M, 1962 *Maladie mentale et psychologie* (PUF, Paris)

Foucault M, 1963a *Naissance de la Clinique: une archéologie du regard medical* (PUF, Paris)

Foucault M, 1963b *Raymond Roussel* (Gallimard, Paris)

Foucault M, 1966 *Les mots et les choses: une archéologie des sciences humaines* (Gallimard, Paris)

Foucault M, 1969 *L'archéologie du savoir* (Gallimard, Paris)

Foucault M, 1970 *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Pantheon, New York)

Foucault M, 1972, *The Discourse on Language*, in *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Pantheon, New York)

Foucault M, 1973 *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (Routledge, London)

Foucault M, 1976 *Histoire de la Sexualité 1: Volonté de savoir* (Gallimard/Jeunesse, Paris)

Foucault M, 1978 *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge* (Penguin, London)

Foucault M, 1980, *On Popular Justice: A Discussion with Maoists*, in *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and writings, 1972-1977* Eds M Foucault and C Gordon (Pantheon, New York), pp 1–36

Foucault M, 1987 *Death and the Labyrinth: the World of Raymond Roussel* (Althone, London)

Foucault M, 1993, *About the Beginning of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth* in *Political Theory* 21(2) 198–227

Foucault M, 1994, *Candidacy Presentation: Collège de France*, 1969, in *The Essential Works of Michel Foucault, vol. 1: Ethics* Ed P Rabinow (The New Press, New York), pp 5–10

Foucault M, 2001a, *Du bon usage tu criminel* in *Dits et Écrits II, 1976-1988* (Gallimard, Paris), pp 658–662

Foucault M, 2001b, *Introduction* in Rousseau, J.-J. *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques: Dialogues*, Paris, A. Colin, 1962, pp. VII-XXIV', in *Dits et Écrits vol. I, 1954-1975* (Gallimard, Paris), pp 200–216

Foucault M, 2001c, *L'eau et la folie*, in *Médicine et Hygiène*, 21e année, n. 613, 23 octobre 1963, pp. 901-906', in *Dits et Écrits vol. I, 1954-1975* (Gallimard, Paris), pp 296–300

Foucault M, 2001d, *Médecins, juges et sorciers au XVIIe siècle* in Médecine de France, n. 200, 1er trimestre 1969, pp. 121-128', in *Dits et Écrits vol. I, 1954-1975* (Gallimard, Paris), pp 781–794

Foucault M, 2001e, *Michel Foucault: Les réponses du philosophe entretien avec C. Bojunga et R. Lobo*; trad. P.W. Prado Jr.) Jornal da Tarde, 1er novembre 1975, pp. 12-13, in *Dits et Écrits vol. I, 1954-1975* (Gallimard, Paris), pp 1675–1685

Foucault M, 2001f, *Philosophie et psychologie entretien avec A. Badiou* Dossiers pédagogiques de la radiotélévision scolaire, 27 février 1965, pp. 65-71', in *Dits et Écrits vol. I, 1954-1975* (Gallimard, Paris), pp 466–476

Foucault M, 2001g, *Théories et institutions pénales*, Annuaire du Collège de France, 72e année, Histoire des systèmes de la pensée, année 1971-1972, 1972, pp. 283-286', in *Dits et Écrits vol. I, 1954-1975* (Gallimard, Paris), pp 1257–1261

Foucault M, 2001h, *La vérité et les formes juridiques*, orig. verdade e as formas juridicas trad. J. W. Prado Jr. Cadernos da P.U.C., 16 juin 1974, pp. 5-133', in *Dits et Écrits vol. I, 1954-1975* (Gallimard, Paris), pp 1406–1513

Foucault M, 2002 *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Routledge, London)

Foucault M, 2003 *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-75* (Verso, London)

Foucault M, 2006 *History of Madness* 2nd revised Eds J Khalfa and J Murphy (Routledge, London)

Foucault M, 2011 *Leçons sur la volonté de savoir: Cours au Collège de Frace, 1970-1971* (Gallimard Seuil, Paris)

Foucault M, 2012a *Du gouvernement des vivants. Cours au Collège de France. 1979-1980* Ed M Senellart (Hautes Etudes, Gallimard, Seuil, Paris)

Foucault M, 2012b *Mal faire, dire vrai: Fonction de l'aveu en justice* Eds F Brion and B E Harcourt (Presses Universitaires de Louvain, Louvain)

Foucault M, 2013a *La Société Punitive: Cours au Collège de France, 1972-1973* (EHESS/ Gallimard/Seuil, Paris)

Foucault M, 2013b *Lectures on the Will to Know: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1970-1971* (Palgrave-Macmillan, London)

Foucault M, 2013c, *Oedipal Knowledge*, in *Lectures on the Will to Know, Lectures at the Collège de France, 1970-1971* (Palgrave-Macmillan, London), pp 229–261

Foucault M, 2014a *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979-1980* (Palgrave-Macmillan, London)

Foucault M, 2014b *Wrong-doing, truth-telling: the function of avowal in justice* Eds F Brion and B E Harcourt (University of Chicago Press)

Foucault M, 2015 *Théories et Institutions Pénales, Cours au Collège de France: 1971-1972* (EHESS/Gallimard/Seuil, Paris)

Karma L, 1997, *Desiring Foucault* in *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27(1) 3–16

Van Maanen J, 1988, *Confessional Tales*, in *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago)

Rail G, 2012, *The Birth of the Obesity Clinic: Confessions of the Flesh*, Biopedagogies and Physical Culture' *Sociology of Sport Journal* 29(2) 227–253

Roberts M, 2005, *The production of the psychiatric subject* in *Nursing Philosophy* 6(1) 33–42

Salter M B, 2007, *Governmentalities of an Airport: Heterotopia and Confession* in *International Political Sociology* 1(1) 49–66

Tadros V, 1998, *Between Governance and Discipline: The Law and Michel Foucault* in *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 18(1) 75–103

Taylor C, 2008 *The Culture of Confession from Augustine to Foucault: A Genealogy of the 'Confessing Animal'* (Routledge, London)

Webster J, 2008, *Establishing the "truth" of the matter: Confessional reflexivity as introspection and avowal* in *Psychology & Society* 1(1) 65–76