

# Foucault in Hamburg: Notes on a One-Year Stay, 1959–60

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## Abstract

This article provides a detailed account of the year that Michel Foucault spent as Director of the Institut Français in Hamburg and as a guest lecturer at the Romance Studies Department at the University of Hamburg. It discusses the beginning of Foucault's time in Hamburg, the courses he taught at these two institutions, his interactions with German students in his classes, and events with invited guests from the French intellectual sphere. But it also sheds light on the friendships he made in Hamburg, in particular with Rolf Italiaander; the completion of his own projects including *Histoire de la folie* and the translation of Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*; and finally his nocturnal wanderings through Hamburg's red light district, Sankt-Pauli.

## Keywords

Foucault, Germany, Hamburg

## Institut Français de Hambourg and the University of Hamburg

The *Hamburger Abendblatt* weekend edition of 10–11 October 1959 announced in a side note that the new director of the Institut Français would be 'Mr. Michel Foucault, who until now has been employed in the same position in Warsaw.' His predecessor, Victor Hell, had apparently been transferred to Mainz.<sup>1</sup> This was announced when the newspaper reported on daily French events during the 'German-French Week' and the reciprocal economic and cultural exchange of the two neighbouring countries (*Hamburger Abendblatt*, 10–11 October 1959: 11).<sup>2</sup>

The Institut Français de Hambourg was founded in March 1951 by the French High Commissioner to the Federal Republic of Germany, André François-Poncet, as an independent charity with legal capacity

(Institut Français de Hambourg, 1962). The purpose of the institute as a charity was defined as:

serving the peaceful development of Franco-German relations, supporting the dissemination of the French language, culture of mind (*Geisteskultur*) in Germany, establishing and maintaining relations between French and German members of the university, researchers, writers and artists, and doing everything possible to cement the German-French rapprochement. (Institut Français de Hambourg, 1951: paragraph 2)<sup>3</sup>

During the initial months the Institut Français was located at Nonnenstieg 1a in Harvestehude district before moving in October 1951 to the building where it is still today, in the equally noble Heimhuder Strasse 55 in Rotherbaum district (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> The director's apartment was located on the second floor and Foucault lived here from October 1959 to September 1960. It is no longer possible to determine the exact time he moved into the institute's building. His predecessor Victor Hell, then 39 years old, had been in post for only a year when he took leave in a letter dated 1 October 1959. Still using the director's letterhead, he explained to University Rector Otto Brunner that he was transferring to Mainz for 'private reasons' in order to find more inspiration for his scholarly work.<sup>5</sup>

The first mention of Foucault in Hamburg is dated 23 September 1959 when the Assistant to the Rectorate Horst Sanmann addressed a letter to the Director of the Institut Français 'Monsieur Faucauld' [sic]. This was in order to invite him to a guest lecture by the French philosopher and sociologist Raymond Aron on 7 October in the *Kunsthalle* (art museum) and to a preceding reception in the foreigners' club (*Ausländerclub*) and residence halls of the University in Werderstrasse.<sup>6</sup> It seemed that the impending change of director at the Institut Français was already known at this point; the name of the new director, however, was only known at best from hearsay. Foucault, who in October 1959 had turned 33, was at the time a blank slate in academia as well as in the public sphere. The French Consulate General in Hamburg officially informed the State Chancellery of Hamburg on 13 October 1959 that Michel Foucault had taken up the direction of the Institut Français in Hamburg.<sup>7</sup>

The time Foucault spent as director in Hamburg was also very convenient for his own research. In principle, Foucault's tasks were similar to his experiences in Uppsala and Warsaw: teaching, serving as intermediary, representing French culture in Germany, and administration. Yet in contrast to Uppsala the advantage was the considerably reduced number of teaching hours as well as the significantly shorter distance to Paris; compared to the previous precarious situation in Warsaw,

everyday life in Hamburg must have been a relief. In addition, Foucault was generally familiar with the German language, unlike Swedish or Polish.

As with the previous positions abroad, Foucault had his own work-intensive projects on the side, in addition to being director of the cultural institute. It was essential to produce the final version of *Histoire de la folie* and to submit it as his main thesis in Paris, as well as to write a complementary thesis in order to be eligible for the award of the doctorate in France (Eribon, 1991: 90; Macey, 1993: 88–9; Defert, 2013: 25). Foucault managed to produce both within one year. His stay in Hamburg therefore marks the completion of his years of doctoral research and (for now) the years spent abroad; it was the final year before his public breakthrough in France. But the year in Hamburg began with a rupture of a different kind: shortly before Foucault took up his position in Hamburg his father died on 14 September 1959 at the age of 66 (Defert, 2013: 25).

Unfortunately no written documentation has been preserved at the institute concerning Foucault's activities at the Institut Français. However, some documents concerning the work of the institute in the 1950s and 1960s can be found in the Hamburg State Archives, including some references to Foucault. An annual report from 1958, shortly before



**Figure 1.** Michel Foucault's residence near the Alster lake: the villa of the Institut Français de Hambourg, Heimhuder Strasse 55.

he became director, conveys an impression of the institute's activities. According to this, in that year 1450 people participated in 31 language courses across seven levels, which were complemented by three lectures on 'French civilization' as well as four special courses (approaches to difficult literary texts, translation, grammar and conversation). The institute's library comprised around 12,000 volumes; it held two daily newspapers (*Le Figaro* and *Le Monde*), 15 French weekly magazines as well as 30 monthly magazines. In addition to the language students, around 500 people had a reader's card for the library from which were borrowed 40 to 50 books daily. Central to the programme also were the events that took place at the institute: Foucault's predecessor Victor Hell organized 21 lectures in one year, 'given by well-known figures of French and German education', three theatre evenings, two concerts, 38 film screenings and three 'social nights'.<sup>8</sup> Foucault took over the direction of an institution that had established itself in the city of Hamburg within a short period of time and whose numerous events were also regularly noted in the media and acknowledged by the public.

Besides his own activities at the institute, Foucault offered courses in Romance Studies at the University of Hamburg. He was listed in the course schedule as 'guest lecturer at the Faculty of Philosophy', similar to the director of the Istituto Italiano. In this way Foucault taught at the University of Hamburg during the winter semester 1959/60 as well as summer semester 1960. His teaching assignment for the winter semester was approved with a delay shortly after Foucault's arrival in Hamburg by the Faculty and the School Authority and comprised a two-hour seminar and a one-hour lecture.<sup>9</sup> It was an unpaid teaching assignment; just the tuition fees were paid to the lecturer.<sup>10</sup> The course schedule for the winter semester 1959/60 had already been printed when Foucault arrived in Hamburg and hence no reference can be found to his assignment (University of Hamburg, 1959: 41, 131). Instead, Foucault took over the lectures scheduled for his predecessor Victor Hell on Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. In the summer semester of 1960, Foucault's name appeared for the first time in the course schedule; lectures were listed as follows: a one-hour lecture on the topic '*La pensée politique du 18e siècle*' as well as a two-hour seminar related to this lecture, also in French (University of Hamburg, 1960: 52, 158).

Jürgen Schmidt[-Radefeldt], then 20 years old and later Professor of Romance Studies at the universities of Kiel and Rostock, belonged to the group of students taught by Foucault. According to his memory and to that of his fellow student Irene Straps, now resident in France, a small group of approximately a dozen students in Romance Studies participated in Foucault's seminars. In contrast to what was stated in the course schedule, these seminars did not take place in the university building at Bornplatz (today Allende-Platz), but instead at the Institut Français (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 2016: 1).

In his seminar on French existentialist drama and philosophy Foucault discussed Sartre's *Les Mouches* (1943) and *L'Existentialisme est un humanisme* (1946), and Camus' *Le Malentendu* (1944), *Caligula* (1945), *L'État de siège* (1948), *Les Justes* (1949) and *Les Possédés* (1959). In Schmidt-Radefeldt's account it says:

Foucault considered these plays as '*théâtres des idées avec beaucoup d'assassins et de fous*' [theatres of ideas with many assassins and mad people]; he highlighted the quest for happiness, manifestation of fear, guilt and madness (*la folie* – above all through the dramatization of Dostoyevsky's demons in *Les possédés*), in *Les Justes* it was the power of the women over men, justice, civic courage, resistance as problems in themselves. Foucault also referred to then rather unknown poets such as Henri Michaux (*Misérable miracle*) and René Char (*Poèmes et Prose*) – the latter having been a fighter in the Résistance and author of *Feuillets d'Hypnos*, translated by Paul Celan – and to the relations between drugs-creativity-knowledge, also the writer Raymond Roussel whom he brought back to the literary spotlight with a monograph (Foucault, 1963) [...]. In the evenings amongst a smaller group of friends, other things were also discussed, for example the connections of concepts in popular etymology, e.g. lunatic-moody [*lunatisch-launisch*], pretending-aspirating [*heucheln-hauchen*], *Tiefsinnigkeit* versus *Tiefdenken* in relation to Kant's *Anthropology*,<sup>11</sup> the knowledge of the world (*Weltkenntnis*), understanding of the world (*Weltverstehen*) on the one hand and use of the world (*Weltgebrauch*) on the other, or the madness of poets, thinkers, kings and scientists (Hölderlin, Nietzsche, Charles VI the Mad, van Gogh, Mengele amongst others). (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 2016: 3)

In his seminars on the political thought of the 18th century Foucault did not treat Voltaire and Diderot, as expected by students, but instead focused on Rousseau and the dialogue *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques* (1780). Foucault's expectations and approach to teaching were demanding, and the students both felt overwhelmed and full of admiration:

Foucault took for granted [...] the knowledge of Rousseau's entire works and their place in the history of ideas – the students in Hamburg were unprepared, unread and completely overwhelmed. Nonetheless the intellectual and linguistic complexity he presented in the *Dialogues*, the different levels of language and ways of speaking, the political spying and prosecution of Rousseau as well as the generally socio-legal conditions and coercion of that time became

clear to the students and they engaged in the challenge Foucault posed; they recognised this novel, distinguished, modern view of Foucault on French literature. (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 2016: 2)<sup>12</sup>

From the students' viewpoint Foucault was clearly different from other teachers and from Professor Hellmuth Petriconi, who was about to retire from the Romance Studies Department, insofar as his personality as well as his topics were concerned.<sup>13</sup> In contrast to them, Foucault would impart transdisciplinary perspectives on psychiatry, sociology, semiotics and painting, and according to Schmidt-Radefeldt (2016: 3) he gave the impression that he always had time for his students. In his retrospective assessment he says:

Foucault was a committed, profoundly academic teacher, who was able to capture his students with enthusiasm, humour and existential interest in each respective theme. During his *ex tempore* elaborations at the Institut Français Foucault changed his standing position constantly between the desks, sometimes consulted a note in his jacket pocket, nothing else. One had the impression that he was driven by the delight of freely formulating his thoughts, in the manner of *exercices de style*, as if he traced down the verbalization of his thoughts whilst at the same time savouring this experience; he also liked to reformulate things said 'in other words', for he was aware that the audience had limited French language skills. (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 2016: 3, emphasis in original)

Michel Foucault seemed to have been in close contact with a small group of his students; however, he had almost no contact with colleagues in the Romance Studies Department. His closest colleague was the French philosopher and specialist in German Studies Jean-Marie Zemb, two years his junior, who taught courses at the Institut Français but who also had a teaching appointment in the Romance Studies Department. At the Institut Français he stage-managed the play *Mon Faust* and inspired Foucault to do the same in the summer semester of 1960.<sup>14</sup>

Foucault chose a play by Jean Cocteau: the less-known *L'École des veuves* (1936). He significantly cut down the one-act play for his protagonists Irene Straps (widow) and Jürgen Schmidt[-Radefeldt] (cemetery guard) (Schmidt-Radefeldt, 2016: 3). The mini-drama [*Dramolett*] followed the narrative of Petronius' *The Widow of Ephesus* (*Die Matrone von Ephesus*): in a dark crypt, a young and wealthy widow plans to starve herself to death next to her husband's tomb to demonstrate her faithfulness, selflessness and morality in a world of decadence and corruption. But the pleas of her fun-loving nurse, the attractive young cemetery guard and the visit of the inheritance-obsessed sister-in-law set her

resolution aside. When a corpse is stolen from the cemetery guard, the widow even offers him her husband's body as a replacement in order to cover up his neglect of duty.

The *Hamburger Abendblatt* announced on 27 June 1960 three performances at the Institut Français on that evening and the two following; it would show three one-act plays in French. Besides Cocteau's *L'École des veuves* there would also be *La Colonie* by Pierre Carlet de Marivaux as well as *Nuit et jour* by Claude-André Puget. Cocteau had previously thanked Foucault for bringing his play to the stage (Defert, 2013: 26). Foucault for his part certified, in hand writing, for all student-actors their participation in the theatre group at the Institut Français as well as the

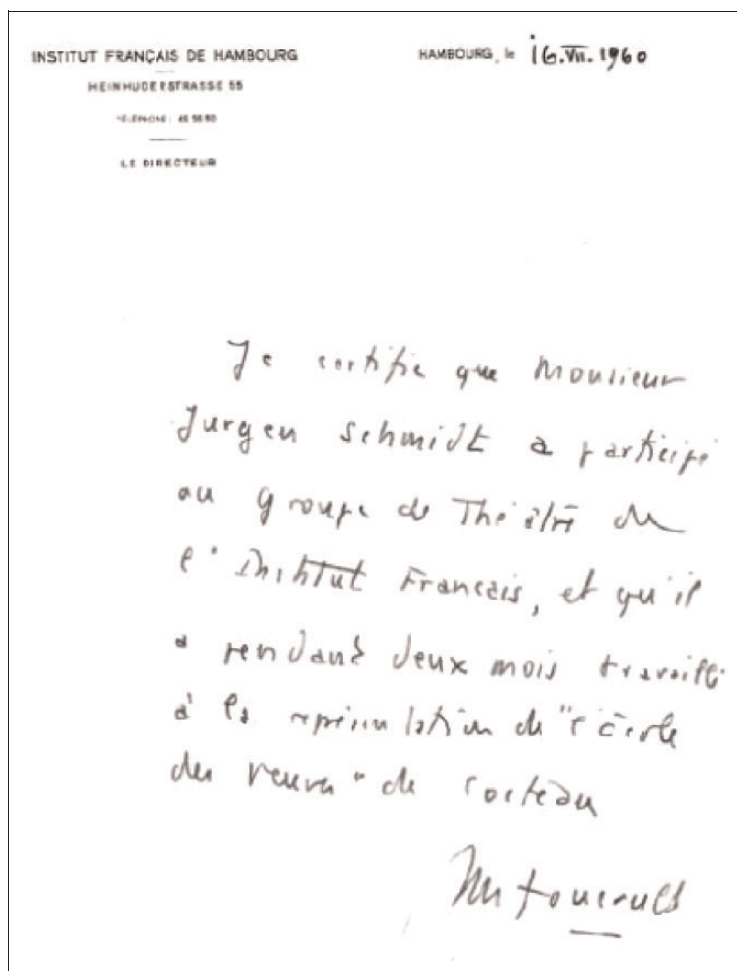


**Figure 2.** Handwritten certification by Foucault for Jürgen Schmidt[Radefeldt] on his two-month participation in the theatre group of the Institut Français, dated 16 July 1960.



**Figure 3.** Michel Foucault photographed by Jürgen Schmidt[-Radefeldt] at a meeting in Paris in 1962.

Source: Institut Français de Hambourg.

collaboration for two months in the performance of *L'École des veuves* at the end of term (Figure 2).<sup>15</sup>

### **Visits and Encounters: Between Rotherbaum and Sankt-Pauli**

The theatre performances are only one example of the extensive cultural programme that was offered to interested members of the public during Michel Foucault's time as director. As in previous years, there were also lectures, music and film nights, readings and official receptions. In May 1960 the French ambassador François Seydoux, based in Bonn at the time, awarded the *Légion d'honneur* to Ernst Georg Nauck, Pro-rector of the University of Hamburg and Director of the Tropical Institute, in recognition of his merits for setting up the partnership between the universities of Hamburg and Bordeaux (Schmidt, 2007; Stiehl and Deininger, 2008). The ceremony took place at the Institut Français. Foucault could hardly have known that Nauck had become a member of the National-Socialist Party in 1937 and had 'justified' the forced ghettoization of Jews in the occupied Polish territories under consideration of 'epidemiological' viewpoints (Wulf, 1997: 759).

But other events at the institute were also newsworthy: in May 1960 the French philosopher Gabriel Marcel gave two lectures at the University of Hamburg and he was invited on this occasion by the Institut Français for a matinee reception (*Hamburger Abendblatt*, 11 February 1960: 11). There is also one notice for a presentation by Foucault in that newspaper: on 11 May 1960 he spoke about ‘*Apollinaire et l’art moderne*’ (*Hamburger Abendblatt*, 10 May 1960: 7).

Throughout the year Foucault’s guests in Hamburg comprised numerous French writers, scientists and intellectuals. His academic mentor Jean Hyppolite visited him for Christmas 1959 and was allowed a first glance at the manuscript of *Histoire de la folie* (Defert, pers. comm., 20 February 2016). Foucault had been good friends since 1955 with Roland Barthes, who was still largely unknown at this time and who also visited him in Hamburg (Defert, 2013: 25). The German translation of Barthes’ *Le Degré zero de l’écriture* [Writing Degree Zero] (1953) appeared in 1959, published by Claassen in Hamburg as *Am Nullpunkt der Literatur*, and was subsequently much discussed. Other guests included Roger Ikor, who won the well-known French literary prize Prix Goncourt in 1955 (Defert, pers. comm., 20 February 2016), and Jean Bruce (born Jean Alexandre Brochet), a best-selling author of spy novels at the time (Defert, 2013: 25).

At an early stage in his time as director Foucault invited Alain Robbe-Grillet who was one – if not the main – representative of the ‘Nouveau Roman’. Foucault knew books by Robbe-Grillet but not the author in person. On 20 November 1959, Robbe-Grillet gave a lecture at the Institut Français entitled ‘*Vers un nouveau réalisme*’ (Institut Français, 1959).<sup>16</sup> Many years later in 1983, Foucault talked about this: ‘The strange thing is that I met Robbe-Grillet for the first time in Hamburg in 1960 and we became friends and went to the Hamburg Fair together, going through the fun house maze of mirrors. It’s the starting point of his novel *In the Labyrinth*’ (Foucault, 1996: 398).<sup>17</sup> Though Foucault’s memory deceives him, for Robbe-Grillet’s book had already appeared in 1959,<sup>18</sup> it is certain that the encounter of the two Frenchmen in Hamburg marked the beginning of a friendship.

Foucault regularly guided his guests through the city and took them – whether they were hetero or homosexual – on nocturnal tours through the district of Sankt-Pauli. The French writer Pierre Gascar published a detailed recollection of this over three decades later as ‘*La nuit de Sankt-Pauli*’ (Gascar, 1991). In the text of 30 pages, Gascar – winner of the Prix Goncourt in 1953 – first recounts his arrival at Hamburg Main Station: in the crowd of people waiting, he located a man with a sign labelled ‘Institut Français’ and he thought this was an employee of the institute or even the driver. To his surprise the man meeting him revealed himself to be the director in person who took great care of Gascar during his stay in Hamburg (Gascar, 1991: 63).<sup>19</sup>

According to Gascar's descriptions, Foucault showed him the city, explained in great detail its history and accompanied him to the Kunsthalle. They discussed the importance of [Friedrich Gottlieb] Klopstock, who was hardly known outside of Hamburg, and Johannes Brahms, who was well-known although few knew that he had been born in Hamburg. At night Foucault guided his guest through the streets of Sankt-Pauli which were familiar to him. During their tour they went from the striptease bar via a gay café until they reached a 'transvestite bar' where Foucault met countless acquaintances and was addressed as 'Herr Doktor' (Gascar, 1991: 86).<sup>20</sup> Foucault was in a relationship with a 'transvestite' (today the term drag queen might be more appropriate) during his time in Hamburg (Macey, 1993: 88, citing an interview with Defert).

The fact that Foucault also gave the heterosexual Gascar insight into his gay life in Hamburg is only one example that shows that, in contrast to Roland Barthes for example, he was not secretive about his homosexuality amongst close friends and acquaintances (Macey, 1993: 81). He had to be courageous to do so inasmuch as even consensual homosexual acts between adult men were still a criminal offence in the Federal Republic of Germany according to Section 175 of the Penal Code (Schäfer, 2006). In Foucault's previous countries of residence – France, Sweden and Poland – homophobic structures and social ostracism existed yet were inconsistent and homosexuals were not prosecuted. Western Germany, however, had inherited the section in its exact formulation from a jurisdiction by the National Socialist Party in 1935 and it was widely applied: between the foundation of the Federal Republic in 1949 and the first law reform in 1969, around 50,000 men were sentenced according to Section 175 (Pretzel, 2010). The decision by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1957 that validated the continued applicability of the penal laws concerning homosexuality as formulated by the Nazis in fact gave the prosecution a new boost: in 1959 alone, when Foucault came to Hamburg, there had been around 3800 convictions because of 'homosexual offences'. Gay men lived in permanent danger of being blackmailed, 'discovered' and arrested, to lose their civic existence and to die a 'social death' (Rosenkranz et al., 2009; Lorenz and Bollmann, 2013).<sup>21</sup>

Against this background it is remarkable how Michel Foucault dealt with the topic of (homo)sexuality in Hamburg. The writer Rolf Italiaander, appropriately regarded as a 'key figure in the literary networks in 1950s Hamburg' (Nottscheid and Stuhlmann, 2014), remembered this shortly after Foucault's death in June 1984. At the time Italiaander worked as 'permanent secretary' at the Freie Akademie der Künste with other connections, and he met Foucault soon after his arrival in Hamburg at the institute. Italiaander recounts their first encounter in a report published in July 1984 in the daily newspaper *Die Welt* (Italiaander, 1984a: 19; 1984b: 300–8), two weeks after Foucault's death:

I came to the institute for a lecture in 1959 and on this occasion met the new Monsieur le Directeur. First conventional small talk. Afterwards we drank a few glasses of French wine with a small group of people. An attractive young girl waited on us; she was not French, but from Hamburg. I sensed that this young girl was close with the director. They flirted joyfully and with *esprit*. Because I found the lively atmosphere with Monsieur Foucault pleasant, I stayed until I was the last guest so that I could exchange some personal thoughts with him; I was enchanted by his Romanic charm and bold intellect. He – who was already almost bald at age 30 – told me as if it was the most natural thing in the world: ‘My girlfriend is not a woman, but a young man.’ The director of the Institut Français took the liberty of receiving guests with a transvestite by his side. This was, at the time of medieval moralities, extremely courageous – even for a foreigner. (Italiaander, 1984b: 301)

According to Italiaander’s descriptions, it had been important for Foucault to develop a new outlook on questions of sex ever since the start of his stay in Hamburg, for he considered these questions had been neglected in past centuries:

From Foucault’s point of view, today sexuality remained ‘carefully confined’. Sexuality would be concentrated in nuclear families and would flourish in the serious business of procreation. More debates than before would take place around sex, yet ‘the legitimate, procreating couple makes the law.’ This couple would establish itself as the model, would set one-sided norms and supposedly the truth, and would preserve the right to speak by keeping the principle of the secret to itself. (Italiaander, 1984b: 304)

In addition, Italiaander claimed that it was in Hamburg in 1959/60 that Foucault began ‘his steep upward career as world-renowned scholar’, and argued that younger academics had tried to ‘petition for’ a chair for Foucault at the University of Hamburg, yet again an opportunity had apparently been missed to ‘deconstruct the intellectual provincialism of the Federal Republic’ (Italiaander, 1984b: 300, 307). Although no proof can be found for such an attempt, it remains interesting how Italiaander made such thoughts public. This account continues about Foucault:

Why was no research assignment given to him, to study and describe Sankt-Pauli with all the backgrounds and abysses? An internationally renowned, although controversial scholar, virtually as ‘writer-in-residence of Sankt-Pauli’? Of course, if he had accepted

this assignment, an important contribution to the history of this Hanseatic city would have been made. (Italiaander, 1984b: 307)

With an 'analysis of Sankt-Pauli' penned by Foucault, according to Italiaander, Hamburg would have 'caused a world-wide mental stir, urgently needed for the city, that would have been useful to its economy and trade as well' (Italiaander, 1984b: 307–8).

Italiaander frequently stylized the people he portrayed; he liked to emphasize his personal proximity to as many contemporary 'great minds' as possible, though he tended to exaggerate (Nicolaysen, 2015: 144–6). His contact with Foucault, however, was significant during the latter's stay in Hamburg. For Foucault, Italiaander was not only an unusually active organizer and well-travelled cultural diplomat, but also someone who had campaigned against racism and for minority groups in many publications, at least after 1945.<sup>22</sup> With the one-act play *Das Recht auf sich selbst* (*The right to oneself*; 1951) that premiered in 1952 at the Hamburger Kammerspiele directed by Ida Ehre, he publicly campaigned against the penal prosecution of homosexuals in the Federal Republic (see Rosenkranz and Lorenz, 2006: 136–8; Nottscheid and Stuhlmann, 2014: 163–5). The fact that Italiaander also campaigned for the contested works of Jean Genet, whom he knew personally since about 1951 (see Nottscheid and Stuhlmann, 2014: 165), must have created a certain proximity to Foucault. In any case both met more often for a 'stroll in Sankt-Pauli'. Italiaander writes about the scene:

Some cellar bars were insider tips, too. Such as the 'Bar-Celona' in Wohlwillstrasse. For the first time since the Nazi dictatorship, transvestites performed there as entertainers. We went there with Jean Cocteau, Hans Werner Henze, Jean Pierre Ponelle, Günther Rennert, Michel Foucault, Jean Genet as well as with H(ans) H(enny) Jahnn or H(ans) E(rich) Nossack. (Italiaander, 1984b: 336, 338)<sup>23</sup>

Italiaander and Foucault stayed in touch even after the latter had left Hamburg. During Christmas 1960 Italiaander met Foucault in Paris. The following day Foucault wrote a long, in part melancholic, yet expressively motivating letter to his friend:

Yesterday evening, my dear Rolf, we parted from an uneasy city that heads into an uncertain future. I have known you for one year already. Our reunion, the first, stood under the sign of H.H. Jahnn. A sombre evening. ...

After so many hours spent together, in Hamburg, I was to see you again in the somewhat archaic informality of Saint-Germain-des-

Prés. That evening had in itself something bitter, forsaken. The holidays, the winter's empty night, and the newspapers informing us that our history happened elsewhere and without us. All this pushed us towards irony. In an era we no longer dominate things hang in the balance. But there is something in you that nothing can unsettle, and whilst I dined with you, in an Africa that only existed as a symbol, as an allusion, I felt that there was so much to tell, and that this could only be told to you. (Foucault, 2001: Vol. I, 257–78)

Foucault then referred to the novel *Hans und Jean* by Italiaander that had appeared in 1951, and that he had read years before the personal encounter with Italiaander in order to learn German (Foucault, 2001: Vol. I, 258). Foucault also engaged with Italiaander's research on Africa in much more detail and with equal praise. The copper engravings by young Africans that Italiaander had taught in Congo were exhibited at the Institut Français during Foucault's time as director (Foucault, 2001: Vol. I, 259). Decades later, in 2004, the exhibits were shown anew in an exhibition on Michel Foucault on the 20th anniversary of his death in the Schwules Museum (Gay Museum) in Berlin.<sup>24</sup>

When Foucault's *Histoire de la folie* appeared in 1961, Rolf Italiaander and his partner Hans-Ludwig Spegg were sent a copy with a dedication '*Pour Rolf + Hans en signe d'amitié fidèle et d'affection. mf*' (For Rolf + Hans as a sign of loyal friendship and affection. mf).<sup>25</sup> In 1970 Foucault sent them a new volume with a dedication in which he reminded them of an old, unforgettable friendship (Antiquariat Wagner, 2010).<sup>26</sup> It is uncertain if Foucault and Italiaander ever met again later, and as far as is known Foucault did not return to Hamburg.<sup>27</sup> But Foucault and Italiaander developed a bond during the time spent together. Foucault lived in a city *also* characterized by the prosecution of homosexuals of which the history for the 1950s and 1960s largely remains to be written (see Rosenkranz and Lorenz, 2006).

## Looking Back at Foucault's Scholarly Work in Hamburg

The impression that Michel Foucault's stay in Hamburg was marked by his role as director of the Institut Français along with the teaching obligations at the university, as well as his nocturnal wanderings, merely reflects one part of his activities in Hamburg. As previously noted, he dedicated a large part of his time to intense scholarly work.

As indicated earlier, for the award of the French 'doctorat d'État' Foucault needed not only a major work but also two studies on different topics which had to be submitted as main thesis and complementary thesis. *Histoire de la folie* was his main thesis with 943 pages (plus appendices and bibliography). It was a manuscript that he finished in Hamburg where he

also wrote its splendid preface dated 'Hambourg, le 5 février 1960'.<sup>28</sup> In addition, Foucault submitted to the Sorbonne in Paris in 1961 a translation of Kant's *Anthropologie in pragmatischer Hinsicht* (1798). It comprised 347 pages and was accompanied by an introduction by Foucault of 128 pages. Foucault was occupied with this study particularly from 1959–60; his year in Hamburg was thus also a 'year of Kant' for him.

Primarily Foucault worked in the State and University Library which at the time was located in the former building of the Wilhelm Gymnasium at the corner of Moorweidenstrasse/Grindelallee (today it is the 'Old Building' of the State and University Library) and it was about a ten minute walk away from the institute.<sup>29</sup> There he used the great Kant collection of the Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften,<sup>30</sup> but also the Cassirer edition comprising 11 volumes,<sup>31</sup> which he bought in Germany and which remained in his possession (Defert et al. in Kant and Foucault, 2008: 7). Foucault published his Kant translation in 1964, however, only with a short *notice historique* and not with his detailed *Introduction à l'Anthropologie*. Only decades later, in 2008, was this published in its own edition (Kant and Foucault, 2008). The fact that the introduction, which Foucault at least prepared and conceived in Hamburg, was not merely a formal academic requirement but possibly a key text for his thinking, has only been discussed in research in recent years (see Hemminger, 2004).

It was also important for Foucault in 1960 to prepare for the examination process in Paris: first he had to find a publisher for his main thesis before it could be submitted to the university. This was the regulation until 1968 (Defert et al. in Kant and Foucault, 2008: 7). A first sponsor also needed to be appointed: for his main thesis he won over Georges Canguilhem, by whom he had already been examined for the entrance exam at the École Normale Supérieure; for the additional piece of work, the translation of Kant with commentary, Jean Hyppolite agreed to sponsor. Hyppolite was an academic teacher whom Foucault had been particularly close to since the beginning of his university education.

While he was preparing for his defence, the University of Clermont-Ferrand in 1960 offered Foucault a teaching position there: first as 'Assistant to the Chair of Philosophy', and once awarded his doctorate, as professor (Eribon, 1991: 128–30). When Foucault after five years of living abroad returned to France from Hamburg for this occasion and started his position on 1 October 1960 at Clermont-Ferrand (he continued to live in Paris), his main works produced in 'exile' were almost complete and the doctorate examination procedure had begun. The farewell from Hamburg after only one year had not really been planned. For the winter semester 1960–61 at the University of Hamburg Foucault had announced two more courses on Baudelaire which now had to be cancelled.<sup>32</sup>

Foucault was living in France again when on 20 May 1961 the viva of his two doctoral projects took place at the Sorbonne. The written report by the President of the Commission Henri Gouhier suggests how unusual and controversial his disputation must have been: the candidate was said to possess a ‘great culture, strong personality’ and ‘intellectual richness’, while the two written works equally provoked ‘numerous and serious criticisms’ from the jury (Gouhier in Eribon, 1991: 112–13). ‘Notwithstanding reservations’, the thesis passed unanimously with ‘very honourable mention’ (Gouhier in Eribon, 1991: 113).

The same month *Histoire de la folie* was published by the Paris publisher Plon in the series edited by Philippe Ariès, ‘*Civilisations d’hier et d’aujourd’hui*’. Foucault’s wish to publish the thesis with Gallimard – the press which had also published the great minds of previous generations such as Sartre and Merleau-Ponty – had not been fulfilled (Eribon, 1991: 105–6). In the preface to the book Foucault thanks in particular Georges Dumézil as well as Jean Hyppolite and Georges Canguilhem for their support, but also friends in Sweden and Poland where most of the book had been written (Foucault, 1964: xi). In an introduction to the German edition *Wahnsinn und Gesellschaft* this passage is, however, missing, as is a biographical note which can only be found on the dust jacket of the first edition from 1961, which explains why this has largely been ignored by researchers.<sup>33</sup> Contrary to the usual practice that texts on the dust jackets are written by the publisher and not by the author, in this case we obviously are dealing with a genuine Foucault:

This book is by someone who became puzzled. The author is by training a philosopher who moved on to psychology and from psychology to history. Having been a student at the École Normale Supérieure, *agrégé de philosophie*; residential scholar at the Fondation Thiers; having frequented psychiatric hospitals (from the side the doors open); having known socialised happiness in Sweden (from the side the doors no longer open); socialist misery and the courage it required in Poland; [then] in Germany, not far from Altona, the new fortresses of German wealth; and having come back to France an academic – made him think, a little more seriously, about what an asylum is. He wanted to know, he still wants to know what, then, is this language that through so many walls and locks enmeshes itself, expresses itself and exchanges itself beyond all divisions. (also quoted in Eribon, 1994: 61)

Foucault’s concise personal statement is remarkable in many ways. It was considered a ‘most unusual author’s note... that can be found in an important scholarly book of the twentieth century’ (Thomä et. al., 2015: 251). And it is unusual with regard to a doctoral thesis as well as an

author who in later years came to question authorship. In this note, Foucault summarizes his experiences of his three stays abroad. In the case of (West) Germany he uses the image of the new fortresses of German wealth. His formulation that he had not been far from Altona can be read as an allusion to Sartre's play *Les Séquestrés d'Altona* (1960) that had premiered in 1959. It discusses the contrast between the conspicuous prosperity and the recent Nazi dictatorship with which society had not yet come to terms. It was in this direction, then, that Foucault found the most succinct characterization, after the experience of this 'German Year', of the young Federal Republic.

*Translated by Melissa Pawelski*

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### Notes

*Translator's Note:* This article was originally published as Rainer Nicolaysen, 'Foucault in Hamburg: Anmerkungen zum einjährigen Aufenthalt 1959/60', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte*, Vol. 102, 2016, 71–112. Only pages 88–110 are translated here; the earlier pages giving a background to Foucault's career have been omitted. English translations of texts cited are provided where available; all other translations from German and French are my own. I am grateful to Orazio Irrera, Daniele Lorenzini, Stuart Elden and Oliver Davis for their invaluable support and constructive comments on this translation.

1. This note appeared without heading in the rubric 'Hamburger Rundblick' (Hamburg Panorama) (*Hamburger Abendblatt*, 10–11 October 1959: 4).
2. The German-French Week took place in Hamburg from 3 to 10 October 1959, jointly organized by the Union française des industries exportatrices, the French Consulate General, the German-French Society of Cluny and the *Hamburger Wirtschaft*. See the beginning of their reporting: 'Ein Hauch Pariser Luft' (A Breeze of Parisian Air) (*Hamburger Abendblatt*, 10–11 October 1959: 11). It is reported that the German-French Week brings 'French products to our shop-windows, French plays to our stages, French music to the opera and concert halls, Parisian fashion to the catwalks.'
3. State Archives Hamburg 363–6, 1828.
4. State Archives Hamburg 135-1 VI, 930, note by Staatliche Pressestelle (Hamburg Press Office) on 24 September 1951 according to which the

- Institut Français took up ‘anew’ its ‘cultural work and teaching’ at the beginning of October 1951 in the new premises in Heimhuder Strasse; the solemn opening of the new house followed on 1 December 1951.
5. State Archives Hamburg 364-5 I, K.20.1.138, 19. In 1967 Hell was appointed as chair in comparative literature at the University of Mainz.
  6. State Archives Hamburg 364-5 I, K.20.1.138, 19. Raymond Aron, then-professor of sociology at the Sorbonne, gave a German-language lecture on 7 October 1959 on the topic of ‘*Europa als Schicksal und Aufgabe*’ (Europe as fate and task). The political scientist Siegfried Landshut, who had returned from exile to Hamburg in 1951, introduced the speaker. Aron and Foucault became colleagues at the Collège de France in 1970.
  7. State Archives Hamburg 363-6, 1828, 58.
  8. State Archives Hamburg 363-6, 1828, 53, Victor Hell (1959) to Kulturbehörde (Cultural Office), 12 June.
  9. State Archives Hamburg 361-6, IV 2750, Head of Romance Studies Department Rudolf Grossmann (1959), *Application for a teaching assignment for Michel Foucault*, to Schulbehörde/Hochschulabteilung (School Office/Higher Education Department), 26 October. Note by Senator Heinrich Landahl on 6 November 1959: ‘First teaching assignment. Agreed!’ Extract from the written protocol of the faculty meeting of 7 November 1959 [belated approval of the teaching assignment by the Faculty of Philosophy]. The approval was a mere formality but was only available after the start of the term time on 2 November 1959.
  10. State Archives Hamburg 361-6, IV 2750, Schulbehörde/Hochschulabteilung (School Authority/Higher Education Department) to the Romance Studies Department and to the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy on 10 November 1959.
  11. *TN: Tiefsinnigkeit* would literally translate as ‘deep thinking’ or ‘contemplation’, as does *Tiefdenken*. Yet, in the *Anthropologie*, Kant adds the Latin root for the first term: *melancholia* (1907: 213). Foucault translates it into French as ‘*songerie mélancolique*’ and Robert Loudon into English as ‘melancholy’.
  12. Two years later Foucault published his own edition of the *Dialogues* as Rousseau, 1962. The introduction conveys an impression of what he taught in his Rousseau seminars in Hamburg. *TN*: The Introduction is available in 2001: Vol. I, 200–216.
  13. On the history of the Romance Studies Department in Hamburg see Meisel and Meyer-Minnemann (2015).
  14. Jean-Marie Zemb returned to France in 1961, where he became Professor of German Linguistics at different universities in Paris and in 1986 entered the Collège de France. His chair was given the title *Grammaire et pensées allemandes*.
  15. See Figure 2. This document is privately owned by Jürgen Schmidt-Radefeldt. Foucault signed it officially with ‘M Foucault’; otherwise he often signed his letters with ‘mf’, which can be understood as ‘[je] m’en fous’ (I don’t care) or ‘mon fou’ (my mad); see Schmidt-Radefeldt, 2016: 5.
  16. State Archives Hamburg 363-6, 1828, top sheet, belonging to sheet 60.

17. Translated by Charles Ruas and published in Foucault (1987). The French version is reprinted in 2001, Vol. II: 1418–1427. *TN*: They are actually two slightly different versions of the same interview.
18. Seemingly Foucault linked the book to Hamburg, and to their visit to the Hamburg Fair, because Robbe-Grillet sent him a copy of the novel published in 1959 as a memento of their encounter in the city with a personal dedication. This is noted in *Dits et écrits* (2001, Vol. II: 1419). *TN*: This note is not in the English translation by Charles Ruas.
19. Gascar did not know Hamburg but recalled as a prisoner of war seeing the city collapse in flames from afar (Gascar, 1991: 65).
20. Jean Genet also seemed to have passed these locations. Foucault and Gascar were told in one bar that ‘Jean’ had been there the previous night and they knew that only Jean Genet could have been meant (Gascar, 1991: 88).
21. After the German Federal Parliament in 2002 had summarily repealed all convictions of homosexuals based on Section 175 during the Nazi-era, Minister of Justice Heiko Maas in May 2016 announced a bill intending also to rehabilitate those men who had been sentenced according to Section 175 during the Federal Republic and (if still alive) to grant them a ‘compensation’. They, too, according to Maas, had been subject to ‘outrages of the constitutional state’; that section had been ‘unconstitutional right from its inception’ (<https://www.spiegel.de/panorama/gesellschaft/schwule-gutachter-wollen-rehabilitierung-fuer-opfer-von-paragraf-175-a-1091772.html>).
22. In the Third Reich, Italiaander as a writer gradually conformed to the Nazi doctrine, as shown in his biographies on the fighter pilot Manfred von Richthofen (1938) and Air Marshal Italo Balbo (1942). After 1945 he eschewed a self-critical engagement with his writings (Nottscheid and Stuhlmann, 2014). A scholarly biography of Italiaander is yet to be written.
23. See for the legendary ‘Bar-Celona’, where Foucault also took Pierre Gascar, Rosenkranz and Lorenz (2006: 118–20).
24. The exhibition ran from 16 July to 18 October 2004.
25. Rolf Italiaander left a collection of autograph copies with more than 5000 exhibits, among them around 1900 books and dedications. Before the dispersed sales began, the antiquarian Matthias Wagner in Berlin had produced a catalogue and registered over 700 dedications (Antiquariat Matthias Wagner (2010) *From me to another. Signierte Bücher aus der Bibliothek Rolf Italiaander*, Berlin). Foucault’s dedication to Italiaander and Spegg on the half-title page of *Histoire de la folie* can be found on page 45. I thank Mirko Nottscheid for pointing this catalogue out to me.
26. This was Jean Pierre Brisset (1970). The dedication on the first page reads: ‘Pour Rolf (und Hans) avec la vieille (= ancienne = fidèle = ineffaçable) amitié de mf.’
27. Daniel Defert said that he never went to Hamburg with Foucault and does not remember any other trips by Foucault to Hamburg (pers. comm., 20 February 2016).
28. The monograph, published as *Folie et déraison*, then comprised 673 pages.
29. Today’s campus Von-Melle-Park was being built at the time: the auditorium maximum was finished in 1959; the roofing ceremony of the Philosophenturm took place in September 1960. The Economics building

- (‘WiWi-Bunker’) was not finished, and neither was the new building for the State and University Library. The University of Hamburg had 13,000 students at the time, around one-third of today’s number.
30. Kant’s *Anthropologie* was vol. 7 of the *Gesammelte Werke* (collected works) in the Akademie Ausgabe (Academy Edition).
  31. The edition, lead-edited by Ernst Cassirer, of *Immanuel Kants Werke* was published from 1912 until 1922 in Berlin.
  32. Foucault’s teaching assignment had already been proposed by Hellmuth Petriconi to the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy on 25 July 1960, which gave its approval on 28 July 1960. State Archives Hamburg 361-6, IV 2750, top sheet, Office of the Faculty of Philosophy to the Romance Studies Department on 28 July 1960. According to this, Foucault planned a one-hour lecture as well as a two-hour tutorial respectively on the topic of ‘*La poésie française de Baudelaire à nos jours*’. This is why these two courses can still be found in: Universität Hamburg (1960–1), *Personal- und Vorlesungsverzeichnis Winter Semester 1960–61*, 149.
  33. The copy of the French first edition can be found at the State and University Library in Hamburg (the front flap is conserved, in contrast to copies in many other libraries).

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