

## INTRODUCTION

Political events often catch up with us, interrupting the flow of our work and opening up previously unimaginable horizons of thought, as Michel Foucault knew so well. The contours of the political present in Brazil have compelled me to modify my original plans for this editorial introduction. I am writing these introductory words to the thirteenth volume of the *Carceral Notebooks* in a state of profound grief. Jair Bolsonaro won the presidential election in Brazil yesterday. A far-right politician and former military captain known for his deeply hostile statements toward gays, Afro-Brazilians, women, and indigenous people, Bolsonaro has capitalized on a popular anger over corruption scandals, an imploding economy, and a generalized insecurity. His solution to these problems resides in Brazil's recent past. Bolsonaro openly defends the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985 and describes his overall objective as a return to what Brazil was like during that period.<sup>1</sup> He finds inspiration in a regime that Foucault forcefully denounced for its severe political repression. Bolsonaro's victory thus makes the theme "Foucault and the Politics of Resistance in Brazil" even more resonant. The exploration of this theme enables us to elucidate what lessons practices of resistance from the period of the dictatorship in Brazil might bear for struggles there (and elsewhere) in our present.

This volume brings together the contributions of scholars throughout Brazil to explore the intellectual and political importance of Foucault's visits to Brazil in 1965, 1973, 1974, 1975, and 1976. During these visits, Foucault synthesized and advanced

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his research in lectures and talks on an astoundingly wide range of topics, from juridical practices, to social medicine, to sexuality. He sought to clarify his unconventional perspectives in interviews with the mainstream and alternative press. Faced with the growing political repression of students, professors, and journalists, Foucault also engaged in open opposition to the military dictatorship. The point of the essays in this volume is not simply to account for Foucault's activities in another national geographical space (alongside the more commonly recognized spaces of Tunisia, Iran, and the United States). The essays in this volume situate his contributions in Brazil within a series of theoretical, historical, and political contexts to reflect on the politics of resistance in Brazil in the past and present. Some of the essays fill in the historical details of Foucault's visits to Brazil to expand our understandings of his concepts, such as political spirituality and militancy. Others bring concepts from Foucault's toolbox, such as self-writing, to bear on practices of resistance in the Brazilian present. Still others focus on the effects of his encounters in Brazil for contemporary practices of resistance there. What emerges collectively from the essays is the importance of Brazil as a space of conceptual and political innovation for Foucault and the significance of Foucault for debates about theory and politics in Brazil.

The initiative for this volume of the *Carceral Notebooks* sprang from the space opened up by the groundbreaking research of Heliana de Barros Conde Rodrigues into the little-known theme of Foucault in Brazil.<sup>2</sup> Bernard E. Harcourt was generous enough to invite me to put together this volume after reading my review of Conde's book in March 2017.<sup>3</sup> Most of the essays in the volume were initially presented at a workshop

on “Foucault and the Politics of Resistance in Brazil” at the Columbia Global Center in Rio de Janeiro in May 2018. The workshop was sponsored by the Columbia Center for Contemporary Critical Thought (CCCCT). I want to thank the authors for their contributions. I also want to thank Lynne F. Goldin and Nick Papaserafym for their excellent work on the production of the volume.

NOTES

- 1 “Bolsonaro diz que objetivo é fazer o Brasil semelhante ‘ao que tínhamos há 40, 50 anos,’” *O Globo*, October 15, 2018, <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/bolsonaro-diz-que-objetivo-fazer-brasil-semelhante-ao-que-tinhamos-ha-40-50-anos-23158680>.
- 2 Heliana de Barros Conde Rodrigues, *Ensaio sobre Michel Foucault no Brasil: Presença, efeitos, ressonâncias* (Rio de Janeiro: Lamparina, 2016).
- 3 Marcelo Hoffman, “In the Shadow of Dictatorship: Foucault in Brazil,” review of *Ensaio sobre Michel Foucault no Brasil: Presença, efeitos, ressonâncias*, by Heliana de Barros Conde Rodrigues, *Theory, Culture & Society*, March 22, 2017, <https://www.theoryculturesociety.org/review-shadow-dictatorship-foucault-brazil/>.