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**Lost geographers:  
power games and the circulation of ideas within Francophone political geographies**

Juliet J. Fall<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract**

This paper takes a reflexive look at the production of scientific discourses by exploring the context and practice of political geography within the Francophone world. This article builds on the idea that the fundamental difference between *Anglo* and Francophone geographies relates to how theoretical writings and texts circulate, rather than to fundamental differences of content or topic. It examines how certain texts, ideas and thinkers have circulated, suggesting in particular

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that it is timely to reconsider Claude Raffestin's contributions on power, territory and territoriality. It argues that his critical theoretical framework, inspired by a number of authors including Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre and Luis Prieto has been overlooked by Francophone and *Anglo* geographers for a number of institutional, conceptual and personal factors. By focussing on institutional structure, the nature of the academy and styles of debate in the Francophone world, and in confronting Claude Raffestin to both John Allen and Yves Lacoste's geographies of power, this paper questions the divide between these two academic traditions.

**Key words**

Boundaries, Francophone geography, knowledge production, Yves Lacoste, political geography, power, Claude Raffestin, territory

## Introduction and argument

*« Au moment d'écrire le premier mot relatif au sujet qu'énonce le titre, je découvre mon «enfermement» dans des limites et des frontières mentales car «penser» implique, ipso facto, un système de limites » (Raffestin 1981 : 119)*

This paper is an opportunity for a reflexive look at scientific discourses by considering the context within which political geographies are produced, providing substance to question the (re)construction of the discipline as an Anglo-American hegemonic project unaware of its internal cultural politics (Minca 2005; Samers 2005). Rather than a review of the literature on power within different political geographical traditions, I suggest engaging with the messiness of the varied thematic overlaps and contrasts in theoretical postures. Paasi most recently explored the uneven geographies of knowledge production within geography, noting most convincingly that “binary divisions, such as Anglophone versus the rest of the world, thus hide that these contexts are in themselves heterogeneous and modified by power geometries” (Paasi 2005 : 770; see also Minca 2005). This paper therefore particularly explores the Anglo-American and Francophone traditions, questioning “the persistence of a sort of ‘parallel’ geographical tradition that in France is still very much alive but (...) does not nurture a broad dialogue with the Anglo-American (‘international’?) geographical universe, although it continues to exert significant influence on a number of European geographies” (Minca 2000 : 286; see also Staszak 2001; Chivallon 2003; Besse 2004). Yet partly in response to Minca’s brackets, I am happy to follow Paasi in arguing that what passes as international science is often nothing more than national

science from the ‘core’ of Anglo-American academies (Paasi 2005 : 770). Thus while the Francophone world is often portrayed in geographical reviews as internally coherent and elusively Other, it continues to remain relatively unknown since “few Anglophone geographers read much French geography, or indeed (to our shame) any non-English language sources” (Hepple 2000 : 270; see also Garcia-Ramon 2003). Simply acknowledging the breach between the two is intellectually unsatisfactory. The suggestion that there is an *Anglo*’ versus a Francophone space of (political) geography requires nuance, accompanied at the outset by a real recognition of the important role played by individuals widely read in both languages and familiar with both contexts<sup>2</sup>. There have been several recent attempts to explain the Francophone political geographical traditions to both English and French-speaking readers (Claval 2000, 2004; Sanguin 1983 & 2004; Lévy 2001; Hepple 2000; Parker 2000; Mamadouh 1998; Buléon 1992; Foucher 1991; or even Imbeault & Montifroy 1996). I build on these to spin a tale of circulations and *regards croisés*, as books and papers percolate through the geographical world, building up different enquiries of the political within geography. I provide neither a historical survey nor a comprehensive review. Rather, since several of the reviews refer to the work of Claude Raffestin, I aim to understand and situate this relatively unfamiliar contribution, exploring how one author’s work can be used to shed light both on the circulation of knowledge within the academy, and on political geography as a discipline and practice.

I argue that confronting Raffestin’s work to that of two other authors, one French and one *Anglo* can shed light on each: a game of *regards croisés*, or playful intertextuality. Firstly, I confront Raffestin’s first and main manifesto *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir* (1980) with John Allen’s more recent *Lost Geographies of Power* (2003). These are natural siblings drawing on a number of similar sources and heading in a broadly similar direction, twenty years apart. Secondly, I

confront Claude Raffestin's critical stance on political geography and geopolitics to that of Yves Lacoste. In opposing Raffestin's position developed within *Géopolitique et Histoire* to Lacoste's own reformulation of geopolitics within his editorials and pieces within the journal *Hérodote*, I argue that the former presents a welcome critique of academic knowledge's instrumentalisation in furthering reactionary political ideologies. Throughout, these various approaches to geographical thinking are used to shed light on how Raffestin, Lacoste and some of their readers have approached space and power. Furthermore, by exploring how these various authors have considered boundaries, I suggest that this reflexive loop further illustrates the epistemological foundations, similarities and differences between these academic traditions. The difference between *Anglo* and Francophone geographies is therefore not one of content, since a full spectrum of political geographies ranging from realist to critical to social constructivist exist in both, but rather in how theoretical writings and texts circulate. I use political boundaries as indicators of this, much as keystone species are used in ecology to indicate the wider health or condition of an ecosystem.

### **Understanding the context: different approaches to theory and practice**

The very different uses made of theory within *Anglo* and Francophone geography is well known. The former is obsessed with it, the latter at times disparaging or dismissive. The consequence of this on the propagation of ideas within the academy, however, has been much less explored. Instead, it has been assumed, from the outside, that Francophone geographies all share this idiosyncrasy. For example, in his review of Yves Lacoste's work – the self-proclaimed *Doyen* of the revival of French geopolitics – Hepple noted that the different role of theory appears a divide that seems hard to bridge: “for the Anglophone, the French geographers' neglect of their local post-structuralist social theorists seems perverse; on the other side, one suspects [they] are quite

amused by this appeal of French social theorists, which they may well see as an ivory-tower distraction from serious geopolitical analysis (and possibly from serious politics too)” (Hepple 2000 : 294). What Hepple fails to note is that in France these key authors would not even be called or considered post-structuralist at all, since labels and badges of belonging of this kind are largely absent (Chivallon 2003)! The main crux of Hepple’s comment, of course, is that while Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and others were becoming unavoidable in universities within the *Anglo* world, “their names were being systematically eclipsed in France”<sup>3</sup> (Cusset 2003 : 22). This absence is especially striking within geography: heralded as manna in the various foci of *Anglo* geography, these authors are practically absent in Francophone geographical circles. As two members of the established clique put it simply: “the French critical philosophy of the 60s and 70s is less popular in France and the Latin countries than in the United States – Barthes and Derrida are not quoted; the interest in Foucault is more evident” (Claval and Staszak 2004 : 319; see also Lussault 2003; Söderström & Philo 2004; Collignon 2004; Dupont 2004; Fall 2005, or the more general Lotringer & Cohen 2001). In contrast to this endorsement in *Anglo* social science, Francophone geography has largely turned its back on this phenomenon.

In his review of French radical politics, and referring to the interview of Michel Foucault carried out in the first issue of *Hérodote*, Yves Lacoste’s journal and personal fiefdom, Hepple (2000) suggests it “does highlight the convergence between Foucauldian thought and the geopolitical perspectives of the *Hérodote* group well before Foucault’s impact on the construction of Anglophone critical geopolitics by Dalby, Ò Tuathail and other [sic] in later years” (Hepple 2000 : 292; see also Ò Tuathail 1994 : 326). I would suggest that Hepple and Ò Tuathail’s attempts to see links here are somewhat misplaced. There was indeed a substantial and early impact of social theory within Francophone geography, but not within Lacoste’s circles. Instead, this took place in

Switzerland, outside the bounded confines of Franco-French debates within the work of Claude Raffestin. Yet he is, in a sense, a lost geographer. He is infrequently cited within Francophone geographies and is much more likely to be quoted in Italy, Spain or South America where his work has been translated and enthusiastically picked up. In the next section, I explore what Raffestin's particular geography of power consisted of and why this should be taken seriously. I then discuss how he was received by reading a number of contemporary book reviews that shed light on the debates within geography at the time.

### **Raffestin's geographies of power**

Born in France, but largely educated and raised in Switzerland, with a PhD in Social and Economic Sciences from the University of Geneva where he subsequently became a professor and vice-rector, Raffestin was a driving force of what has been called the post-vidalian critique<sup>4</sup> in the Francophone world. Much of his inspiration came from the work of Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Martin Heidegger and Luis Prieto, bringing a much-needed breadth of references to a discipline pitted by intellectual incest. He is a rare and fascinating example of a Francophone geographer active within and not outside the wider *sciences humaines*, engaging intellectually with many different sources. Söderström and Philo wrote for example recently that “the most substantial theoretical contribution to non-Anglophone social geography in the 1970s and 1980s was (...) to be found in the work of the Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin. Being rather idiosyncratic, his social geography was difficult to categorize in the neat boxes traditionally used to describe English-speaking geography (terms such as spatial analysis, humanistic geography, and radical geography)” (Söderström & Philo 2004 : 304-305). The decisive factors of his non-emergence are therefore both institutional and thematic. Raffestin attempted to endorse the role of senior theoretician in the linguistic and constructivist turn the discipline took at the end of the

Seventies, in a context where the dominant but battered *Ecole de géographie française* remained overwhelmingly in debt to the classical Vidalian tradition: much more likely to describe than theorise. Thus in contrast to the many neorealists within Francophone geography, he responded to the lancing problem of the reality clause of geographical objects by engaging in what has been called a metaphysical quest for *géographicité* (Orain 2003 : 339), adopting an unashamedly social constructivist posture (see also Racine 2002).

Claude Raffestin's *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir*, published in 1980, implicitly built on Michel Foucault's statement that space is fundamental to any form of communal life and to any exercise of power, constituting a form of indirect response to Foucault's questions to geographers that appeared in *Hérodote* in 1976 (Fall 2005). Amongst other ambitions, he sought to formalise a theory of territory and territoriality within a clearly foucauldian framework of power relations strongly influenced by *La Volonté de Savoir* published in 1976. This was not a finished theory, reflecting his rejection of closed systems and his personal attachment to a *pensée en procès* in which a framework was attained through successive approximations (Raffestin 1980 : 44). The book was inevitably a bit of a hotchpotch with methodological chapters ranging from explaining what a geographical *problématique* should be, to theoretical contributions on a relational approach to power and space<sup>5</sup>. This set the groundwork for his nascent theory of territory and territoriality. As he spun his framework, metaphorically following the fragile string a geographical Ariadne seemed to suggest (Raffestin 1980 : 1), Raffestin explored his proposals within a series of chapters on population and resources, adding touches of colour to his theory through short examples. While empirically often unconvincing, it did map out both a theoretical paradigm on power and space and a innovative draft methodology for applying it.

Raffestin wrote beautifully, making use of a breadth of references and myths:

“power, a common noun, hides behind Power, a proper noun. It hides so efficiently specifically because it is present everywhere. It is present in every relation, within every action: it insidiously uses every social fracture to infiltrate into the heart of people. It is ambiguous because there is Power and there is power. But the former is easier to grasp because it manifests itself through complex apparatuses that surround and grasp each territory, control the population and dominate the resources. It is visible, massive, identifiable power. In consequence it is dangerous and unsettling, but it inspires wariness through the very threat that it represents. But the most dangerous is that which is unseen or that which one no longer sees because it is assumed to be discarded through house arrest. It would be too simple if Power were the Minotaur locked into its labyrinth that Theseus could kill once and for all. But power is reborn worse than it was, when Theseus meets the Minotaur: Power is dead, long live power. From then on, power is assured to live forever as it is no longer visible; instead it is consubstantial to all relations”<sup>6</sup> (Raffestin 1980 : 45).

As this short extract illustrates, Foucault’s definitions of power as developed in *La Volonté de Savoir* largely underpinned Raffestin’s approach (see also Raffestin 2006). Initially, spatiality of power was implied rather than explicitly carved out. Sweeping away any temptation of equating all power with the state, he interpreted Foucault’s idea of a network to mean that power was the dynamic basis of relations of force that, through their intrinsic inequality, constantly created states of power [*états de pouvoir*] that were both local and instable (Raffestin 1980 : 45). Each relation was the place [*le lieu*] within which power manifested itself, as energy and information got manipulated that is to say formed, accumulated, combined and circulated (Raffestin 1980 : 46). He used Foucault to argue that any attempt at classifying forms of power (such as

distinguishing domination, influence, coercion etc.) was untenable, since the exercise of power implied manipulating the fluxes of relations between actors through creation [*formation*], accumulation, combination and circulation of energy and information. Knowledge and power were linked as insolubly as energy and information, within any relation, a position Raffestin reinforced by quoting Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze's comment that any point in which power was exercised was simultaneously a place of knowledge formation<sup>7</sup>. This was not unproblematic at the time within Francophone geography. In an interview in 1997, Raffestin noted that "I have been very heavily criticised for this use of Foucault and the only consolation I have is that Americans, and in particular Californian geographers, are discovering or are rediscovering Foucault today"<sup>8</sup> (Interview by Elissade in 1997, quoted in Orain 2003 : 306).

In addition to Foucault and to a lesser extent Deleuze and Henri Lefebvre, he relied on Jean-William Lapierre (1968), a political philosopher from Quebec, and on the better-known philosopher André Glucksmann (1977) to reinforce the links between energy / information / power / knowledge. He suggested that these four notions could be bound together by considering the role of work [*travail*]. This notion of work rested both rather confusingly on the Marxist idea that alienation through work decayed all other social relations, and the notion that power, via work, came from the bottom up. The possibility of power, then, and not power itself, rested on the appropriation of work taken to be informed energy (Raffestin 1980 : 50). In formalising this, he drew on communication theory to design figures with boxes and arrows, representing actors, strategies and relations drawn to suggest rough sketches and attempts at formalisation, rather than figures set in stone<sup>9</sup>. What was perhaps most intriguing in Raffestin's discussion of power was how space was, at least initially, only hinted at and not dissected directly.

It was in discussing territory that his proposal took on more tangible spatial dimensions. Like his conception of power, Raffestin's concept of territory drew upon Lefebvre's idea of the production of space in order to spatialise his relational approach. Territory, in his perspective, was the space [*travail*] within which work (or energy and information) had been projected and that in consequence was constructed through and revealed power relations (Raffestin 1980 : 129). In this, his distinction between space (pre-existent to any action) and territory (produced relationally) was fundamental. For Raffestin, "space is the 'original prison', while territory is the prison that men design for themselves"<sup>10</sup> (Raffestin 1980 : 129). This was enriched by an analysis of representations and the semiotics of territory that drew on sources as diverse as Ludwig Wittgenstein, Edward Soja and Umberto Eco. This social constructivist position was innovative at the time, while remaining close to what Lévy has called realist constructivism (Lévy 1999 : 39; Agnew 2001 : 4). Raffestin's focus, however, was almost exclusively on territory as the site of all social and spatial relations, and territoriality as the expression of these (power) relations. Following René Girard, territory acted as mediator in relations between people (Raffestin 1980 : 144).

#### *Who read Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir?*

It is often instructive to go back and explore what was being said about a book at the time of its publication, shedding light as much on the particular epoch as on the piece. At the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, academic geography in France was undergoing violent and highly personalised fistfights and struggles (Orain 2003 : 267; Clout 1985) in which official national geographical institutions such as the *Comité National de Géographie* were seen as nothing less than the "hateful emanation of an over-hierarchical system of mandarins that systematically marginalised progressive groups, specifically financially"<sup>11</sup> (Orain 2003 : 264). The time, called

a decade of ferment by Buléon (1992) was one of volatile rejection of the orthodox Vidalian *Géographie Classique* and the corresponding renegotiation of a theoretical grounding within the quantitative and positivist *Nouvelle Géographie*. Paul Claval (1983; see also Claval 1990 : 41), Hervé le Bras (1981), Jacques Lévy (1981), Yves Lacoste (1981) and Paul Villeneuve (1982) all produced reviews of Raffestin's book within a few months of each other in different journals. Some of these were pretty savage by Francophone standards, in a context where debates, by being more highly personalised are often more guarded and rarely as public as within the *Anglo* world.

In a piece in *Population*, on the periphery of geography, Le Bras's (1981) comments reflected the division of geography into opposing schools, illustrating the need to chose one or the other camp. In rejecting the book as uninteresting, he suggested its novelty was only apparent since rather than using robust statistical methods and developing a "way of thinking about uniformity and totality that rests on linear algebra and classical statistics" (Le Bras 1981 : 1201), Raffestin preferred "a way of thinking based on random events and discontinuities, the best expression of which is catastrophe theory. What one calls the l'Ecole française de géographie, founded by Vidal de Lablache [sic] and extending to the 'possibilistes' can be assigned to that category. Despite claiming to break away from this, Cl. Raffestin is in fact an heir of this tradition"<sup>12</sup> (Le Bras 1981 : 1201). Raffestin's ambition of establishing a theoretically-informed geography was cast aside with a disparaging brush of the hand. The critique was little more than petty posturing and point scoring. What was more interesting, in retrospect, was how little Raffestin's project of introducing social theories of power into geography was read on its own terms. While this seems surprising now, particularly in the *Anglo* context of a ubiquity of social theory, it was not unexpected at the time. Commenting, in another context, on French geography in the late

Seventies, Lévy wrote that “I was struck by the serious lack of culture of the existing geographical circles, combined with an even stranger superiority complex towards existing philosophical texts and debates”<sup>13</sup> (Lévy 1995 : 520). More cautiously, Paul Claval in a characteristically kind understatement suggested that, at the time, “geography as taught in the majority of departments was not at the vanguard of radical French intellectual culture” (Claval 2000 : 240).

Paul Claval, already at the time a grand figure of French geography, suggested in *Political Geography Quarterly* that while Raffestin’s book was not without merit, it failed to explain itself clearly: “he does not construct a scheme for explaining the diversity of social and political architectures as well as the differences in the role of power according to technical levels and ideologies. As the titles [sic] makes explicit, this book is more a plea for a new approach to political geography than a structured presentation of what it can be” (Claval 1983 : 94). Noting rather bluntly that “this approach is akin to Marxist ones – and Raffestin gives many references to Lefèbvre” (Claval 1983 : 94), he sought to categorise the work according to that scheme, rather than engaging with the profoundly Foucauldian approach to power. He wrote that “Raffestin is mainly interested [...] by the control system linked to power, and by relations between the centre and the periphery, areas and nodes, networks and circulations” (Claval 1983 : 94), approaching it as though it were simply a descriptive filter rather than a theoretical posture. Similarly, le Bras recognised that the Foucauldian approach was innovative... but ultimately useless: “The term ‘power’ is used in line with Michel Foucault. By its dissymmetry, any relation is analysed as a relation of strength, as violence as Marx would say. The reading made of Foucault is prodigiously stimulating but it doesn’t provide operational tools, no measure of power, no objective identification of its effects. Power, like physicists’ ether or the phlogiston of chemists is

consubstantial to all relations, but is also impossible to separate one from another, it's impossible to isolate it and therefore to map it precisely"<sup>14</sup> (Le Bras 1981 : 1201). Villeneuve made a similar point: Raffestin "could be accused of practising political determinism when he argues that power is consubstantial to all relations"<sup>15</sup> (Villeneuve 1982 : 266). Ether was obviously a curiously geographical obsession since it also appeared in Villeneuve's review when he said, more positively, that the book was liberating "not because it is high-flying, in the ethereal air of abstract concepts, but because it plunges deeply into the hidden structures of power"<sup>16</sup> (Villeneuve 1982 : 266). Le Bras's obsession with mapping was interesting, reflecting again the prevalence of the map as an end in itself, as the ultimate fetish that distinguished geographers from other scientists. Sanguin made a similar comment in a review article of Raffestin (1980) and Paul Claval's rather different book *Espace et Pouvoir* (1978), allowing himself a little flutter of emotion: "Paradoxically these works, written by two reputed geographers, are indeed publications without any maps!" (Sanguin 1983 : 325), an apparent paradox to him which appeared all the more condemnably ungeographic in view of the objects considered. Likewise, Lacoste also reviewed the two books together in his vicious review in *Hérodote*, echoing Sanguin in writing that "it must be said that these geographers, even if they take pleasure in speaking about power, refuse to observe it as geographers and especially to refer to the specifically geographical way of seeing, the major epistemological characteristic: maps!"<sup>17</sup> (Lacoste 1981 : 155). Likewise, for Sanguin, power relationships that "lie beyond the bounds of cartography" (Sanguin 1983 : 325) led to a dialectic that was "somewhat abstract and [within which] the thought is essentially theoretical" (Sanguin 1983 : 324), a grave sin indeed<sup>18</sup>. Thus, by moving away from mapping, Raffestin was identified as a traitor: "whilst abundantly exploiting aspects of anthropology, sociology and political science, [he] tend[s] to leave geography somewhat in the

shadows” (Sanguin 1983 : 326). Lacoste was particularly incensed by Raffestin’s attempts to differentiate political geography from geopolitics – a direct critique of his approach – as well as by Raffestin’s desire to move away from the traditional focus on states as sole actors<sup>19</sup>.

Much later, and in a more guarded critique than the angry one he wrote in a volume of *EspaceTemps* in the 1980s, Jacques Lévy also commented on *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir* by linking it to Paul Claval’s book (1978), noting cautiously that “despite the great interest of these books, they were scarcely taken up, perhaps because they cumulated two opposite handicaps. On one hand, they were too advanced for their readers, handling concepts perceived to be too abstract, too far from usual research fields; on the other they continued to approach politics indirectly, a topic that remains the real blind spot of the geographical *Weltanschauung*. In that, they gave up creating a political geography based on a clear epistemological and theoretical basis. This is true for France and for other Latin countries, because within the Anglophone world throughout the 1980s political geography has softly conquered a significant place within the discipline”<sup>20</sup> (Lévy 2003 : 738). He remained unconvinced by Raffestin’s uses of Foucault, noting that *pouvoir* was neither a category nor a social science concept, but instead only a linguistic category, upstream epistemologically from the *politique*, a notion he had personally favoured (Lévy 1994).

In his book, Raffestin made a conscious choice not to exploit and apply his proposals on power empirically, preferring to stand back and make suggestions that he, or perhaps in his mind others, would pick up and validate. His later *Géopolitique et Histoire*, and in particular the chapter on maps subsequently translated into English in Lévy (2001), was perhaps the closest he came to applying his ideas to concrete topics, notwithstanding his various and rather unconvincing brushes of examples throughout *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir*. For this lack of explicit

application, perhaps more than anything else at the time, he was panned in the Francophone world. Meanwhile, in California, Allen Scott was chaffing him not for being too theoretical but for implicitly not being Foucauldian enough. Writing in *Environment and Planning A* in 1982, he commented that “the only problem here is that Raffestin draws back from elaborating his theoretical problematic to the point where the emergence, logic, and trajectory of power relation in human society become analytically determinate and historically comprehensible” (Scott 1982 : 131). Thus “Raffestin’s abstract transactional approach to the geography of power denies him the potential richness and insights of this latter mode of investigation, and instead encourages him to dissipate his theoretical energies in the construction of simple and, in the end, rather uninformative structural models of symmetric and dissymmetric power relations” (Scott 1982 : 132). In other words, he does not develop both an archaeology and/or a genealogy of spatial power clearly enough to be useful. Instead, writes Scott, it is “perhaps less far from the universe of discourse of classical political geography than its author might wish (above all in view of its finally encyclopaedic treatment of political and geographical relata)” (Scott 1982 : 132), a comment that echoes Le Bras. More recently, Buléon suggested similarly that instead of a protean conception of power, a clearer “relationship of power and politics in specific historical contexts has to be appropriately apprehended. It also means that Raffestin is entirely correct when he attempts a generalizing, integrating approach, as the only means whereby one can read the social whole; however this approach should not necessarily be present in the exploration of every sphere of activity, in our case the political, as would be necessary in the case of the economy” (Buléon 1992 : 31). While many of these comments seem harsh, the number of distinguished geographers reading him was in itself interesting. Raffestin was certainly read but was largely discarded.

It is not always easy to read Raffestin, as his theory of territory and territoriality and his wider writings on the geographical intelligibility of reality are often put forward more as proposals than polished theories. Orain notes for instance that “his production has the character of a slowly built up mosaic in which each text takes its place as a piece, both a device and a process. It is a device in that each piece of writing refers to other contemporary ones, edging them on and adding elements through partial repetitions that can be easily pieced together”<sup>21</sup> (Orain 2003 : 315). It has seemed at times, to those around Raffestin, that he has always been waiting for a disciple to take on this role of polishing his proposals, yet on a personal level he has done his best to crucify anyone who might have tried. At the University of Geneva, several doctoral students did apply his framework to topics as varied as Alpine territoriality, landscape literature or graphical semiotics, but they subsequently largely remained in Geneva and published neither widely nor in English. More surprisingly, his own sources of inspiration such as Foucault, Heidegger, Lefebvre were not picked up; at most, the orthodox *raffestinian* reading of these was reproduced. This is of course where the peripheral nature of Swiss geography shows its limitations: Raffestin’s lack of insertion into certain guarded circles of French geography certainly did not help spread his *oeuvre*. However, having said that, a number of links did exist and continue, in particular inserting geographers working in Geneva into networks centred on universities and *laboratoires* in France, in particular at Grenoble and Pau. Raffestin has also made a substantial impact on Italian geographies (Minca 2005), perhaps even more than on Francophone geographies, although a review of this is outside the scope of this paper. He currently spends most of his time in Turin.

### **Regards croisés**

Twenty years after Raffestin’s attempts to adapt Foucault, Lefebvre and Deleuze to geographical theory within a relational framework, John Allen published his *Lost Geographies of Power*. He

assumed, like Raffestin and also following Foucault, that power rather than being all encompassing was “a relational effect of social interaction” (Allen 2003 : 2). However, he specified that “people are placed by power, but they experience it at first hand through the rhythms and relationships of particular places, not as some pre-packaged force from afar and not as a ubiquitous presence” (Allen 2003 : 2). It is this, he argued, that had been lost within geographical thought. The real ‘power’ of power, for Allen, was visible in the interplay of forces in place, as the presence of power was mediated in space and time. This was not so different from Raffestin’s proposal that place mediates power relations between individuals. In fact, at times, Allen appears to echo Raffestin in an uncanny way, while at others he clearly disagrees with what ironically is certainly, at least to him, a totally *Lost Geography*. Allen suggested that Foucault and Deleuze’s approaches to power fell short of a real appreciation of the inherent spatiality of power, including the fact that spatiality was inherently imbued with power (Allen 2003 : 8). Thus, he wrote, “even if we accept Foucault’s immanent conception of power, as I broadly do, it is important to bear in mind – lest we lose sight of it – that power relations have long been experienced through a variety of different modes and that they are always already spatial” (Allen 2003 : 10). This implied broadening Foucault and Deleuze’s notions that “subjects are constituted by the spacing and timing of their own practices as much as they are by those who seek to shape their conduct” (Allen 2003 : 9). Thus, in contrast to Raffestin’s initial formalised and largely aspatial figures, Allen was intent on grasping the full materiality and rootedness of power from the very beginning. Power, therefore, was not reduced to “some facile notion that it is a shadowy force lurking in the murky recesses” (Allen 2003 : 9). Instead, the very concrete spaces of the everyday were considered as sites “through which subjectivity is immanently produced” (Allen 2003 : 9).

In grasping the particular ways in which power takes effect spatially, Allen found it useful to distinguish the particularly spatialities of authority, coercion, seduction and manipulation, something that Raffestin very clearly rejected from the outset as simple differences of means, not nature (Raffestin 1980 : 47). Allen, for instance, very clearly argued against a conception of power as ‘capacity’, writing that such a conception led to ideas where, at worst, “power is conceived as something which radiates out from an identifiable centre, triggering an effective capacity for control. Once you have the measure of power and a grasp of its capacity to administer, control and fix a territory and its population, the rest, it seems, amounts to little more than a series of footnotes from the centre” (Allen 2003 : 17). This off-hand comment appeared to be an echo and partial refutation of Raffestin’s chapter on *Dénombrément et pouvoir* which claimed to explore how populations were involved in relations of power simultaneously as stake [*enjeu*], resource and actor, yet turned into little more than a call to understanding the strategic role of population censuses. Likewise, both authors had very similar takes on the asymmetries of power relations. For Raffestin, while ‘zero-sum’ games – one in which the scores of the ‘winner’ and ‘loser’ sum to zero – might have appeared frequent, these were not in fact very prevalent in human relations (Raffestin 1980 : 51), something with which Allen largely agreed, drawing additionally on Weber (1978 in Allen 2003 : 27).

However, despite many overlaps, Allen’s basic issue with capacity was perhaps the strongest critique that could be levelled at Raffestin (see also Sayer 2004)<sup>22</sup>. In summing up his argument, Allen unknowingly put his finger on the limitations of the latter’s framework revolving around population / territory / resources: “the so-called ‘capacity’ of power is often a euphemism for the resources and abilities which may or may not be mobilized to produce an effect – be it domination, authority, seduction, manipulation, coercion, inducement or whatever. Resources

move and can be lost and may simply evaporate, but power has none of those qualities” (Allen 2003 : 36). Allen was most innovative in interrogating the spatial effects of the different modalities of power (see Cidell 2005 : 231; Ogborn 2004), understanding the “embodied clashes over the inscribed meaning of space” (Allen 2003 : 170) and the tensions evident between those who inhabit places. He pointed to the different ways in which power was exercised from domination through manipulation to seduction and even down to coercion. This, wrote Allen, “is not because power is endowed with some kind of vapid plurality, where the different modalities take it in turn to act out their display. On the contrary, it is the nature of the places themselves, how they are constituted through the practice and rhythms of the different groups which inhabit them, which gives rise to tangled arrangements of power and their execution” (Allen 2003 : 171). Thus by focussing on what he called a topological view of space, where power works through the play of proximity and distance, he created a non-scalar view of the dynamism of place, bringing elsewhere into immediate presence or distance. Echoing Le Bras’ earlier comment, Allen was also dismissing power as a sort of metaphoric phlogiston, choosing instead to encounter it within concrete physical or material *dispositifs*. These different engagements with the modalities of power can be touched upon by examining how both have explored boundaries as particular geographical objects.

### **Territory, boundaries and territoriality**

Raffestin wrote extensively on boundaries, first in his book *Géographie des Frontières* (1974), written with Paul Guichonnet, and subsequently in various articles and book chapters (Raffestin 1981; 1990). Many of these copy / paste each other, setting out what he hoped would become an established *théorie limologique*, a theory of boundaries. In *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir*, he dealt with boundaries as part of the wider question of *quadrillages du pouvoir*, or networks /

grids of power, distinguishing the more generic *limite* from the specifically state-based *frontière*. Building on the idea that boundaries (*limites*) were the expression of a bio-social interface that was historically contingent and therefore subject to continual redefinition, he suggested that when boundaries became fixed (*crystallisées*) they became ideological in that they expressed the existing relations of power territorially (Raffestin 1980 : 149). Thus every territorial grid or territory was “simultaneously the expression of a social project that was the result of relations of production that are created within the means of production and the ideological field present within any given relation”<sup>23</sup> (Raffestin 1980 : 149). Boundaries were taken to be information structuring a territory, requiring energy to be maintained: “we no longer make sacrifices to Terminus, the god that watches over boundaries, but modern states still circle their territories with limits, often heavily materialised and sometimes hard to cross”<sup>24</sup> (Raffestin 1981 : 125). Obviously any idea of a ‘natural’ boundary was discarded through the appeal to their essential *historicité*: naturalizing them would assume negating their historical contingency, different from the purely arbitrary. Instead they were born of and reflected social projects. Raffestin drew very heavily on semiotics in discussing boundaries, taking them to be a specific kind of sign (*signe*). The most innovative aspect of his writings on boundaries appeared when he linked boundaries to his concept of territoriality: boundaries were lived and experienced as part of the socio-spatial framework, part of the multidimensionality of the territorial experience of members of a *collectivité*. He wrote that the principles of “translation, regulation, differentiation and relation are the principles that are always contained within boundaries or frontiers. These principles allow us to ask the essential questions in regard to any boundary: what is it translating, what is it regulating, what is it differentiating and what is it linking? This is the only way of moving from an ideographic to a nomothetic analysis, it is the only way of moving from the particular to the

general”<sup>25</sup> (Raffestin 1990 : 301). The definition of the Other by boundaries was taken to be a two way game: boundaries contained difference just as difference constructed boundaries. Because this idea of differentiation was inherently contained within the idea of territoriality, being the sum of relations with both alterity (otherness) and exteriority, Raffestin sought to explore it further, advancing by repetitive touches and slow brush-strokes within various consecutive papers:

“Boundaries are differentiation. They always found difference, the disappearance of which leads to crisis. Throughout history, the transcending (*franchissement*) of boundaries has almost always led to explosions of violence, and it is precisely because indispensable difference was negated on that occasion. Redrawing the line is akin to finding differentiation again and re-establishing order. No material or spiritual activity can do without a system of boundaries. This necessary differentiation does not imply that boundaries be always stable, but it implies that there will always be boundaries, even if what is defined as different may vary. Chaos is indifferentiation, it is the absence of boundaries. It is easy to see the link between boundaries and value. The boundary is a ubiquitous notion; it is an absolutely indispensable invariant, in the real sense of the word. We could even say that – and in that we would agree with those calling for an erasure of borders – it doesn’t matter what boundaries there are, provided there are some... It is easy to see how the differentiation that is contained within boundaries leads to a theory of culture. Finally, all culture – in the anthropological sense of the term – is an enacted theory (*théorie en actes*) of boundaries”<sup>26</sup> (Raffestin 1990 : 300).

This attempt to create a theory of boundaries as part of a wider theory of territoriality involved weaving together their different functions and principles. However, it was never fully finished to a point where Raffestin was satisfied. At most, he suggested that since boundaries defined spatio-

temporal containers, their inscription and functional significance were both instrumental to and stemmed from power relations and enshrined or imposed a given territoriality through a series of instruments and codes (Raffestin 1981). While this might seem rather cryptic, it was not unlike Allen's discussion of boundaries and walls. Drawing more directly on Lefebvre's equation of domination / power and social space, he wrote for instance that "a sense of membership is produced by a group constructing a social space in its own likeness, [for instance] in the gated communities [where] any likeness is formally imposed by strict rules of conduct. (...) Such rules are intended to dramatize the difference between those on the 'inside' and those on the other side of the walls" (Allen 2003 : 172). This conception of a formalised constructed space involving a social project leading to the production of social space was not unlike Raffestin's concept of territoriality, drawing on similar Lefebvrian sources. The difference here was that Allen was not speaking about power in a very vague sense, but instead wrote of control being forcefully imposed in such closed physical spaces of domination. But Allen did not only write about clear, fixed scenarios. Instead, like Raffestin, he stressed the dynamic nature of boundaries: "even in closed, gated communities, boundaries are routinely crossed by all manner of tradespeople and public officials, as well as friends and relatives, and the supposed stark lines of difference are compromised daily by the service rhythms of domestic care, maintenance and security staff. 'Open walls' rather than 'enclosed worlds' is perhaps a more apt metaphorical redescription of such places (...) and such interactions, I would argue, disrupt any easy cultural mapping of who is close at hand and who is distant, who belongs and who does not" (Allen 2003 : 174).

Both authors were interested in the actual regulation of social spaces. Allen referred to the different mechanisms of regulation, exploring examples of indirect or shallow ways that could be used to achieve different levels of enclosure, emphasising that the (in)directness of the regulation

implied different spatial configurations such as domination / seduction etc. Raffestin tried to pin down the idea of regulation by referring to the semiotics of space, suggesting a two-way relationship between changes in the *signifiant* (the spatial inscription of a boundary) and/or its *signifié* (the functions it is made to reflect). Changes in either/both implied a modification of territoriality. Conversely, changing the instruments and codes led to changes in territoriality and boundaries (Raffestin 1981). Exploring the forces producing social space, Allen noted similarly that “the different arrangements of power take their shape from the placement of forces and their relational ties (...) the mutability of power differs in line with the differences between places, in terms of their uses, attachments, codes and relationships” (Allen 2003 : 178). However, in concluding his exploration of power and boundaries, Allen made an important nuance that Raffestin would not have made: “but, and this is an important but, in so far as each and every relationship is not a relationship of power, so each and every place is not continuously marked by the presence of power” (Allen 2003 : 178).

What these *regards croisés* have sought to show is how broadly similar Raffestin and Allen’s approaches to space and boundaries actually were. Referring back to the earlier reviews of Raffestin’s book, it is obvious how different his writing was from other Francophone authors in the Eighties. The mystery is why, if his writing makes sense and in many ways continues to appear innovative today, such writing should have become a partially Lost Geography. I am aware of the danger of romanticising one particular writer by making him appear a forgotten prophet and consequently personally taking on the role of enlightened facilitator. Instead, I am interested in what his *disparition* says about the circulation of texts and the (dis)functioning of the academy as a whole. While this sort of theoretically informed, social constructivist and critical approach to space was certainly marginal for a long time, it has recently found a much

wider echo in Francophone geography, in particular among researchers working together in Grenoble, Bordeaux and Pau, as well as around Strasbourg, Mulhouse and Montpellier (Arbaret-Schulz et al. 2004). A review of these in English is overdue. If innovative research on boundaries and power is to take place in France in future, these are the places in France worth watching. In Switzerland, a new team around Jacques Lévy at the EPFL in Lausanne (*Laboratoire Chôros*), and new faculty in the department of geography at the University of Geneva are also grounded in similar paradigms (Debarbieux 1999). However, these groups are mainly made up of researchers in their thirties and forties, only appointed to full professorships in the past few years. The established clique and the older generation are still involved in other battles.

### **Institutional structures and the circulation of ideas**

Part of the lack of impact of this work is to be found in the structure of the French academy, requiring a brief comment. This is broadly not a system designed for rapid innovation or the rise of freethinkers – innovation for innovation's sake is scorned upon and pointed out as something uniquely *Anglo* and therefore intrinsically suspect (Cusset 2003 : 230). It is also different from the much more decentralised structures prevalent in other French-speaking contexts such as Switzerland or Quebec. In comparison to British or North American contexts, the French geographical world is like a small family within which – as one geographer put it – *il faut montrer patte blanche* (Chivallon, 2005, *pers. comm.*), that is to say that individual acceptance is obtained by demonstrating one's worth, as in many exclusive peer groups, as well as by conforming and not sticking out too much. Paradoxically, however, or maybe in consequence of this hierarchical system, 'belonging' to a particular school of thinking is not highly regarded in France – in contrast, I would suggest, to the *Anglo* world – and instead being 'outside' and 'unclassifiable' is valued (Lévy & Debarbieux 2004, *pers. comm.*; Chivallon 1999 and 2005,

*pers.comm.*). Anything identified as jargon is savagely frowned upon. Likewise, labels ('postmodern', 'poststructuralist', 'constructivist', 'feminist' and so on), are seen to enclose and are largely rejected in France (Chivallon in Antheaume et al. 2004 : 13) and sometimes feared. Indeed, in another piece, Chivallon writes that "it is scarcely possible to speak of 'postmodern geography' in France without suspicion of scientific heresy" (Chivallon 2003 : 406). As Bourdieu (1984) has noted, this need to position oneself within the academia has an important effect on how ideas are spread and appropriated, relating to the varying visibility of different thinkers. Another substantial difference in France is the rarity of public debates, partly due to the absence of recent paradigmatic change, due mainly to reduced generational renewal. This institutional fixity has largely contributed to a certain climate of comfortable conformity and the corresponding strategy of remaining within the accepted *pré carré*, the designated field assigned to the discipline, rather than seeking inspiration from the outside – such as from social theorists. This may well be simply a current trend linked to individual waves of recruitment, as the current pattern is in contrast to more vivid debates in the Seventies and Eighties pitching the *Nouvelle Géographie* against established conservative paradigms (Chivallon 2005, *pers.comm.*).

In consequence of this highly codified French system, the smaller, marginal or peripheral schools in Switzerland and Quebec have sometimes acted as catalysts and innovators, largely simply by staying outside of partisan politics in France. In the past thirty years, many French academics have moved to Switzerland, for instance, not only lured by the substantially higher salaries and better material conditions, but also for the perceived intellectual freedom, rejoining what Söderström rather prettily described as an "archipelago of thinkers"<sup>27</sup> (Söderström 2004, *pers. comm.*), very different from the centralised French system of large centrally-funded *laboratoires*. It seems as if some French geographers have idealised Switzerland as an innovative periphery, as

Guy di Méo stated (di Méo 2004, *pers.comm.*) that Swiss-Romand geographers have historically had an impact on geography far beyond the objective size of the academy<sup>28</sup>, a point also made by Claval (1998 : 439).

The next section relates one particularly venomous battle that has pitted Raffestin against the full force of the French revival of geopolitics, reflecting radically different approaches to space, power and boundaries. More than a simple conflict of personalities who love to hate each other, often in public, this fracture reflects the wider schism between neo-realist and broadly post-structuralist or rather social constructivist approaches within the Francophone world. What is interesting here is not that there should be such a spectrum, but that the latter has been largely marginalised until recently. While it would be very easy to continue the game of *regards croisés* by contrasting Raffestin to Gearoid Ó Tuathail's *Critical Geopolitics* (1996)<sup>29</sup>, I prefer to explore an internal Francophone dialogue. The aim, rather than showing somewhat pointlessly that Raffestin could have been an honorary *Anglo* geographer, is to show how very different he is from the only Francophone brand of political geography / geopolitics that has been discussed and written about in English.

### **Raffestin's attacks on the theory and practice of *géopolitique***

Fifteen years after his book on the geography of power, Raffestin published *Géopolitique et Histoire*, in collaboration with Dario Lopreno and Yvan Pasteur<sup>30</sup>, two graduate students working at the University of Geneva, as part of a study partly funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. This critique of the philosophical underpinnings of geopolitics and the accompanying historical survey of European and North American geopolitics including American, British, French, German, Italian and Spanish schools was as much a personal manifesto for an engaged, critical geography as it was a critique of contemporary *uncritical*

geopolitics. This took his earlier proposal seriously by providing a history of ideas, a history of the knowledge and practices of self-declared past and present *géopoliticiens*<sup>31</sup>. This political geography was therefore seen to contribute to questioning the naturalisation of practices and policies by shedding light on their taken-for-granted character by revealing the presence of power. This was radically at odds with the much-better known attempt by Yves Lacoste to rehabilitate geopolitics as a direct tool of power and action, within and around the journal *Hérodote*.

It is important to read Raffestin's critique of Lacoste's work within the *Anglo* world since the few analyses that exist in English have largely taken at face value Lacoste's claim of providing a radical, informed and even neo- or post-marxist critique of political phenomena, speaking up for the oppressed, the voiceless and the marginalised groups in society. While this might have been arguably true at the start of his project when he founded the journal *Hérodote* in 1976, it is far from the case at present. The personal conflict started after the publication of *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir*, since in it he still quoted Lacoste positively (Raffestin 1980 : 170). Lacoste's review of the book (Lacoste 1981) indicated the shift in their proximity and the beginning of the feud. Subsequently, Raffestin wrote vociferously that Lacoste's endeavours were much closer to the (wrong) end of the political spectrum, with recent dangerously nationalist and populist surges (Raffestin 1995 : 290-304).

This position was in stark contrast to the very kind analysis of Lacoste offered recently by Paul Claval in Klaus Dodds and David Atkinson's otherwise excellent review of geopolitical traditions. Claval wrote that "once again, Lacoste offers a critical analysis of prevailing conceptions, and suggests interpretations which incorporate elements which are often exclusively claimed by right-wing parties" (Claval 2000 : 258). This seemed politically unbearably naïve,

notwithstanding an understandable desire to present French geography to the dominant *Anglo* world in the best possible light. Rather than engaging with the critiques of Lacoste written by Jacques Lévy or Claude Raffestin from within Francophone geography, Claval only chose to quote Lacoste's responses to them in which he claimed he was only panned for not being an orthodox Marxist, thereby laying claim to being the only free-thinker around (Claval 2000 : 260)<sup>32</sup>. Claval nevertheless did acknowledge that as time passed "many left-leaning journalists considered that Yves Lacoste had [...] broken his links with the French left" (Claval 2000 : 252). But he also wrote that "the renewed interest in political geography was not limited to left-wing geographers, for in the period between 1975 and 1980, for instance, new contributions to the field of geopolitics were proposed by André-Louis Sanguin (1977), Paul Claval (1978) and Claude Raffestin (1980)" (Claval 2000 : 261). Notwithstanding Lacoste's own dubious position on such a spectrum, the question one longs to ask is quite where Claval would place Raffestin. What was interesting here, of course, was that this left/right spectrum mattered in France in a way that it didn't in *Anglo* political geography where radicalism was (ostensibly) the benchmark and academics tried terribly hard to be more radical than their proverbial neighbours. Claval's attempts from the inside to explain away the divide only served to further stress its fundamental importance (see also Claval 2003). Hepple's analysis of Lacoste within the same book was however much more nuanced. He identified Lacoste's initial and laudable ambition of putting his finger on "a serious lack of 'epistemological reflection' [that] had blinded French geography to the ways in which the subject had been constructed in a narrow and emasculated fashion" (Hepple 2000 : 272). This was undoubtedly necessary at a time when the overwhelmingly *Vidalian* descriptive traditions was still rampant, and – to push the hopelessly macho imagery still further – was arguably castrating all forms of innovation. However, although Hepple effectively provided the first comprehensive engagement with the *Hérodote* clique to be published in

English, he was less astute in detecting the slow shift of Lacoste's politics from critical agitator to established servant of a figurative Prince. Hepple explained the return of the term *géopolitique* within the title of the journal as nothing more than a strategic choice reflecting the need to occupy the lexical ground at a time when other more reactionary forces were using it in France (Hepple 2000 : 277; compare to Raffestin 1995 : 291)<sup>33</sup>. In addressing Raffestin's critique of Lacoste's shift to the right and his somewhat Franco-French nationalism, Hepple reduced this to a simple misunderstanding of Lacoste's stance against Anglo-Saxon hegemony.

Raffestin's critique was aimed at those who saw geography as a strategic decision-making tool. In a particularly self-satisfied article – and one that directly quoted Raffestin to discard him – Béatrice Giblin, one of the members of Lacoste's clique, wrote for instance that academic geography and political geography were quite simply 'lost on Sirius' (Giblin 1985 : 285)<sup>34</sup>, the French equivalent of running off with the fairies<sup>35</sup>. In response, Raffestin noted that this perfidious stance was "not simply a question of putting oneself purely at the service of the powerful, but rather of marrying science and politics, of knowing how to create a political tool for rulers. Here, we are faced with the permanence of one of the characteristics of the former geopolitics, systematically subservient to political power"<sup>36</sup> (Raffestin 1995 : 298 ; see Lacoste's response 2001 : 12). Lacoste brushed away such critiques by arguing that his apolitical, 'scientific' *raisonnement géographique* protected him from the peril of ideological slippage (Ò Tuathail 1994 and Hepple 2000 : 281 also make this point), as did – one is tempted to add – his former veneer of radicalism. He increasingly referred to his group as a nationally based school, writing that "geopolitical reasoning, at least that which characterises what can from now on be called the French School of Geopolitics, is methodical and rigorous"<sup>37</sup> (Lacoste 2001 : 7), stating that no other country than France had such a competent body of scientists that could produce

analyses “based on a sufficiently solid and diverse scientific basis”<sup>38</sup> (Lacoste 2001 : 8), except in some (unspecified) countries where they might be located within the Ministries of Defence or of Foreign Affairs (Lacoste 2001 : 8), indicating directly how close to state power he thought geopolitics should be. Raffestin showed convincingly that this was nothing new: just the resurgence of the old geopolitical Beast. The geographer, once again, was deluding himself in serving the Prince, congratulating himself on his (largely-imaginary) strategic importance.

## **Conclusions**

In this paper, I have offered a reflexive, and subjective, look at the production of scientific discourses by exploring the context and practice of political geography within the Francophone world. I have suggested that the fundamental difference between *Anglo* and Francophone geographies relates not to a fundamental and unbridgeable gap in content or topic, but rather to how theoretical writings and texts have been made to circulate. I chose to use two *regards croisés*, two strategic comparisons, rather than to write an alternative epistemology of Francophone political geography that would contrast with the accepted orthodoxy that lists Lacoste, Sanguin, Claval and Raffestin chronologically, with the last as a marginal late-comer. This meant shedding particular light on the circulation of ideas within various contributions to political geography. By focussing on institutional structure, the nature of the academy in France and styles of debate in the wider Francophone world, I have both pointed out and questioned the divide between academic traditions. In confronting Raffestin’s *Pour une Géographie du Pouvoir* (1980) with John Allen’s *Lost Geographies of Power* (2003), two books that come to somewhat similar conclusions, building on a variety of common sources, I pointed out Allen’s firmer affirmation of the importance of topology, materiality and embodiment in the experience of power in particular places. This was different from Raffestin’s more general discussions, in

which examples were more likely than not to concern nation-states, despite his overt articulation that this was not the only scale at which power was manifest. Following this, I briefly confronted Claude Raffestin's wider approach to the practice of geography by contrasting his critical stance on political geography and geopolitics to that of his nemesis Yves Lacoste. In opposing his critique developed within *Géopolitique et Histoire* to Lacoste's own reformulation of geopolitics, I argued that his position presented a very necessary critique of reactionary political ideologies that continue to gain popularity in a world shaken in its certainties.

The various analyses of different approaches to geographical thinking were used throughout to shed light on how Raffestin, Lacoste and some of their critiques and readers approached space and power. Furthermore, by briefly exploring how these various authors considered boundaries, I suggested that this continuous reflexive loop further illustrated the particular epistemological foundations and differences between these academic discourses. Throughout, it emerged that the main difference between *Anglo* and Francophone geographies was not one of content, since the full spectrum of political geographies – from realist to critical or social constructivist – existed in both, but rather in how certain theoretical writings and texts have circulated and been picked up. The danger of focussing on the personal stories and vendettas, on the buzz of what so often turns into little more than academic gossip and feuds, is to get caught up in them and to have to choose sides. This camp mentality is somewhat waning in the Francophone world yet the lack of any accepted ritualised spaces or national fora for what should be stimulating debates continues to cause concern, and most journals continue to be house journals of individual departments, reflecting the local hegemony. In contrast to the petty warfare, I keep in mind Raffestin's healthy and very Sartrean approach to criticism that requires an author not to listen to critiques and be hurt by them, but instead demands of them to write 200 pages in response to any disagreement.

Raffestin's *Pour une géographie du pouvoir* was such an attempt, as was his later *Géopolitique et histoire*. If geography is to take its desire to create a global space of debate seriously, then further engagement with this literature both within and outside the Francophone world will be necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to avoid arguing myself into a corner over what term to use to call this and mindful of reifying a world that in many ways is more diverse than the term might suggest (see Paasi 2005; Garcia-Ramon 2003; Samers & Sidaway 2000; Minca 2000; Agnew & Duncan 1981) yet still willing to risk the shorthand for the sake of argument, I will use the French term *Anglo*, a mildly slangy expression used orally when discussing it ‘from the outside’, as in “Les *Anglos* font comme ça, mais nous...”. It is harder to find a snappy equivalent to describe the French-language world since the term often used by the *Anglos* is ‘French’. As an Anglo-Swiss cultivating the position of the in-between, I find this unsatisfactory, and have chosen ‘Francophone’ as a rather less snappy alternative.

<sup>2</sup> Listing some of the most recent individuals cannot fail to be arbitrary and subjective, and by definition partial, but might include John Agnew, Vincent Berdoulay, Nick Blomley, Christine Chivallon, Paul Claval, Béatrice Collignon, Bernard Debarbieux, Nicolas Entrikin, Eleonore Kofman, Jacques Lévy, Jean-François Staszak, Michel Storper and Allen Scott. Jean Gottmann’s early pioneering role should not be forgotten either. While he largely remained an outsider in France much of his life, there is some indication of his reappearance and re-appropriation, e.g. during “L’Orbite de la Géographie de Jean Gottmann”, Colloque International, Société de Géographie de Paris, Université de Paris-Sorbonne, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 29-30 Mars 2005, Jean Bastié and Jean-Robert Pitte tentatively (re)claimed Gottmann as a member of the French School (Agnew 2005, *pers. comm.*).

<sup>3</sup> « leurs noms connaissaient en France une éclipse systématique »

<sup>4</sup> Further details on the epistemological history of French geography can be found in Olivier Orain’s excellent thesis (2003) *Le plein-pied du monde: postures épistémologiques et pratiques d’écriture dans la géographie française au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne. The title is mildly misleading since many of the authors invoked belong to the French-speaking world in the wider sense, in particular from universities in Switzerland.

<sup>5</sup> Similar explicitly relational postures seems to be enjoying recent success, and (re)invention in *Anglo* circles, as in Doreen Massey’s recent *For Space* (2005).

<sup>6</sup> « Le pouvoir, nom commun, se cache derrière le Pouvoir, nom propre. Il se cache d’autant mieux qu’il est présent partout. Présent dans chaque relation, au détour de chaque action : insidieux, il profite de toutes les fissures sociales pour s’infiltrer jusqu’au cœur de l’homme. Ambiguïté donc puisqu’il y a le ‘Pouvoir’ et le ‘pouvoir’. Mais le premier est plus facile à cerner car il se manifeste à travers des appareils complexes qui enserrent le territoire, contrôlent la population et dominent les ressources. C’est le pouvoir visible, massif, identifiable. Il est dangereux et inquiétant, par conséquent, mais il inspire la méfiance par la menace même qu’il représente. Mais le plus dangereux c’est celui qu’on ne voit pas ou qu’on voit plus parce qu’on a cru s’en débarrasser en l’assignant à résidence surveillée. Ce serait trop simple que le

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Pouvoir soit le Minotaure enfermé dans son labyrinthe qu'un Thésée pourrait aller tuer une fois pour toutes. Le pouvoir renaît, plus terrible encore, dans la rencontre de Thésée et du Minotaure : le Pouvoir est mort, vive le pouvoir. Dès lors, le pouvoir est assuré de pérennité car il n'est plus visible, il est consubstantiel de toutes les relations»

<sup>7</sup> «tout point d'exercice du pouvoir est en même temps un lieu de formation du savoir». (Quoted by Raffestin 1980 : 48, but not referenced)

<sup>8</sup> «j'ai été très critiqué pour cette utilisation de Foucault et la seule consolation que j'ai, c'est que les Américains et notamment les géographes californiens découvrent ou redécouvrent Foucault aujourd'hui »

<sup>9</sup> These were redrawn in the Italian version, and ended up looking much more rigid (see Raffestin 1981). This is only one of the many articles and books by Raffestin to be translated into Italian and Spanish.

<sup>10</sup> « l'espace est la 'prison originelle', le territoire est la prison que les hommes se donnent »

<sup>11</sup> « l'émanation haïssable d'un système mandarin par trop hiérarchique, marginalisant (d'abord et avant tout financièrement) les équipes 'progressistes' »

<sup>12</sup> « pensée de l'uniformité et de la totalité qui s'appuie sur l'algèbre linéaire et la statistique classique [...] une pensée de l'accident et de la discontinuité dont la meilleure expression est la théorie de catastrophes. Ce que l'on appelle l'Ecole française de géographie, de Vidal de Lablache [sic] aux « possibilistes » se range dans la seconde catégorie. Sous l'apparence d'une rupture, Cl. Raffestin est en réalité l'héritier de cette tradition »

<sup>13</sup> « j'étais frappé [...] de la grave inculture, jointe à un d'autant plus étrange complexe de supériorité, du milieu géographique face aux textes et aux débats philosophiques »

<sup>14</sup> « le terme 'pouvoir' est employé à la manière de Michel Foucault. Par sa dissymétrie, toute relation s'analyse comme rapport de forces, comme violence dirait Marx. La lecture de Foucault est prodigieusement stimulante, mais elle ne fournit pas d'outils opérationnels, pas de mesure du 'pouvoir', pas d'identification objective de ses effets. Le 'pouvoir' à la manière de l'éther des physiciens, ou du phlogistique des chimistes est consubstantiel à toute relation, mais impossible de l'en séparer, de l'isoler et donc d'en dresser la carte précise »

<sup>15</sup> « pourrait être taxé de pratiquer un certain déterminisme politique quand il affirme que le pouvoir est consubstantiel de toute relation »

<sup>16</sup> « non parce qu'elle vole haut, dans l'air éthéré des concepts abstraits, mais parce qu'elle plonge au plus profond des structures cachées du pouvoir »

<sup>17</sup> « il faut bien constater que ces géographes, s'ils se plaisent à parler du pouvoir, se refusent à l'observer en tant que géographes et surtout à se référer à sa qui en est la façon de voir spécifique, la caractéristique épistémologique majeure de la géographie: les cartes! »

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<sup>18</sup> Lacoste wrote almost exactly the same: « Ces livres écrits pas des géographes qui traitent l'un de l' « espace » et l'autre d'une « géographie » sont des *livres sans aucune carte* » (Lacoste 1981 : 155, emphasis in original). Michel Foucher, a former disciple of Lacoste and present French Ambassador to Latvia, also argued forcefully that maps were the privileged instruments through which geographers engaged with the complexities of geographical reality: “its privileged tool is the study of facts as they are observable on sets of geographical maps at different scales” (Foucher 1986 : 14; see also Lacoste 1981; or Buléon 1992 : 37 for a critique). Compare with Raffestin’s later chapter on the use of maps (Raffestin 1991) within Haushofer’s *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik*, translated into English in Lévy (2001).

<sup>19</sup> This is actually a surprising thing to attack Raffestin on, since Lacoste wrote much on extending what he called his *analyse géopolitique* to non-state actors (Lacoste 1985).

<sup>20</sup> « malgré leur grand intérêt, ces deux ouvrages ont peu fait école, peut-être parce qu’ils cumulaient deux handicaps pourtant opposés. D’un côté, ils étaient trop avancés pour leurs lecteurs, maniant des concepts perçus comme trop abstraits, trop lointain des champs de recherche habituels ; de l’autre, ils continuaient d’aborder de biais le politique, véritable point aveugle de la *Weltanschauung* des géographes, renonçant à fonder une géographie politique sur des bases épistémologiques et théoriques claires. Du moins en France et dans les pays latins, car dans le monde anglophone, la géographie politique a, au cours des années 1980, conquis en douceur une place significative dans la discipline »

<sup>21</sup> « sa production a le caractère d’une mosaïque lentement échafaudée, dans laquelle chaque texte prend place comme *pièce*, d’un dispositif et d’un processus. Dispositif, car chaque écrit renvoie à d’autres, contemporains, qu’il relaie et qu’il complète, avec des redites partielles qui permettent un *empiècement* assez aisé »

<sup>22</sup> Unknowingly, in a review of Allen’s book, Sayer (2004) was closer to Raffestin in arguing, albeit largely from a realist perspective, that it is not ‘capacity’ that needs rejecting, but instead the varying intelligibility of power that needs taking into account through concepts of causal powers and what he calls emergent properties.

<sup>23</sup> « Simultanément l’expression d’un projet social résultant des rapports de production qui se nouent dans les modes de production et le champ idéologique présent dans toute relation »

<sup>24</sup> « A cet égard, nous procédons de la tradition romaine et même nous en vivons encore. Nous ne sacrifions plus à Terminus, le dieu qui veille aux limites, mais les Etats modernes entourent leurs territoires respectifs de limites, souvent lourdement matérialisées, et parfois difficilement franchissables. »

<sup>25</sup> « Traduction, régulation, différenciation et relation sont les principes même qu'on retrouvera toujours dans la limite ou la frontière. Principes qui doivent permettre de poser les questions essentielles à

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n'importe quelle limite à propos de laquelle il faut se demander : que traduit-elle, que régule-t-elle, que différencie-t-elle, que relie-t-elle? C'est le seul moyen de passer d'une analyse idéographique à une analyse nomothétique, le seul moyen de dépasser le particulier pour atteindre le général »

<sup>26</sup> « La limite est différenciation. Elle est toujours fondatrice d'une différence dont la disparition est crise. Si les franchissements de limite, au cours de l'histoire, se sont, presque toujours, traduits par des explosions de violence, c'est que justement la différence indispensable était, à cette occasion, niée. Refaire la limite, c'est retrouver le sens de la différenciation et ramener l'ordre. Aucune activité matérielle ou spirituelle ne peut se passer d'un système de limites. Cette nécessaire différenciation n'implique pas que les limites soient toujours stables, mais elle implique qu'il y ait toujours des limites, ce qui est différent on en conviendra. Le chaos c'est l'indifférenciation, c'est l'absence de limites. On voit bien le rapport qu'entretient la limite avec la valeur. La limite est une notion ubiquiste, c'est, au vrai sens du terme, un invariant absolument indispensable. On pourrait dire, et en ce sens nous serions d'accord avec ceux qui prônent l'effacement des frontières, peu importe les limites... pourvu qu'il y en ait. On voit bien que la différenciation dont la limite est porteuse débouche sur une théorie de la culture. Finalement, toute culture, au sens anthropologique du terme, est une théorie en acte de la limite. »

<sup>27</sup> “un archipel de penseurs”

<sup>28</sup> Within the four French-speaking geography departments in Switzerland, there are only 10 full professors in all : equivalent to one large department in several universities in Great Britain, for instance.

<sup>29</sup> This would have followed Lévy's idea in both (1999) and (2001 : 4) when he casually suggested similarities between the two.

<sup>30</sup> On reading the book it is possible to guess, though it is unfortunately not actually stated, which chapters were not written directly by Raffestin. There was apparently some debate, at the time of publication, on whether Lopreno and Pasteur's names would in fact appear.

<sup>31</sup> For once, the masculine really is appropriate here, as Raffestin cites very few female geographers in his review, reflecting not chauvinism for once, but the overwhelmingly male dominance of the field. Marie-France Garaud, in France, is perhaps the only exception to this long list of (mostly dead) white men.

<sup>32</sup> The struggles within different factions of the French Left in the late 1970s are hinted at within the various critiques and responses taking place in a variety of French newspapers and academic journals. See for instance Lévy (1976) and Lacoste's response (1976)

<sup>33</sup> Another more recent lexical change was the renaming of the Centre de Recherches et d'Analyse Géopolitiques at the Université Paris-VIII as the Institut Français de Géopolitique, in 2003, headed by Béatrice Gibling, a colleague and close collaborator of Lacoste's since the creation of Hérodote in 1976, further reinforcing the national rootedness of both the institution and its members.

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<sup>34</sup> This tight-knit clique is referred to in a footnote: Giblin wrote that the content of her article had been largely discussed and had been approved by the director of *Hérodote*. It was, this implied, perfectly orthodox (see Giblin 1985, footnote 1).

<sup>35</sup> In his preface to Michel Korinmann's book (1990), Lacoste used the same metaphor when he stated that "ce n'est pas de Sirius que nous regardons le monde, et nous savons aujourd'hui ce qu'il en est de l' « internationalisme prolétarien ». Chacun et chacune d'entre nous est citoyen d'une nation » (Lacoste 1990 : V), also further adding fuel to his stance increasingly based around the idea of distinct, and largely reified, 'nations'.

<sup>36</sup> « il ne s'agit évidemment pas de se mettre purement et simplement au service du pouvoir, mais de savoir marier science et politique, de savoir créer un outil politique pour les dirigeants. Nous avons affaire ici à la permanence d'une caractéristique des anciennes géopolitiques, leur statut toujours subordonné au pouvoir politique »

<sup>37</sup> « les raisonnements géopolitiques, du moins ceux qui caractérisent ce que l'on peut désormais appeler l'école française de géopolitique, sont (...) méthodiques et rigoureux »

<sup>38</sup> « sur des bases scientifiques suffisamment solides et diversifiées »