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# The Foucault Effect in Argentina (1970-1990)

by Mariana Canavese

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## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Recognized as a classic thinker, one of the most disruptive, complex and influential authors of the Twentieth century, Michel Foucault maintains a strong presence in Latin America. In Argentina in particular, his proposals are currently part of the conventional wisdom of local political, intellectual and cultural fields. He is one of the most well-known, widely read and broadly purchased philosophers in the country.

Argentina is one of the central hubs of the Latin American reception of Foucault. In order to understand this immeasurable factor in Argentine culture, I aim to reconstruct the genealogy of the extraordinary contemporary diffusion, and naturalization, of Foucault's ideas in the country; a reception which had not been investigated, and which is also linked to the rest of the region. Foucault never visited Argentina, nor did he make substantial references to this country, but nonetheless, his presence there has seen consistent growth for more than a half century. The effects

<sup>1</sup> This article was produced within the framework of the INTERCO SSH project under grant agreement n°319974 (interco-ssh.eu/en/). The Argentine reception of Foucault is vast, intense and heterogeneous, which makes it impossible for this work to discuss the topic in anything more than incomplete terms. For a more thorough review of the presence of Foucault in Argentina, see Mariana Canavese, *Usos de Foucault en la Argentina. Recepción y Circulación desde los Años Cincuenta hasta Nuestros Días* [Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2015].

of his work have become a privileged prism for the study of struggles for signification and strategic uses, as well as for the analysis of certain political and cultural issues which permeated the local intellectual field. The challenge lies in understanding the characteristics of the Argentine presence of Foucault and explaining the trajectory towards his legitimation. It is not solely about understanding how Foucault's texts circulated and were read, but how, during the second half of the Twentieth century in Argentina, they gradually became both an instrument for political struggle, an expression of social tensions, a companion in the practice of reading as an act of resistance, a catalyst for militant identification, and an object of academic study; a varied and contradictory presence in the Argentine political-intellectual sphere during decisive years which linked the initial moment of his reception and his present-day legitimation.

I suggest that, on the one hand, one of the specificities of this reception is its high politicization, which reflects strong interdependencies between the intellectual and political domains in Argentina. Foucault's theoretical productions operated midway between the intellectual and political fields based on readings that were over-determined by local sociopolitical and historical conditions. For a long time, his texts were mainly excluded from university programs, and were instead reclaimed in private courses, the media and extra-academic spaces.

On the other hand, I believe that this reception must be understood in relation to the privileged position of French culture among Argentine intellectuals. But, regarding this point, I attempt to contribute to the particularities of the international circulation of ideas by presenting a case of reception that demonstrates the intersection between the plasticity present in the work itself in the form of latent meanings, and the diverse, changing local contexts which construct a Foucault adapted to their needs and desires. Can we speak of an Argentinian, or Latin American, Foucault? As we will see, there are different usages which make it difficult to unify his thinking: there is an international circulation, as well as appropriations linked to local conditions. The concurrence of these two situations does not result in "one" Foucault, but rather, a singular composition made up of diverse fragments and mediations.

In order to organize and understand the fluctuations in the reception of Foucault in Argentina, I first establish a periodisation which seeks to highlight the contrast between an initial era of restricted circulation (1961-1983), and a subsequent period of widespread diffusion, which begins with the return of democracy in 1983, increases in the 1990s, and grows exponentially in the 2000s. Although this chronology may be analogous to many other national contexts, the singular nature of the way in which Foucault is appropriated in Argentine culture is evident when focus is placed on three specific moments, all of which contributed to his installment as a fun-

damental reference for a diverse range of politico-intellectual and academic debates: a) the last military dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983), when the academic, political and intellectual spheres were undermined by death, fear and silence; b) the political-intellectual circumstances of the “crisis of Marxism” in the 1980s; c) the modes of circulation in academic and cultural spaces after the recuperation of democracy in 1983. These three periods are of special interest in observing how Foucault operates in very different contexts; perceiving certain uses by Argentine intellectuals and academics in the social sciences and humanities; and analysing the ways in which said uses are connected to specific forms of interpreting local culture and politics.

This approach is supported by productions within the field of studies focused on the international reception and circulation of ideas, which understands works to be open texts, and reading to be an active and situated process [Jay 1993; Chartier 1992 and 1999; Aricó 1980; Palti 2007; Tarcus 2007 and 2016; Various Authors 2008, among others]. The present analysis understands “reception” as the modes of circulation, diffusion, interpretation, appropriation or rejection of texts, concepts and practices. It is inevitable that this work will recall the formulation based on “structural misunderstanding” [Bourdieu 1999], a classic notion in the study of the reception of ideas in contexts other than the one in which they were produced, and the inherent characteristics of those intellectual spaces. In this sense, far from analytical frameworks that establish “models” and “deviations” – an interpretation of the notion of reception tied to “influence”, authentic discourse and adaptations – this work reasserts the reconstruction and analysis of usages in order to understand how Foucault’s texts have been appropriated, giving way to both theoretical developments and the production of local thought, as well as practices and operations that allowed political-intellectual strategies to be redesigned. They spanned a diverse range of disciplines (from linguistics and literary theory to epistemology of the social sciences and philosophy of law, passing through history, philosophy, sociology, literary studies, communication sciences, anthropology, education, political science, psychiatry and psychoanalysis), and were executed from different ideologies: a wide arc marked by anarchism, Marxism, postmodernism, and considerations which – under Foucault’s Nietzschean bias – set out to critique the traditional left, among others.

In brief, far from an inquiry focused on judging the fidelity, or lack thereof, in relation to Foucault’s texts, this analysis is oriented toward reading practices that offer indications as to how these texts were used, the conditions which made these productions useful tools for thinking about the local reality, the experiences that molded these readings, and signs that point to how circulating texts were legitimized as a way of analysing certain characteristics of the Argentine political-intellectual

sphere and proposing a territorialization of these usages to identify the singularities of the international circulation of ideas.

## 2. Two Major Periods of Reception

During the **first period** of reception, there was a set of early circulations of Foucault's proposals, references which today are unknown or forgotten, but which were originally fostered by the French element of Argentine culture, especially with regards to two very different books, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* [1954] and *Les mots et les choses* [1966]. However, during these years, references to Foucault were restricted, initially due to his classification within structuralism, which could not be reconciled in the climate of political radicalization of the 1960s, and later due to the conditions imposed by the last military dictatorship in Argentina. Some elements corresponding to the initial local circulation of texts by Foucault include readings of *Maladie mentale et personnalité* from the psychoanalytic field, the translation of this book into Spanish in Argentina, and the local publishing of an anthology on Foucault.

In Argentina, *Maladie mentale et personnalité* – Foucault's first book, and one of the least recognized – was read directly in French and cited alongside Marxism, phenomenology and psychology by exponents of the development of psychoanalysis in Argentina [Bleger 1958 and 1963]. Those references marked Foucault's first entry into the psychoanalytic domain, a discipline and practice which experienced rapid diffusion among the middle class during the 1960s [Plotkin 2003]. In 1961, Argentine publishing house *Paidós*<sup>2</sup> edited the first Spanish translation of *Maladie mentale et personnalité*, performed by a young psychology student in the city of Rosario (Argentina), Emma Kestelboim.

Published by *Siglo XXI* in 1968, *Les mots et les choses*, on the other hand, arrived in Argentina via Mexico. Nonetheless, in the climate of humanist voluntarism and political radicalization of those years, that book – often considered the consummation of the hegemony of structuralism – could not avoid being the target of critiques that resisted the progression of that movement, considered in those years a paradigm that discouraged thinking about political and social change. However, the 1970 publication of an anthology titled *Análisis de Michel Foucault* demonstrates that this author already had a significant readership. This book, published in Buenos Aires, by *Tiempo Contemporáneo*, is a collection of articles from French journals *Esprit* (P. Burgelin), *Raison Présente* (O. Revault d'Allonnes), *Les Temps Modernes* (M. Amiot, S. Le Bon), *La Pensée* (B. Balan, G. Dulac, G. Marcy, J.-P. Ponthus, J.

<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1960s, *Paidós* was a thriving publisher, well-known in Latin America and in Spain.

Proust, J. Stefanini, E. Verley, M. Foucault) and *Critique* (G. Canguilhem). Though they refer to the suggestive and brilliant nature of the book, these texts – written after the appearance of *Les mots et les choses* and published in France between 1967 and 1968 – mainly focus on challenging and critiquing this work. This was the first Spanish-language publication fully dedicated to Foucault, and possibly the first in the world outside of France. The texts were selected and translated by Argentine philosopher José Sazbón, albeit anonymously.<sup>3</sup> At that point in time, Sazbón (1937-2008) was a young humanist intellectual, influenced by Sartrean and Lukacsian Marxism. Coming from a modest family, and as a philosophical scholar interested in history and politics, he later became a prominent intellectual and point of reference for studies focusing on Western Marxism and Critical Theory. He had first accessed Foucault directly in French, and lived in Paris from 1972 to 1974 while on a doctoral grant under Jacques Derrida and Manuel Castells. In Paris, he attended courses given by Lévi-Strauss, Lacan and Foucault at the Collège de France. As a professor and researcher, he worked exhaustively as a translator, compiler, prologuist and editor. In addition to teaching (at that time, he was a Professor of General Sociology at the National University of La Plata), his role in the mediation of French authors in the social sciences was marked by his direction of the collection “El Pensamiento Estructuralista,” published by *Nueva Visión* beginning in 1969. But *Análisis de Michel Foucault* was less an academic proposal, and more a work that sought to diffuse Foucault’s thinking and intervene in the intellectual field. In the academic field of philosophy in the late 1960s, Foucault still did not resonate.

In addition to the circulation of his proposals in accordance with Sartrean criticism, during these years, some readings of his texts – on some occasions mediated by *Tel Quel* or, to a lesser extent, Althusser – circulated irregularly among psychoanalysts, philosophers, writers, literary critics and artists, outside of academic settings.

<sup>3</sup> Regarding the fact that Sazbón’s name did not figure in this volume, it should be noted that this was a common practice for him; in fact, instead of creating pseudonyms, he often used the names of friends and family. In this case, his wife, Berta Stolor, appears as the translator.

TAB. 1. *Publications from 1960 to 1976*

<b>Title</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Place of publication</b>	<b>Years between original ed. and 1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Translator</b>
<i>Enfermedad Mental y Personalidad (Maladie mentale et personnalité)</i>	1961 (1954)	Paidós (PUF)	Buenos Aires	7	Emma Kestelboim
<i>El Nacimiento de la Clínica. Una Arqueología de la Mirada Médica (Naissance de la clinique. Une archéologie du regard médical)</i>	1966 (1963)	Siglo XXI (PUF)	Mexico	3	Francisca Perujo
<i>Historia de la Locura en la Época Clásica (2 vols.)<sup>4</sup> (Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique)</i>	1967 (1964)	FCE (Plon)	Mexico	3	Juan José Utrilla
<i>Las Palabras y las Cosas. Una Arqueología de las Ciencias Humanas (Les mots et les choses. Une archéologie des sciences humaines)</i>	1968 (1966)	Siglo XXI (Gallimard)	Mexico	2	Elsa Cecilia Frost
“La Proto-fábula,” in Various Authors, <i>Verne: un Revolucionario Subterráneo</i> (“L’arrière-fable”)	1968 (1966)	Paidós ( <i>L’arc</i> , no. 29)	Buenos Aires	2	Noé Jitrik
<i>Nietzsche, Freud, Marx</i> (“Nietzsche, Freud, Marx,” in <i>Cahiers de Royaumont. Nietzsche</i> )	1970 (1966)	Anagrama (Minuit)	Barcelona	4 (another ed. in <i>Eco</i> magazine, Bogotá, 1969; translated by Carlos Rincón)	Alberto González Troyano

TAB. 1. *Publications from 1960 to 1976*

<b>Title</b>	<b>1st Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Place of publication</b>	<b>Years between original ed. and 1st Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Translator</b>
“Carta de Michel Foucault sobre el Coloquio” and “Respuesta al Círculo de Epistemología,” both in Various Authors, <i>Análisis de Michel Foucault</i> (“Lettre de Michel Foucault à Jacques Proust” and “Réponse au cercle d’épistémologie”)	1970 (1968)	Tiempo Contemporáneo ( <i>La Pensée</i> 139 and <i>Cahiers pour l’analyse</i> 9)	Buenos Aires	2	José Szabón
<i>La Arqueología del Saber</i> ( <i>L’Archéologie du savoir</i> )	1970 (1969)	Siglo XXI (Gallimard)	Mexico	1	Aurelio Garzón del Camino
<i>Raymond Roussel</i>	1973 (1963)	Siglo XXI (Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	10	Patricio Canto
<i>El Orden del Discurso</i> ( <i>L’Ordre du discours. Leçon inaugurale du Collège de France</i> )	1973 (1971)	Tusquets (Gallimard)	Barcelona	2	Alberto González Troyano
<i>Yo, Pierre Rivière, habiendo degollado a mi madre, a mi hermana y a mi hermano [...] (Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma sœur et mon frère [...]) Un cas de parricide au XIX siècle</i>	1976 (1973)	Tusquets (Gallimard)	Barcelona	3	Joan Vinyoli
<i>Vigilar y Castigar. Nacimiento de la Prisión</i> ( <i>Surveiller</i>	1976 (1975)	Siglo XXI (Gallimard)	Mexico	1	Aurelio Garzón del Camino

TAB. 1. *Publications from 1960 to 1976*

Title	1st Spanish ed.	Publisher	Place of publication	Years between original ed. and 1st Spanish ed.	Translator
<i>et punir. Naissance de la prison</i>					

Source: Author's Elaboration.

During this first period, the Spanish publication of Foucault's texts followed shortly after their French versions, with the translation and publication of these works taking place at key companies (*Paidós, Siglo XXI, FCE*) located in the main Latin-American publishing hubs of the era (Argentina and Mexico).<sup>5</sup> However, in the beginning, Michel Foucault had not yet become Foucault, the fundamental Twentieth-century philosopher, leading figure and influential thinker that he represents today. And in Argentina, he certainly was not classified as such, at least until the release of *Vigilar y Castigar (Surveiller et punir)* [1976], when local conditions summoned, welcomed and started to build the Foucault we know today. The publication of this book coincided with the start of the last military dictatorship in Argentina, when his works circulated not only in an implicit manner. I will address this topic in more detail later.

Unlike those first readings, today, Foucault's presence in Argentine culture is inescapable. **The second stage** of his reception begins with the recuperation of democracy in 1983, and is characterized by a consolidated and expanded interest in his works. Foucault would emerge in that moment, ready to analyse problematics of the state and lay the groundwork for new modes of resistance and autonomy. His proposals would have a deep impact on academic spaces, and spread to the cultural domain in general, appearing in film, theatre, music and poetry.<sup>6</sup>

Since the second half of the 1980s, Foucault has been published massively (today, his books are sold at newsstands). Though local translations of his texts circulated in newspapers, journals and compilations beginning in the 1980s – including selections of texts that did not necessarily correspond to the French editions – in

<sup>5</sup> Although Spanish publishing had regained its expressiveness in those years, censorship and ideological restrictions imposed by Franco's dictatorship limited the participation of Spanish publishers in the publication of social sciences and humanities until the late 1960s [Sorá 2017].

<sup>6</sup> A band from the Southern region of the Province of Buenos Aires (*Plèyades*) even defined itself as “the first Foucauldian reggae” a few years ago.

later years a period of new translations commenced, placing specific emphasis on Foucault's courses.

TAB. 2. *Publications from 2000 to 2016*

Title	1 <sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.	Publisher	Place of publication	Years between original ed. and 1 <sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.	Translator
<i>Defender la Sociedad</i> ("Il faut défendre la société." <i>Cours au Collège de France</i> 1976)	2000 (1997)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	3	Horacio Pons
<i>Los Anormales</i> ( <i>Les anormaux. Cours au Collège de France</i> 1974-1975)	2000 (1999)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	1	Horacio Pons
<i>La Hermenéutica del Sujeto</i> ( <i>L'herméneutique du sujet. Cours au Collège de France</i> 1981-1982)	2002 (2001)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	1	Horacio Pons
<i>Discurso y Verdad en la Antigua Grecia</i> ( <i>Discourse and Truth</i> )	2004 (1985)	Paidós (Joseph Pearson)	Buenos Aires	19	Fernando Fuentes Megías
<i>La Pintura de Manet</i> ( <i>La peinture de Manet</i> )	2004 (2004)	Alpha Decay (Seuil)	Barcelona	0	Roser Vilagrassa
<i>El Poder Psiquiátrico</i> ( <i>Le pouvoir psychiatrique. Cours au Collège de France</i> 1973-1974)	2005 (2003)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	2	Horacio Pons
<i>Seguridad, Territorio, Población</i> ( <i>Sécurité, territoire, population. Cours au Collège de France</i> 1977-1978)	2006 (2004)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	2	Horacio Pons
<i>Nacimiento de la Biopolítica</i> ( <i>Naissance de la biopolitique. Cours au</i>	2007 (2004)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	3	Horacio Pons

TAB. 2. *Publications from 2000 to 2016*

<b>Title</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Place of publication</b>	<b>Years between original ed. and 1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Translator</b>
<i>Collège de France 1978-1979)</i>					
<i>El Gobierno de Sí y de los Otros (Le gouvernement de soi et des autres. Cours au Collège de France 1982-1983)</i>	2009 (2008)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	1	Horacio Pons
<i>Una Lectura de Kant. Introducción a la Antropología en Sentido Pragmático (Kant, Anthropologie du point de vue pragmatique; Foucault, Introduction à l' "Anthropologie")</i>	2009 (2008)	Siglo XXI (Vrin)	Buenos Aires	1	Ariel Dillon
<i>El Coraje de la Verdad. El Gobierno de Sí y de los Otros II (Le courage de la vérité. Le gouvernement de soi et des autres II. Cours au Collège de France 1983-1984)</i>	2010 (2009)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	1	Horacio Pons
<i>El Cuerpo Utópico. Las Heterotopías (Le corps utopique. Les hétérotopies)</i>	2010 (2009)	Nueva Visión (Lignes)	Buenos Aires	1	Víctor Goldstein
<i>El Poder, una Bestia Magnífica. Sobre el poder, la prisión y la vida (Sel. Dits et écrits I - II)</i>	2012	Siglo XXI	Buenos Aires	-	Horacio Pons
<i>Lecciones sobre la Voluntad de Saber. Seguido de "El Saber de Edipo" (Leçons sur la volonté de savoir. Cours au Collège de</i>	2012 (2011)	FCE (Seuil/Gallimard)	Buenos Aires	1	Horacio Pons

TAB. 2. *Publications from 2000 to 2016*

<b>Title</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Place of publication</b>	<b>Years between original ed. and 1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Translator</b>
<i>France 1970-1971. Suivi de "Le savoir d'Œdipe")</i>					
<i>La Inquietud por la Verdad. Escritos sobre la Sexualidad y el Sujeto</i> (sel. <i>Dits et écrits I-II</i> )	2013	Siglo XXI	Buenos Aires	-	Horacio Pons
<i>¿Qué es Usted, Profesor Foucault? Sobre la Arqueología y su Método</i> (sel. <i>Dits et écrits I-II</i> )	2013	Siglo XXI	Buenos Aires	-	Horacio Pons
<i>Obrar Mal, Decir la Verdad. La Función de la Confesión en la Justicia</i> ( <i>Mal faire, dire vrai. Fonction de l'aveu en justice</i> )	2014 (2012)	Siglo XXI (Presses Universitaires de Louvain/University of Chicago Press)	Buenos Aires	2	Horacio Pons
<i>Del Gobierno de los Vivos</i> ( <i>Du gouvernement des vivants. Cours au Collège de France 1979-1980</i> )	2014 (2012)	FCE (EHESS/Gallimard/Seuil)	Buenos Aires	2	Horacio Pons
<i>La Gran Extranjera: Para Pensar la Literatura</i> ( <i>La grande étrangère. A propos de littérature</i> )	2015 (2013)	Siglo XXI (EHESS)	Buenos Aires	2	Horacio Pons
<i>El Origen de la Hermenéutica de Sí. Conferencias de Dartmouth, 1980</i> ( <i>L'origine de l'herméneutique de soi. Conférences prononcées à Dartmouth College, 1980</i> )	2016 (2013)	Siglo XXI (Vrin)	Buenos Aires	3	Horacio Pons
<i>La Sociedad Punitiva</i> ( <i>La Société punitive</i> ).	2016 (2013)	FCE (EHESS/Gallimard/Seuil)	Buenos Aires	3	Horacio Pons

TAB. 2. *Publications from 2000 to 2016*

<b>Title</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Publisher</b>	<b>Place of publication</b>	<b>Years between original ed. and 1<sup>st</sup> Spanish ed.</b>	<b>Translator</b>
<i>Cours au Collège de France 1972-1973)</i>					

Note: In order to prioritize clarity, this table includes only what was published as a book by Foucault.

Source: Author's Elaboration.

In this second period, the acceleration and intensification of the reception of Foucault's work was demonstrated by the continuous publishing of his texts and a reduction in the time span between the French publication and the Spanish translation. In later years, the recognition in terms of publishing has been backed by the consolidation of the editing of his works in Buenos Aires by the most important and prestigious publishers of social sciences and humanities in the region (*FCE* and *Siglo XXI*), although his circulation among Mexican, Argentine and Spanish publishers does not exclude the participation of smaller publishing houses (e.g. in Argentina, *Almagesto*, *Altamira*, among others).

During this stage, there was an increasingly intense circulation of the Foucauldian lexicon, which coincided with the greatest amount of publishing of Foucault's pages. In fact, one can observe how terms deriving from the Foucauldian vocabulary and discourse began to operate as universal concepts, while references to Foucault began to function as an authoritative tagline for certain sectors of the intellectual field. His vocabulary melded into a lexicon which no longer belonged to him. Over the course of this trajectory, changes to Foucauldian sayability become evident, as well as the movement toward his final recognition by the academic field. Below, I refer to three moments that represent the passage from an early restricted circulation to widespread present-day diffusion. There, an elective affinity between the Foucauldian word, his readers, and the local and global context is produced.

### 3. Foucault in Three Junctures that Link the Two Major Periods of Reception

#### 3.1. a) Readings amid Repression

The Argentine cultural sphere suffered a series of violent transformations during the 1970s. Censorship was on the rise when the daily nature of political violence, economic turmoil, social unrest and institutional crisis enabled the coup d'état of March 24, 1976, which put the military Junta in power, leaving 30,000 disappeared persons in its wake. Toward the second half of the decade, the Ministry of the Interior aimed to increase cultural repression, targeting issues ranging from sexuality to authors such as Nietzsche. Many publishers found themselves in a critical situation: the *Centro Editor de América Latina* suffered the burning of more than one million copies of their published works; others were shut down, such as the Argentine branch of Mexican publishing house *Siglo XXI*; and, in many other instances, books were confiscated [Invernizzi and Gociol 2002]. A nationalist, authoritarian, anti-liberal, heterophobic and family discourse, based on Christian morals, tradition and "National Security," aimed to bury all secular, libertarian, modernist or Marxist discourse [Terán 2008, 297-300]. The same rhetoric permeated the university realm. Many professors were forced to abandon their posts between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s. Up until the restoration of democracy, the academic social sciences and humanities fields were marked by restrictions on admissions, intervention, the reorientation of curricula (e.g., classical texts, positivism, liberal traditions, historicism). Renovative readings were performed in exile or outside of universities. In these non-academic learning spaces (called "*universidad de las catacumbas*" or "*university of the catacombs*"), readings by Marx, the Frankfurt School, Greimas, Bajtín, Williams, Jauss, Lacan, Althusser and Barthes circulated, among many others.

It is important to highlight the civil-military character of the Argentine dictatorship, and emphasize the existence of censorship and self-censorship, even taking into account the tricks that could be used in those years. However, given the retrospective conception of the dictatorship as the "dark age" or the "empty decade," and taking a step back from a monolithic view of the military regime, it is also important to mention the resistances and the continuity of critical reflections in clearly hostile conditions. In this sense, contrary to the general assumption of the Argentinian intellectual field about Foucault as a censored and silenced author during the military regime, I could reconstruct a restricted but important circulation of his works in that context.

In a private and limited circulation, references to Foucault emerged in spaces such as extra-academic study groups in private homes and periodical publications. In these non-official spheres, different readings and uses took place, for example, at the *Association of Psychologists of Buenos Aires* (APBA) – in publications and courses that brought together actors that would be very important as the subsequent dissemination of Foucauldian ideas, such as Tomás Abraham and Hugo Vezzetti – or at *La Escuelita*, a private architecture teaching space that offered courses in private homes.

One periodical publication that requires a special mention is cultural criticism journal *Punto de Vista* (1978-2008), where Foucault appeared as a reference, citation and translation. This journal – developed under semi-clandestine conditions – would later acquire a prominent place in the Argentine cultural sphere. Important critics and writers from the 1960s and 1970s participated in this publication, intellectual influencers in leftist political culture of those years.<sup>7</sup> Granting an important place to Raymond Williams and Pierre Bourdieu, from its beginnings until the end of what would be the bloodiest stretch of the dictatorship, it included implicit and explicit allusions to texts such as *Historia de la Locura (Histoire de la folie)* [1967] and *Historia de la Sexualidad: La Voluntad de Saber* [1977] (*Histoire de la sexualité: La volonté de savoir*), in readings attentive to the logic of disciplining bodies and regulating populations.

Despite the presence of Foucault in underground spaces, and in spite of the closure of publisher *Siglo XXI* in Argentina, some of his books continued to arrive via Mexican publications that distributor *Catálogos* – equipped with the remnants of *Siglo XXI* Argentina, and which also carried *Anagrama*, *Tusquets*, *La Piqueta* and other publishers of the Foucauldian/Deleuzian world – distributed throughout the country.

The uniqueness of Argentina during this period quite possibly lies in the fact that, confronted with the breakdown of institutions, among them cultural (universities, publishing houses), the practice of reading as an act of resistance was able to persist, an occurrence that directs attention to both the previous circulation of Foucault's ideas and their subsequent proliferation. A more visible circulation took place in newspapers and institutions (e.g., bibliographical references within the Psychology degree program of the University of Buenos Aires, UBA; conferences and lectures on the first volume of *Historia de la Sexualidad* and *Vigilar y Castigar* at the French Alliance of Buenos Aires).

<sup>7</sup> It has been indicated that the journal received financing from a Maoist organization (*Vanguardia Comunista*) [De Diego 2003, 145]. It should be noted that, during those dark years, this journal touched on topics related to contemporary ideologies, while also circulating Marx and Marxism. On the other hand, the journal supported communication with intellectuals in exile.

However, another fact expresses the presence of Foucault's contributions during the military regime: it remains paradoxical that, in 1980, *Convicción* – a periodical known as “the newspaper of Emilio Eduardo Massera,” a figure who, along with Jorge Rafael Videla and Orlando Ramón Agosti, led the military Junta – spoke of Foucault as “the French genius,” for whom “Bentham [was] more important for our society than Kant and Hegel,” and that it commented on *La Verdad y las Formas Jurídicas* – a series of conferences given by Foucault in Río de Janeiro in 1973, published in Spanish in 1980 and translated by Argentine philosopher Enrique Lynch – [Moreno 1980, 16]. Despite what might be expected, the Foucault name, as well as citations of this thinker, circulated in ways that differed from the prohibited mention of the most important radical figures, such as Marx. It was a limited circulation, but one which calls into question the assumption that the repression of the era would have annihilated the circulation of Foucault, and which verifies a certain persistence in the international circulation of ideas, even under the most oppressive regimes.

Even when conditions imposed by the military dictatorship stifled a wide range of Foucauldian citations, his material was used in readings and appropriations in the social sciences and humanities (sometimes along with, for example, Erving Goffman's microsociology). The dissemination of Foucault's ideas during those years was especially connected to the perception of him as a historian of punishment and confinement, and his intervention in conceptual cores such as *subjectivity* and *power*. As an illustrative case, some of the most significant and interesting productions include the texts written by lawyer and philosopher Enrique Eduardo Marí (1927-2001) in the early 1980s. The son of immigrant workers, Marí worked at the Central Bank of the Argentine Republic from 1951 until his retirement in 1987, eventually reaching the position of Manager of Legal Affairs. He also worked as a professor of Philosophy of Law and Epistemology of the Social Sciences (UBA), and a researcher at CONICET beginning in the second half of the 1980s. Since 1977, Marí carried out a series of stays in Europe and, along the lines of structuralist Marxism, he situated himself in an interdisciplinary sphere that allowed him to incorporate analyses such as those by Althusser, Bachelard and Foucault into the local legal field, and to propel “critical legal theory.” Marí certainly did not hold a prominent place in the academic-university legal field during this time. However, that should not cast a shadow on the fact that he intervened in the fields of history and law from international and national newspapers and journals. Regarding *Vigilar y Castigar* (published in Mexico by *Siglo XXI* in 1976), for example, he refers to the specific characteristics of Foucault's thinking and, from philosophy of criminal law, presents a scholarly and precursory analysis of the use of Foucauldian theses in the Argentina legal field [Marí 1983]. This presence in the legal sphere illustrates the way in which

the Foucauldian word would, slowly but persistently, permeate the social sciences. It also speaks to the inescapable effect, almost amounting to a turning point in the local reception of Foucault, that the readings of *Vigilar y Castigar* had on this conjuncture.

In the early 1980s, when the repression of the previous years had become evident, *Vigilar y Castigar* was read by young university students outside of official programs. Toward the end of the decade, in 1989, this book had more than seventeen Spanish editions, as well as one Argentine reprint. The emergence of an analysis focused on power, like the one offered by this book, would mark a local appropriation of Foucault's ideas, one that was shaped by State terrorism and bound to mechanisms of repression and social control [Caimari 2005].

The Foucault name, and citations of his texts, appeared less frequently between 1976 and 1978, but gained greater visibility after those "bleak three years" ended, especially beginning in the 1980s, when the military regime began to break down. These interpretations circulated in public and private spaces; they were not completely unambiguous and were indeed permeated by the local situation. Foucault gave rise to the very practice of resistance via thought and writing on strategies aimed at the construction of civil society during that period. His material was used in reflections and interventions from the fields of sociology, history, philosophy and epistemology, politics and communication, discourse analysis, the relationship between architecture and political organization, the convergence of law and psychoanalysis.

If readings of Foucault began to come to light in greater force in the early 1980s, it is because these readings were already being carried out in the context of the dictatorship. These readings focused on disciplinary problems – theoretical uses linked to certain formations – still extremely distant from the widespread diffusion to come, but which produced a sort of theoretical trench that would have to wait to fully take shape at the heart of the balance of political practice.

### 3.2. *b) Foucault in the Local Crisis of Marxism*

The reception of Foucault in relation to Marxism can be framed in a distinct point in time, visible around the world, but with connotations specific to Argentina, a product of the strong connection between the political and intellectual fields, and of political practice that flows toward the social sciences: in Argentina, the conjuncture of the "Crisis of Marxism" was over-determined by the cruelty of military repression, the verification of the popular field's defeat, the critique of dogmatic positions on the left, and the reconsideration of the armed fight in the country. The majority of

the recipients referred to in this section, though with varying levels of intensity, had participated in a solidary proximity to political practice and would be prominent intellectuals who would play a substantial role in the academic field of the social sciences and humanities after the recuperation of democracy. Thus, among leftist Argentine intellectuals, varying positions took shape in a power struggle between Marxism and Foucaultism, in the conjuncture of the so-called “Crisis of Marxism,” and in the context of the transition to democracy and the revision of leftist militarism.

The same cadence of fluctuations and ambiguities that characterized Foucault’s treatment of Marx and Marxism can be discerned in subsequent readings of his works. It is therefore impossible to compare monolithic and mutually exclusive blocs; so much depends on the ways in which they are read and the contexts that stimulate them, thus determining how they are used. Local expressions of this dialogue between Marx, Marxism and Foucault contribute significantly to shaping the direction of the Argentine political-intellectual field, given that they comprised and encouraged a context of redefinitions and ruptures in the leftist world, and in political culture in general. With the decline of the dictatorship and the recuperation of democracy, this “crisis” would become visible, public and would have large-scale effects. The manifestation of that cataclysm and of the tensions addressed by Foucault encountered diverse positions from the Argentine left in a transitional moment in which theory strengthened passions. A large part of these readings were performed in exile. From there, intellectual endeavors were organized, developments that would evolve into debates about the Argentine context were furthered, and readings that determined those that would later be performed locally were advanced. Although they materially accessed different discourses and other conditions for thought, their interventions were aimed at shared problems.

I will refer to just three models of this reception: first, a Marxism which understood that this paradigm in crisis could indeed be relieved by Foucauldian proposals, or at least deemed that the crisis would also enrich readings in the cultural realm; secondly, the model of those who came out in defense of Marxism, considering that it could still be made intelligible to the world, sustaining the relevance of the theoretical paradigm and seeking its reconstruction; and, thirdly, a reading that perceived a natural continuity between Marx and Foucault.

The first series of uses in the framework of this conjuncture shares the possibility of traversing the crisis hand-in-hand with Foucault. In the context of the recuperation of democracy, Foucault intervenes in theoretical practice in socialist cultural spaces, as well as in the political practice of young leftist activists, as a mainstay after his decision to break with the Communist Party, in line with Gramsci and granting access to Nietzsche. As the replacement of a Marxism in crisis, the paradigmatic

passage was that of Argentine philosopher and historian of ideas Oscar Terán (1938-2008). Born and raised in a small city in the Province of Buenos Aires, he graduated from UBA, participated in militant political activity in the 1960s and 1970s, went into exile in 1976, returned to Argentina in 1983, and participated actively from the social democracy during the transition to democracy. He was a prominent researcher and professor. It is in the context of the failure of the radical politicization of the left, and the breakdown of revolutionary confidence, that the possibility of a mend can be understood. It was not about replacing one system with another, but, on the contrary, how attractive the inexistence of a “Foucault system” could have been. Exiled, first in Spain and shortly thereafter in Mexico, Terán’s version of Foucault was an *Argen-Mex* one – a term used to refer to Argentine exiles in Mexico in the 1970s –, the product of his Argentine background and thinking and the reading and analysis of articles and interviews published in the Mexican media. Terán wrote the prologue for, compiled and partially translated *Michel Foucault: El Discurso del Poder* [1983]: a pioneering text, one of the first globally distributed Spanish-language books on Foucault, which would mark the readings of future generations within and beyond Argentina. There, he enters Foucault into an operation that seeks to circumvent instrumentalism and economic determinism, while contemplating power as a producer, Nietzsche’s rupture with the Kantian transcendental subject, and the notions of discontinuity and plurality in opposition to the teleological reading of history and in the breakdown of reductionist monisms. Terán went a bit further in the use of Foucault as a mediator of Marxism, and of Marxism as a toolbox, giving way to controversy in the pages of *Punto de Vista* journal upon noting the theoretical ineffectiveness of the “last resort,” and asking:

It is not leftist Argentine thought’s chance to reclaim its right to post-Marxism?  
[1983b, 46-47].

Shortly thereafter, he would relativize the operability of Foucauldian proposals, in an assessment of the virtues of that young democracy, upon warning of the dangers of assimilating modernity into mere techniques of social control.

Secondly, in this same context, a series of opposing positions emerged, which, following in the footsteps of historical materialism and from the perspective of a renewed Marxism, aimed to dispute the origins of those uses of Foucault in Argentina. One exponent of this second series of uses is José Sazbón, the young man influenced by Sartre and Lukács, and a recipient of structuralism, who had prepared *Análisis de Michel Foucault* twenty years prior. In 1989, during the global peak of the “crisis of Marxism,” he argued its reach and understood the seismic jolt by claiming that the very concept of “crisis” is inherent to Marx’s intellectual biography.

Early in the decade, from his exile in Venezuela and in the framework of a critical re-reading of structuralism and post-structuralism, he carefully analysed Foucault's archaeological project, addressing its conception of history, the absence of an explanation of change, and anti-humanism [Sazbón 1981]. Two years later, in light of Oscar Terán's statements in *Punto de Vista*, he responded by turning to the relevance of Marxism, incisively questioning the banishment of the "last resort," and challenging the pluralism of multiple determinations. In that moment, he referred to

the syntagms "metaphysics of presence," "micro-powers," "dissemination," "decentralization of the subject," none of them less enigmatic than "last resort," but that Terán, rightly, does not feel obliged to decipher [them], since they are well-known within the "stubborn discursive universe" of Foucault, Derrida and Lacan" [Sazbón 1983, 36-37].

Hardly accustomed to such controversy, he was encouraged to write such content given the evidence of a movement that not only jeopardized the "last resort," but Marxist theory as a whole, which he believed to be advantageous for those renewed times. Younger generations positioned themselves similarly: in the interior of a marked permanence in the Marxist field, historian Horacio Tarcus critically perceived the Foucault effect of the late 1980s. Years later, he gathered the pages of the European debate which, in the 1970s and 1980s, had targeted from Marxism to the Foucauldian analysis of power, and, under the title *Disparen sobre Foucault* ("Shoot Foucault") [Tarcus 1993], he presented the first local compilation of articles that critiqued Foucault from a Marxist perspective. Based on the resistance to accept the eclipse of Marx, and Deleuze and Foucault as the only stars in the sky – which did not necessarily mean resisting the actual reception of Foucault –, and even encouraging an exchange and contemplating the Foucauldian exploration of power, he advocated, in critical terms, a possible reconciliation between Marx, or Marxism, and Foucault.

Finally, a third series of uses seemed to perceive nothing but a natural theoretical and political continuity between Marx and Foucault. Far from the questioning to Marxism or the scathing criticism to Foucaultism, this model found a clear connection between both thinkers. For example, sociologist Juan Carlos Marín (1930-2014), who, from the student movement, contributed to the process of founding the Sociology degree program at UBA, collaborated with Latin American revolutionary groups and returned from his exile in Mexico to the Sociology department at UBA in 1984. In *La Silla en la Cabeza* [1987], Marín reproduced a dialogue that had first taken place in 1986 at the Argentine School of Philosophy in Buenos Aires (Colegio Argentino de Filosofía, CAF). Under the impression that, in that meeting, they had

“believed to have talked about the same Foucault solely on the basis of naming him,” he incorporated into the transcript of that informal conversation fragments of texts by Foucault in order to complement his arguments. It is not often that a conversation is published in order to assert a position. In this exchange, according to the transcript, an assistant, gesturing, had assured him that many Marxists “have eaten shit”; Marín countered that, if [the assistant] was referring to him, Marín would be happy to break a chair over his head. Though anecdotal, this fact reveals a rivalry of the times: the materialist argument versus the multiplicity of interpretations. In this theoretical confrontation, calling for a renewed critical field to confront the effects of the dictatorship, Marín appropriated the French thinker as a fellow traveler in the Marxist field, through whom he was able to incorporate the productive conception of power, the relevance of subjectivity for the development of class consciousness, and the idea that the expanded reproduction of the application of Panopticism was necessary for capitalist accumulation [*Ibidem*].

In this context, readings of Foucault fostered the questioning of certain political-cultural practices and the configuration of others, drawing on theoretical appropriations that were neither coherent nor unambiguous, and which, in many cases, were preceded by a political practice that they later came to put to the test.

### 3.3. c) *Towards an Expanded Reception*

With the recuperation of democracy in late 1983, Foucault’s texts would appear intrinsically linked to a number of prevailing issues: micro-powers, ethics, human rights, the emergence of new social movements (feminist, homosexual, ethnic minorities, etc.), the issue of the state, the assertion of pluralism, the transformation of subjectivity in a country in which the social realm had experienced profound change, the postmodern debate, and transgression. Thus, between uses directed at questioning the traditional left and interpretations focused on aesthetics, libertarianism or anti-Marxism, between contemporary Nietzscheanism, postmodernism and post-structuralism, Foucault was revealed as the philosopher at the head of a new “permissiveness” in Argentina and the analysis of difference.

In this context, there was an expanded reception of the Foucault name and texts, which became clear in the intellectual and cultural realms. It also marks the beginning of a more regular and systematic academic presence of Foucault’s texts in the social sciences and humanities, and the start – especially with the tributes that took place after his death, in 1984 – of what would become a phenomenon of intense circulation and dissemination in the local media. These years were characterized by

a series of operations in the intellectual field, including new theoretical articulations and conceptual hybridizations, and widespread use.

With regard to the social sciences and humanities, the fluid incorporation of Foucault would not happen quickly nor instantaneously, but he did begin to carve out a space in the educational realm in the mid-1980s – with the renovation and professionalization of the academic domain –, and has not stopped expanding since then. As in previous years, his proposals continued to circulate in spaces outside of the university, but also acquired a more substantial, prominent place: for example, in the CAF and in the *Seminario de los Jueves* (Thursday Seminar), directed by philosopher Tomás Abraham, where unpublished texts were translated and other publications were furthered [Various Authors 1988; Abraham 1989]. Abraham had studied sociology in the Sorbonne, as well as philosophy in Vincennes, where he met Foucault in 1969; then, starting in 1984, he taught classes as a professor at UBA, and collaborated dynamically in the dissemination of this thinker in Argentina. A promoter of a Nietzschean Foucault that would not only exceed Marxism, but silence it, and who advanced a type of thought that addressed minorities, micro-powers and ethics, his appropriation of Foucault is one of the most resonant of the period. Although mentions of the Foucault name and citations of his texts had circulated in a number of spaces prior to the recuperation of democracy, Argentina did not yet enjoy courses or seminars specifically dedicated to his works, the sort that would have organized a systematic reading of those texts. This is one of many circumstances that stimulated a more open and fragmented reception of Foucault.

However, despite what might seem to be the obvious answer, Foucauldian texts did not gain entry to the academic field via philosophy or history, but through subjects such as psychology and sociology. In an environment such as UBA – the most important university in Argentina –, in the case of the Philosophy degree program, there had been a tendency to prioritize the preservation and promotion of classic works at the expense of more contemporary authors, although, toward the late 1980s, references to Foucault circulated in other universities around the country. Regarding the field of history, the tension was unmistakable. Academic historians remained suspicious and fluctuated in terms of their opinion of his proposals, ideas which challenged traditional categories in the field. Although uses of Foucault did not lead to significant questioning of the theoretical-methodological foundations of the discipline, Foucauldian thinking fostered significant elaborations by outstanding figures in local intellectual and cultural history, such as Oscar Terán [1979], Dora Barrancos [1990], and Hugo Vezzetti [1985], among others. Barrancos, an Argentine sociologist, historian and feminist, and currently a member of the CONICET board of directors, came across Foucault's texts during her exile in Brazil and performed historic

analyses in which sexuality, feminism and the anarchist movement coincide. Vezzetti, on the other hand, performed his first Foucauldian readings from the perspective of the mental health field, as a psychologist at the Borda Psychiatric Hospital in Buenos Aires (1967-1976), although he would later devote himself to historical research. A militant in political activity and a member of the APBA in those years, he wrote *La Locura en la Argentina* [1985] while the dictatorship was still in force, commenting on the composition and function of the mechanism of insanity in the country and in relation to State formation.

Although both the Philosophy and History degrees at UBA granted only a marginal role to Foucault's texts in their undergraduate programs, at that time, bibliographic references to the French philosopher were present, for example, in the Ciclo Básico Común (CBC)<sup>8</sup> and the Education Sciences, Liberal Arts and Psychology degree programs at that same university. On the other hand, Foucault would have a pronounced impact on the field of sociology. The French thinker, at least beginning in 1988, acquired his own space at the UBA School of Social Sciences: his regular incorporation into the university structure took shape via a program on sociological theory dedicated to a political reading of his works. Professor of Philosophy, graduate of Psychology, and Doctor of Social Sciences specialized in research regarding power relations and the construction of subjectivities, Susana Murillo led the undergraduate course "Saber, Poder y Gobernabilidad. Foucault y la Teoría Crítica," the first course specifically dedicated to Foucault's contributions to be incorporated into the Sociology degree at UBA.

Beginning with the recuperation of democracy, the French thinker would occupy an increasingly important presence in the local university world, going beyond the classroom and the efforts of some professors. Toward the end of the decade, there was also a Foucauldian air among students from different degree programs at UBA (Law, Psychology, Sociology), in journals that, though their dissemination went beyond university limits, were still marginal within the cultural sphere. In *Fahrenheit 450* (1986-1988), for example, Foucault would be a practically omnipresent figure, as part of a new epistemological basis, also associated with matters of Argentine life in the 1980s. It is interesting to note that some of his texts were translated in these periodical publications; in the case of *Fahrenheit 450*, for example, "Las Redes del Poder" [1986], a translation from Portuguese of a conference given by Foucault in Brazil in 1976, at that point still unpublished in French.

However, beginning in the second half of the 1980s, Foucault started to enjoy an increasingly extensive circulation in journals whose horizons went beyond the uni-

<sup>8</sup> Established in 1985, the CBC is the first obligatory course of studies for all degrees at UBA.

versity world to question the cultural field in general. In fact, the widely disseminated and well established Foucault of power, who did not need to be presented, or even mentioned, would appear in those years in the journal *Crisis*, which circulated among the intellectual middle class, as a sort of style of the era. There, Foucauldian proposals were able to participate in discussions on the consequences of the military dictatorship, terrorism during the constitutional period, delinquency and local security; this was also the case in interviews with legendary Argentine musician Luis Alberto Spinetta [Jacoby 1986; Jacoby and Domínguez 1986; González Cezer y Aranda 1988].<sup>9</sup>

Moreover, the presence of Foucault is not only verified by academic investigations and citations, university analyses, or journals, but also by opinion articles, especially at the beginning of the period of greatest dissemination, prompted by the impact of his passing. After the death of Foucault, new stories and tributes were published in the two most important newspapers in the country, *Clarín* and *La Nación*, as well as in less widespread papers. In that moment, *Tiempo Argentino* newspaper remembered him as “the thinker of our days.” Three years after his death, Foucault’s omnipresence was such that the journalism sector referenced him, commenting that Foucault “has become a vibe in the air,” or speaking about “the most widely ready philosopher on these beaches, especially among young people,” comparing his impact to that of Sartre or Marx [*El periodista de Buenos Aires* 1987, 26-28]. By 1989, his reception was part of a movement that promised to be largely concentrated in the media. That year, as if to define the interpretation of the French thinker’s future in the era of democracy, it was once again claimed that the “Foucault trend is among us,” and there were allusions to “a seduction as massive as it is rare,” to “Foucaultmania”:

With a fascination as powerful as that produced by Jean-Paul Sartre in the 1960s, the discourse of French thinker Michel Foucault has invaded Argentina [Ángel 1989, 22-23].

Though the trend became apparent starting in the 1980s, the movement aimed at giving Foucault’s texts a more regular place in academia intensified in the 1990s. Scholars such as Argentine philosophers Esther Díaz – who works from a Foucauldian perspective on discourses, contemporary sexual practices and the relationship between subjectivity and post-modernity –, and Edgardo Castro encouraged the incorporation of these ideas into the local philosophical establishment, into courses and into research [Díaz 1993 and 1995; Castro 1995 and 2014]. The Spanish translator

<sup>9</sup> In different spaces during the 1980s, Luis Alberto Spinetta referred to Foucault in terms of the possibility of having “a degree of intelligent rebellion,” with compositions that went from the soul to the body.

of the work by Giorgio Agamben and one of the main disseminators of Italian philosophy in the case of biopolitical authors, Castro is also author of the most important Spanish-language work of conceptual lexicography referring to Foucault, the very publication of which is a manifestation of the intense local circulation of Foucault [2004; 2011].

Although there have been other appropriations – with the strong mediation of Anglo-American readers –, in relation to, for example, education, governmentality, management, queer theory, gender studies and feminist criticism, in later years, an astonishing proliferation of uses and readings of Foucault in the academic field is especially related to the issue of biopolitics, an omnipresent notion in theoretical studies and local intellectual circles, in philosophy and the social sciences. This is inextricably linked to the publishing situation of Foucault's courses on the subject at the Collège de France and the mediation of contemporary philosophers who identified with Foucault's proposals (Agamben, Esposito, Negri).

The dissemination of the Foucauldian word was now clear, one which had timidly begun in uses positioned between disciplinary renewal and politico-intellectual intervention; which had persisted and spread incipiently in the social sciences during the dictatorship; which had taken shape in the 1980s in relation to Marxism; and which, since the recuperation of democracy, had emerged vigorously in the connection between politics, social sciences and culture, a slight sensation that would soon become fully manifest.

#### **4. Final Thoughts**

By tracing this reception, we can observe several singularities of this periodisation. I will attempt to provide a very few examples: By the time of Foucault's most direct dialogue with French historiography (1964-1971) [Aguirre Rojas 1996; Eribon 1995], Argentine references were situated between psychoanalysis, philosophy and politics; in the mid-1980s, and then more clearly in the 1990s, the same moment that, according to Didier Eribon [2014], a silence of the French academy on Foucault began, Argentina experienced a visible acceleration of Foucauldian citations. Contrary to the case in the United States, Foucault did not arrive or find a home in Argentina especially via literature departments [Cusset 2005]. Anglo-American readers started editing Foucault's books in the mid-1960s, with a drastically abridged edition of *Histoire de la folie (Madness and Civilization [1965])*, while the Mexican edition – and not the first Latin American translation of a text by Foucault – of the complete work was published in 1967. In Brazil, despite Foucault's travels, his books began to be

published in Portuguese shortly after the Argentine publications [Gondra and Kohan 2006]. Although recent Argentine history shares certain problems with the rest of the countries in Latin America and, to some extent, a certain common periodisation, unfortunately, the Latin American reception of Foucault has yet to be reconstructed.

Through this very brief review of the reception of Foucault in Argentina, I hope I was able to show that the Argentine reception of Foucault found its singularity in an initial period of intense politicization of the intellectual and cultural domains, finally achieving academic autonomy at the end of this path. There, different operations in referencing Foucault can be observed, as well as a diverse range of relationships with his texts. Foucault was widely established in Argentina, first in public interventions and debates, periodical publications and the media, before becoming a systematic element of academic institutions. The uses that unique actors in the local intellectual sphere have generated based on these texts were situated amidst the renewal of the social sciences and humanities, and were placed at the core of political-intellectual debates. The mediation of periodical publications would be a constant and fundamental factor in this reception: non-academic cultural and political journals, a very dynamic type of media among the actors of cultural legitimation in Argentina. During these years, his readers were largely university-educated intellectuals in the social sciences and humanities belonging to the broad Argentine middle class, with political vocation and access to different mediations (readings in other languages, travels, scholarships and stays abroad, intellectual contacts, etc.).

The three moments analysed here articulate his passage from restricted circulation to subsequent widespread dissemination, and allow for the observation of agents and channels through which, utilizing both critique and validation, Foucault's proposals were legitimized in Argentine culture. It is through these periods that some of the principal characteristics of this reception can be understood: the continuity of readings, even in brutal times, such as those lived during the last dictatorship; the intense intervention of the political domain in the crystallization of local uses of Foucault; and the widespread dissemination which took place with the recuperation of democracy, especially within the social sciences and the cultural realm. During these years in Argentina, Foucault was able to act as a structuralist philosopher in times of radical change; a historian on punishment; the thinker of a new political radicalness critical of domination and based in the difference that the democratic moment demanded; an anti-humanist and anti-progressive that did not assign value to democracy because he did not see in modern institutions anything beyond exclusion and social control; a theoretical-practical name that both withstood the crisis of radical politics and passed through it; a sounding board for the torsions that outlined the local political-intellectual field. Through the uses of Foucault's productions in

Argentina, it is possible to reflect, for example, on fundamental matters such as the conceptions of power and truth held in the 1970s, the emergence of new social subjects, and the authoritarian/anti-authoritarian dichotomy of the transitional 1980s. Between anti-humanism and humanism, there is a Foucault who reconciled with leftist Argentine traditions, while questioning the most mechanistic version of Marxism and reinstating himself as a proponent of new counter-hegemonic schools of thought; another version in which a contribution to Marxism can be perceived or rejected; the “psych” reception of texts critiquing this field; an overwhelming presence, almost a saturation, of the use of certain notions related to his vocabulary, and more. Together with him, Argentines have been able to reconstruct an array of local problems, establishing him as one of many present-day tools.

Studies on reception tend to focus, via the blurred traces of social and cultural history, on the incorporation of concepts and signs of legitimate discourses that rebound in the academic and intellectual spheres. In this work, I have only alluded to some of the most central elements of the Argentine reception of Michel Foucault’s contributions, therein describing a series of appropriations notable for their heterogeneity. But while meanings can be modified depending on the context, this dissemination always occurred amid a certain setting. In other words, these works are renewed in local conjectures. But, what seems to have persisted over the years is a reading centered on power which allows for a political outlook linked to reflections on domination. In this sense, it is essential to emphasize the intimate relationship between the local academic, political and intellectual fields, where these unique circulations and uses occur.

The characteristic malleability of the Foucault name and citations of his works in Argentina responds to a diverse and dynamic range of contexts, but also appears in his works in the form of potential meanings. In this case, perhaps unlike most, there is feedback between the back-and-forth and struggles for meaning anchored in local contexts, and a writer who eluded labels, remained resistant to taxonomy, was unclear in the expression of his theoretical decisions, and produced an open work.

In closing, there is one obvious remark worth noting: the reception of Foucault must be understood in relation to the privileged position of French culture among Argentine intellectuals. Nonetheless, this should not bypass the fact that, in Argentina, an openness predisposed to multiple readings persists. It is possible to observe early readings in spheres where his texts could be accessed directly in French.<sup>10</sup> Though

<sup>10</sup> The publication of translations is another indicator of the early entry of the French author into a system of debates and positions in the social sciences and humanities. As was said, in general, the publication of texts by Foucault in Spanish followed shortly after the corresponding French

this reception is unfinished, it can be said that it occurred directly from French, was translated into Spanish, and, more recently, emerged in Italian and English readings. A geopolitical view of the culture probably could affirm that local uses, diverse and transversal, give shape to a singular Foucault: in Argentina, there would be several, intercultural versions of this thinker, which are connected by fragments from diverse places, with contributions by different discourses and authors, the product of international circulation and a local history composed of specific contexts, networks of meanings and actors. As is the case with some authors who have been uprooted from their homelands by the force of internationalization, Foucault is never the same, but is always new; he is used as a way of understanding ourselves and he is renewed in practice.

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## The Foucault Effect in Argentina (1970-1990)

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Abstract: Argentina is one of the central hubs of the Latin American reception of Foucault, where connections with the rest of the region can also be observed. By reconstructing the Argentine reception of Foucault, aspects associated with the transformation of the social sciences and humanities can be analysed, as well their interdependencies with the intellectual and political domains, and, in particular, the circulation and uses of Foucault by non-academic spaces since the late 1950s. The present article first provides a general periodisation of this reception. Then, some of the key elements that join the early restricted circulation (1961-1983) and the later widespread diffusion (1983 to present-day) are explained, in three periods through which one can observe how Foucault operates in very different contexts (State terrorism, debates on Marxism and the crisis of the Argentine left, and the recuperation of democracy); perceive certain uses by Argentine intellectuals and academics in the social sciences and humanities; and analyse the ways in which these are connected to specific ways of interpreting local culture and politics.

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*Keywords: Reception; Circulation; Uses; Argentina; Latin America; Foucault.*

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