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Michel Foucault's Influence on Italian Historiography  
(1970s-1990s): Shaping Perspectives and  
Methodologies

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To my supervisor Federico Mazzini, who had the patience to follow me attentively and professionally, guiding the research pathway whose fruit is this thesis.

To my parents, Maria Luigia and Mario, who took care of me from a distance without ever letting me lack anything I might need, either material or spiritual.

To my grandfather Giuseppe, who throughout my life has been an authoritative and loving point of reference that has allowed me to become the man I am.

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To Gaia, the woman to whom I declared my love, who with her closeness and loving care supported me in times of difficulty and great insecurity.

Every beginning  
is only a sequel, after all,  
and the book of events  
is always open halfway through.

*Love at first sight* - Wislawa Szymborska

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## Introduction

The question posed here is quite ambitious and equally fascinating. How much and what kind of influence has Michel Foucault's work and thought had on Italian historians? Although thinking about it, this question could be reformulated in general terms as follows: How much and what kind of influence has a thinker had on a given current of thought?

Historical research has often tried to answer this kind of question through the analysis of primary sources in the attempt that through the intensive study of these, details and points could be grasped that would lay bare these connections between different authors. The work that has been conducted in this sense has often focused on a single work in an attempt to - starting from that work - trace back all the works and writings connected to it. Today, software and applications such as Connected Papers, Litmap and Research Rabbit enable this kind of operation.<sup>1</sup> By entering a document - in this case an academic paper - it is possible to reconstruct through citations the network linking it to other papers written before or after the one entered as input.

This attempt to conduct a real search for 'human understanding' through the study of the use and evolution of certain concepts and models is a suggestion that has its own history.<sup>2</sup> The question in this paper about Foucault and historians is not so new either. In a 1987 paper, Allan Megill, professor of history at the University of Virginia, posed precisely the problem of Foucault's reception among history scholars. He stated at the beginning of the paper:

The reception of Foucault by historians is a "problem" in a way that the reception of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, Lawrence Stone, or even E. P. Thompson is not, for a gulf separates him from what I shall call "disciplinary history".<sup>3</sup>

He himself recognised that the problem of Foucault's reception was actually the problem of the reception of a particular author in general. Since this work dates back to 1987, the number of tools at his disposal was extremely limited. As data to quantitatively assess this reception history or history of influences, Megill resorted to two fundamental sources: the Social Sciences

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<sup>1</sup> See 'Connected Papers | Find and Explore Academic Papers', accessed 7 November 2023, <https://www.connectedpapers.com/>; 'Literature Map Software for Lit Reviews & Research | Litmaps', accessed 7 November 2023, <https://www.litmaps.com/> and 'ResearchRabbit', ResearchRabbit, accessed 7 November 2023, <https://www.researchrabbit.ai>.

<sup>2</sup> See Stephen Edelston Toulmin, *Human Understanding: The Collective Use and Evolution of Concepts* (Princeton University Press, 1977).

<sup>3</sup> Allan Megill, 'The Reception of Foucault by Historians', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 48, no. 1 (1987): 1, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2709615>.

Citation Index and Arts and Humanities Citation Index, Michael Clark's volume 'Michel Foucault. An Annotated Bibliography' and the number of reviews of Foucault's works.

The graphs in fact and the results that emerged were necessarily limited and not very comprehensive. Today, however, the situation is very different. A series of quantitative and textual analysis tools have changed the way this research is conducted, offering further insights and evidence.

This paper aims to use these new tools precisely to try to offer further answers along the lines of what Megill did almost forty years ago. However, due to the amount of work and material that research such as Megill's would have required, it was decided to circumscribe the field of research. In fact, an attempt was made to assess Foucault's influence in Italy among historians in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s. Before proceeding to the analysis of the texts and the quantitative evaluation, a qualitative research is carried out along two main lines. The first consists of assessing what Foucault's reflection on history consisted of, trying to identify the historical methods and themes he introduced in the course of his research. The second, on the other hand, seeks to assess how these themes have been received by the community of Italian historians, through the evaluation of various primary sources.

Finally, the last two sections are dedicated to quantitative work on the citations of Foucault's work in Italian historical research and the textual analysis of a corpus composed of all the publications in major Italian academic journals containing a reference to Foucault. Excel was used to conduct the quantitative analysis, while the Voyant Tools application was used to analyse the text corpus. In light of what emerged from these analyses, we attempt to answer the extent and type of influence Foucault has had among Italian historians.

As to why attempting to answer this question is relevant, one should refer to the concluding words of Megill's paper:

In his wounded solitude, Foucault refused to conceal the contempt he felt for scholarly convention. This does not mean, however, that those who are committed to the progress in knowledge that alone justifies a discipline ought in turn to take Foucault's work lightly or treat it with contempt. It is impossible to imagine Foucault's 'method' which is really the anti-method of Nietzsche and later Heidegger, acquiring credence within a disciplinary context [...] This is because, as Lakatos, Toulmin, Feyerabend, Bernstein and others have noted, intellectual innovation is needed if a discipline is to advance. Every discipline bears within itself the seeds of its own stultification. Though Foucault is solitary, he has nonetheless become part of a collective machinery of research, reflection and argument. Though he is not *of* the discipline, he

is important *to* it, partly because he has called attention to hitherto neglected fields of research, but mostly because he fosters a self-reflection that is needed to counteract the sclerosis, the self-satisfaction, the smugness that constantly threaten. Intellectual apprenticeship is in large measure a matter of learning the conventions of argument within a discipline – a matter, that is, of learning its rhetoric. In any discipline that still has new and interesting things to say, these conventions evolve. Though it would have chagrined him to know it, Foucault's work is unquestionably part of that evolution.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Megill, 134.

## I. Foucault and historians: a complicated relationship

### I.1 The “antihistorical historian”

Identifying the role and importance of Michel Foucault as a historian is a very complicated task. Conflicted at times, the Poitiers native's relationship with 'human beings in time' has actually been long and complex. Certainly, it must be acknowledged that his activity as a historian has been unconventional. Challenging the canons of historical practice as it had been codified, Foucault attempted to bring a breath of fresh air and innovation to the study of the past. It is no coincidence, in fact, that scholars such as Mark Poster went so far as to describe him as an 'anti-historical historian':

Although Foucault's work is read by anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, philosophers, literary critics and historians, the basic impact of his work is historical. Foucault offers a new way of thinking about history, writing history and deploying history in current political struggles. If Foucault is the *enfant terrible* who would destroy the human sciences, he is also one of their most fascinating practitioners, reshaping their contours according to an original if most peculiar historical practice. Foucault is an *antihistorical historian*, one who, in writing history, threatens every canon of the craft.<sup>5</sup>

In this disciplinary jigsaw, it is therefore not easy to place Foucault's work and thought, perhaps precisely because of the variety and novelty of the themes addressed. Picking up a book published by him would be complicated to be able to establish with absolute certainty in which section of a library to place it. To this intricate question, Alan Sheridan attempted to give an answer:

'Is he some kind of philosopher?' 'Well, yes in a way', one answers. 'Then why does he write not about Plato, Descartes and Kant, but about the history of madness and medicine, prisons and sexuality?' 'Well, he is more of a historian than a philosopher, though his approach to his material is very different from that of a historian.' 'Ah, a historian of ideas!' 'Well, no [...] In fact it was to distinguish what he was doing from the history of ideas that he coined the term 'archaeology of knowledge.'<sup>6</sup>

It is no chance that Sheridan cites among all Foucault's works precisely *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Indeed, it was in that work that he openly took a stand against reading linear historical narratives of progress into the sources. He writes in the introduction that “For many years now historians have preferred to turn their attention to long periods, as if, beneath the

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Poster, 'Foucault and History', *Social Research* 49, no. 1 (1982): 116.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (Routledge, 2003), 2.

shifts and changes of political events, they were trying to reveal the stable, almost indestructible system of checks and balances, the irreversible processes, the constant readjustments, the underlying tendencies that gather force, and are then suddenly reversed after centuries of continuity, the movements of accumulation and slow saturation, the great silent, motionless bases that traditional history has covered with a thick layer of events.”<sup>7</sup> Foucault himself noted how in the case of disciplines such as the history of ideas, the history of science, the history of philosophy, the history of thought, the history of literature “attention has been turned, on the contrary, away from vast unities like ‘periods’ or ‘centuries’ to the phenomena of rupture, of discontinuity.”<sup>8</sup>

This aspect, however, we will elaborate on later. Returning to the question of Foucault's disciplinary framing, it is therefore clear that if Foucault is to be defined as a historian, it is necessary to interpret him - not by chance, I would say - as a historian of rupture, who marked a discontinuity with the historiographic practice that preceded him. How, however, did Foucault himself conceive of himself? In 1984, following the death of Philippe Aries, a French medievalist and historian of the family and childhood and pioneer of what became known as *histoire des mentalités*, as well as a friend of Foucault with whom he always maintained a flourishing intellectual exchange, Foucault had an interview with another historian, Arlette Farge, in the newspaper ‘Le Matin’. Foucault also carried out several research projects with her, the most fruitful of which was undoubtedly the publication of the volume *Le Désordre des familles: Lettres de cachet des Archives de la Bastille au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* in 1982. To symbolise this close intellectual understanding between them, Farge produced a volume entitled *Foucault contre lui même* in 2014, from which collaboration with filmmaker François Caillat led to the creation of a documentary of the same title. The text was a collection of essays and interviews conducted by scholars such as Leo Bersani, Georges Didi-Huberman, Geoffroy de Lagasnerie and Farge herself. In the aforementioned interview conducted in 1984, it is pointed out that Foucault adopted an "iconoclastic" perspective on history. Philippe Ariès's contribution was that of the sensitive, forging a very subversive history of sensitivities. He contributed in a similar way by using the same break in technique. Considering *Discipline and Punish*, the focus was on the changes inside institutions as well as how people saw them. The strategy was equally subversive. Faced with this provocation by Farge, Foucault responded as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge* (Psychology Press, 2002), 4.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



Yes, but Ariès was a historian and wanted to be a historian. But I was basically a philosopher. [...] And what I wanted to do was philosophical: can we reflect philosophically on the history of knowledge as historical material, rather than reflecting on a theory or philosophy of history? In a somewhat empirical and clumsy way, I envisaged a piece of work as close as possible to that of historians, but to ask philosophical questions about the history of knowledge. I expected the goodwill of historians.<sup>9</sup>

So, the focus should be on defining his areas of interest carefully rather than on the prestige of his title; this means focusing on ‘systems of thought’ rather than the history of ideas or thought. The rules governing the emergence and reproduction of such systems, mental structures that classify social life and then present the results as truth, have been the main focus of Foucault's work. His writings cover a wide range of topics, from his early investigations into psychology and insanity to the development of modern medicine and the sciences of man to the critique of contemporary disciplinary structures and a *History of Sexuality*.

Underneath this diversity, there have been two overarching concerns: understanding the intricate relationships between knowledge and power; and revealing the circumstances that led to the development of modern forms of rationality, particularly the ‘human sciences.’ His investigations have only been explicitly organized around the concept of power since the late 1960s, in the wake, as he makes clear, of the dramatic events that occurred in France in 1968. The General Strike was ignited in the academy, the purportedly objective repository of knowledge, and it was there that 1968's effects were most obvious.

Thus, his work has taken on a new tone since that time, but it can be said that his research has always been implicitly preoccupied with issues of knowledge and power. His work had a distinct tone as a result of his dual interests in rationality and the analysis of power. He would have been the last person to deny that his thought has been shaped within the space of current preoccupations given his challenge to the idea of an autonomous, individual ‘authorship.’<sup>10</sup> His work has emerged from a variety of intellectual currents. He struggled with the totalizing philosophical claims of the heritage of Hegel, following his Sorbonne philosophy professor Jean Hyppolite, and ultimately rejected them in favor of a profound skepticism about the claims

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Le Style de l’ Histoire Michel Foucault’, 9 February 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200209032009/http://libertaire.free.fr:80/MFoucault254.html>. My translation.

<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘What is an author?’ in Michel Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 113–38.

of philosophy, inherited from Nietzsche.<sup>11</sup> He also disapproved of Sartrean phenomenology, particularly its emphasis on individual consciousness and the creative, constitutive individual.

However, Foucault is difficult to incorporate into the forms of structuralism that took the place of existentialism as the dominant intellectual movement in France in the 1960s. He shared with the loosely organized structuralism the desire to replace individual consciousness with an investigation of the ‘positive unconscious’ of knowledge, the unspoken rules that serve as the foundation for social structures.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to structuralism's claims to have created a theoretical framework that could ‘scientifically’ comprehend everything from kinship structures to literary text, Foucault questioned how this intellectual framework came to be and what its effects were. These were the same inquiries he made of Marxism and psychoanalysis, two ideologies that intellectually shaped Foucault but whose claims to scientific validity he sought to undermine. Nevertheless, Foucault did not downplay their importance because he rejected these claims to be true.

The history – or, in his own words, ‘archaeology’ – of the development of psychoanalysis as a discipline can be seen in much of his writing, from the early *Madness and Civilization* to the Introduction to *The History of Sexuality*.<sup>13</sup> However, Foucault was more concerned with the circumstances surrounding this emergence (such as the religious ‘confessional mode,’ the categorical separation of madness and reason, and the rise of sexological investigations) than he was with the validity or otherwise of the theory of the unconscious.

His views on Marxism were even more nuanced. He was a Communist in the 1940s and the early 1950s, like many of his generation, but he broke from the party when he realized the effects of the ‘Lysenko affair,’ in which the conclusions of biological science regarding inheritance appeared to be subordinated to the Moscow-established party line.<sup>14</sup> Here, Foucault developed an early understanding of the complex interactions between knowledge and power. He also felt that Marxism itself was an authoritarian discourse that imposed meaning while purporting to be the truth in this area. Later, in the 1970s, Foucault showed reluctance to set

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<sup>11</sup> See Michel Foucault, ‘Orders of Discourse’, *Social Science Information* 10, no. 2 (1 April 1971): 7–30, <https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847101000201> and Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (Routledge, 2003), 4–5.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Pantheon Books, 1971), xi.

<sup>13</sup> See Mark Cousins and Athar Hussain, ‘Sexuality’, in *Michel Foucault*, ed. Mark Cousins and Athar Hussain, *Contemporary Social Theory* (London: Macmillan Education UK, 1984), 202–24, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-17561-1\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-17561-1_8) and John Forrester, *Language and the Origins of Psychoanalysis* (Columbia University Press, 1980), 167, 213–14, 243, 247.

<sup>14</sup> Alex Callinicos, *Is There a Future for Marxism?* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1982), 99, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-16677-0>.

himself apart from the 'new philosophers' and the 'new right' in France, who rejected all forms of socialism as potentially authoritarian and believed that Marxism was inherently corrupted because of the days of its 'master-thinkers.'<sup>15</sup> Evidently, Foucault disagreed with the Althusserian claim that Marx's writings represent an "epistemic break" in science. He simultaneously acknowledged Marx's major innovative contribution as the founder of what he terms a 'discursive practice,' a set of social, economic, and political activities governed by a set of exclusionary and demarcational rules that have had tangible consequences. Additionally, he was unwilling to outright reject Marxism as a political philosophy or as a method of historical inquiry.

Indeed, it was impossible to write history without referencing a wide range of ideas that are directly or indirectly related to Marx's ideas and without locating oneself within a thought horizon that has been defined and described by Marx. Even the ultimate difference between being a Marxist and a historian could be questioned.<sup>16</sup> He disagreed with Marxism's totalizing goals, not necessarily its regional commitments, claims, or insights. It is not surprising that his literary heroes were those who have challenged western rationalism's norms and certainties, like the erotic surrealist novelist Georges Bataille and the poet and philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche.

His fascination with the idea of sexuality as transgression, which he would later start to trace in *The History of Sexuality*, was already evident in his appreciation of Bataille. He was already cognizant of the jarring and deciding power ascribed to sexuality 'to the degree it is spoken,' a significance derived from the void created by 'the death of God.' The modern deity, according to him, was sexuality.<sup>17</sup> However, Nietzsche was a more significant starting point because, as Foucault once stated, he was the architect of the realm of contemporary thought, as the reference to the 'death of God' suggests. Both Nietzsche and Foucault shared a desire to look into the 'various systems of subjugation' and the 'hazardous play of dominations' that philosophy's lofty generalizations masked.<sup>18</sup> In a chaotic and pluralistic world, the will to power rules, and knowledge is its handmaiden, according to Foucault and Nietzsche. As Nietzsche stated,

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<sup>15</sup> See Peter Dews, 'The "New Philosophers" and the End of Leftism', *Radical Philosophy*, no. 024 (1980), <https://www.radicalphilosophy.com/article/the-new-philosophers-and-the-end-of-leftism> and; Peter Dews, 'The Nouvelle Philosophie and Foucault', *Economy and Society* 8 (1 May 1979): 127–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147900000005>.

<sup>16</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), 53.

<sup>17</sup> Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 50.

<sup>18</sup> Foucault, 148 see also; Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 53 and; Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1971, 263.

“Insofar as the word 'knowledge' has any meaning at all, the world is knowable; but it can be interpreted differently; behind it lies no meaning but rather countless meanings – ‘Perspectivism’.”<sup>19</sup> The implication is that, thanks to the operations of power, there is no one truth to ‘reality’ but rather an infinite number of perspectives on it.

Three main methods of control – hierarchical observation, normalizing judgment, and the examination – are at the center of Foucault's depiction of contemporary disciplinary society. People can be controlled (given power) to a large extent by simple observation. So, for instance, the tiered rows of seats in a stadium make it simple for security personnel or surveillance cameras to scan the crowd in addition to making it easy for spectators to see. One guard could see everything with a perfect observation system, which is roughly what happened in Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, as we'll see.

This ‘perspectivism’ was adopted by Foucault, along with a radical skepticism toward the loftiest claims of knowledge. Partially explaining Foucault's interest in a different set of intellectual concerns represented by philosophers and historians of science, particularly his teachers Gaston Ballard and George Canguilhem, was his preoccupation with the illusory nature of knowledge claims. The current state of science and scientific categories was what worried him in this situation. The Frankfurt School of Marxists of the interwar years shared some of Bachelard and Canguilhem's concerns, as noted by Foucault:

In the history of the sciences in France, as in German critical theory, it is a matter at bottom of examining a reason, the autonomy of whose structures carries with it a history of dogmatism and despotism—a reason, consequently, which can only have an effect of emancipation on condition that it manages to liberate itself from itself.<sup>20</sup>

The work of Bachelard and Canguilhem drew Foucault to their attempt to free science from itself. From his teachers, Foucault discovered that the history of the sciences was the history of how certain scientific discourses create their own means of separating truth from falsehood. This did not imply that science is not evolving or that the empirical world is not being discovered; rather, it meant that the notion that science must be founded on the gradual finding of truth is under jeopardy. Whatever its claims, that was not the basis for the scientific process. Knowledge was created via breaks in preconceived notions, and Bachelard has had a

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<sup>19</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* (Penguin UK, 2017), 481.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, ‘Critique and Enlightenment: Michel Foucault on “Was Ist Aufklärung?”’, in *The Enlightenment and Modernity*, ed. Norman Geras and Robert Wokler (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2000), 2, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780333983300\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780333983300_10).

particularly large impact on this. In other words, Foucault was interested in the ruptures in thinking and the effects they have had on the definition of truth.

It is hardly unexpected that he has been referred to as a historian of discontinuity, a label he rejects: “No one is more of a continuist than I am. To acknowledge a discontinuity is never anything more than to note a problem that has to be solved.”<sup>21</sup> But his work is guided by this dilemma, which also lends it historical importance.

## I.2 From archaeology to genealogy

The *Order of Things* is explicitly described by Foucault as an “archaeological” approach to the study of intellectual history. To speak of archaeology in Foucault is to begin to take a different view of the reconstruction of the past. In *The Order of Things*, the goal that is set was as ambitious as it was interesting. Foucault's archaeologist was the one who moving in a terrain of uncertainty and darkness. He does not research “the fundamental codes of a culture – those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices – establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home.”<sup>22</sup> Nor was it concerned with “scientific theories or the philosophical interpretations which explain why order exists in general, what universal law it obeys, what principle can account for it, and why this particular order has been established and not some other.”<sup>23</sup> However, this does not mean that the results that emerge from this type of research represent fundamentals of human history, valid in every era. On the contrary, one of the points on which Foucault placed most emphasis was precisely that of conceiving historical ‘truths’ as ‘local’, i.e., daughters of a certain historically located *forma mentis*. Transcendence was not what Foucault sought in the study of madness in the age of reason or sexuality in 1800. The systems of knowledge that defined culture and thus the evident structures of culture are the target.

The method deployed was the analysis of a large corpus of writings on a certain topic and produced in a certain chronological span, in order to define what the underlying rules were for the use of language in those texts. We were obviously not talking about the formal rules of language - grammar, logic - which would mislead attention, but rather the boundaries within which to place what could and what could not be said. What could or could not be expected to

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<sup>21</sup> Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality: With Two Lectures by and an Interview with Michel Foucault* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), 76.

<sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (Psychology Press, 2002), xxii.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

be found within a text written in the 1700s? This is an example of one of the questions that had to guide anyone following the archaeological approach. This historical circumscription of minds was defined by Foucault as *épistémè*. He asserted that this was a unique epistemological structure for each historical period and each "archaeological stratum" that governed how thinkers would reason, how statements would be made, and how discourse would develop without directly interfering with the thinkers' own consciousness. As Foucault stated in an interview from 1971:

What I am trying to do is grasp the implicit systems which determine our most familiar behavior without our knowing it. I am trying to find their origin, to show their formation, the constraint they impose upon us; I am therefore trying to place myself at a distance from them and to show how one could escape.<sup>24</sup> [...] My problem is essentially the definition of the implicit systems in which we find ourselves prisoners: what I would like to grasp is the system of limits and exclusion which we practice without knowing it; I would like to make the cultural unconscious apparent.<sup>25</sup>

However, one must be careful not to confuse archaeology with epistemology. As Gary Gutting points out:

Foucault's archaeology of knowledge is not a theory of knowledge in the sense of analytic epistemology: it is not a philosophical account of the nature of knowledge in general. [...] It is a historical rather than a philosophical project, although its historical approach depends on philosophical assumptions about the priority of language over subjective experience. Archaeology is similar to what Canguilhem called the 'history of concepts.'<sup>26</sup>

Foucault frequently referred to his work as 'archaeology.' In fact, he makes use of that distinctive term in the titles of several of his books as well as in the methodological study *The Archaeology of Knowledge. The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1970), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), and *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (1973) are examples of such works. The *History of Sexuality Volume 1* (1978) announced a series of studies, which Foucault himself described as "an archaeology of psychoanalysis."<sup>27</sup> For Foucault, archaeology was a crucial method because it supported a historiography that did not depend on the supremacy of individual subjects' consciousness.

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<sup>24</sup> J. K. Simon, 'A conversation with Michael Foucault'. *Partisan Review*, 38 (1971): 201.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 198

<sup>26</sup> Leonard Lawlor and John Nale, *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), 14.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (Pantheon Books, 1978), 130.

Instead, it allowed the historian of thought to function at an unconscious level, which replaced the subject's primacy found in both phenomenology and conventional historiography.

In this respect, one cannot ignore how important Foucault's confrontation with Hegel's and Kant's thought was. In his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Hegel, in fact, had outlined an approach to history that prioritises thought above event-commentary, synthesising philosophical concepts and ideas with historical information. Hegel famously argues that the process of human history is a process of self-recognition guided by 'the principle of reason.' The concept is a nodal point in development. To grasp the concept of something, presupposes an historical investigation of it. So, the starting point of a theory is the Concept which forms the subject matter of the theory, not Being, even though in reality the science emerges from Being.<sup>28</sup> Foucault grasps the importance of experience as a historical datum, which, however, is to be considered subject to a fundamental objective structure, namely the Concept, which, however, allows new forms of experience in which one can break out of the pattern established by the past. On the other hand, however, Foucault rejects notions such as Complete System, absolute knowledge, total synthesis and final necessity. It must be acknowledged, however, that Foucault's reconstruction is much "closer to an idealist history, which makes use of a more holistic and extended approach, than to an empirical history, which tends to stick to the pure evidence that emerges from sources and data."<sup>29</sup>

The three histories (of madness, clinical medicine, and the emergence of the modern 'sciences of man') that preceded Foucault's detailed formulation of the archaeological methodology in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* show the difficulties he faced in trying to devise a historical methodology that was free of Hegelian entanglements.<sup>30</sup>

With Kant, the relationship is even more long-standing and on some fundamental issues. In fact, it is no coincidence that even Foucault posed the famous question 'What is Enlightenment?' as a sign of his debt to Kant's critical philosophy. Foucault characterised his archaeological project in Kantian language, saying that he was looking for the 'conditions of possibility' for thought in a given period.<sup>31</sup> But, for Kant "such conditions were universally applicable, necessary constraints on all possible experiences, whereas for Foucault they are contingent on the particular historical situation and vary over times and domains of knowledge. [...] This

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<sup>28</sup> On the notion of 'Concept' (= *der Begriff*) see Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: The Science of Logic* (Cambridge University Press, 2015), 508–25.

<sup>29</sup> Lawlor and Nale, *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, 14.

<sup>30</sup> Lawlor and Nale, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 2002, xxii.

difference is deep, since Kant's claims of universal necessity required his transcendental project to invoke methods beyond those of empirical studies such as natural science and history [...] Foucault may employ Kant's terminology, but his project seeks no truths beyond those available to the empirical methods of historiography."<sup>32</sup>

*The Archaeology of Knowledge* can be seen as an attempt to construct a real theoretical and methodological framework for archaeology. Building on the experimental experiences of *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic* and *The Order of Things*, this 1969 publication defined a method for offering historical reconstructions that neither depended on the subjective experiences of individuals nor assumed an abstract individual as an exemplification of an epoch. This was not to deny the role of human agents in shaping past events, but to limit their revolutionary significance or potential for change in the course of history. Each individual is embedded in the 'discourse' of his or her time - the aforementioned episteme, here called 'discursive formation' - and in light of this, history cannot be the preserve of the individual. Indeed, as stated by Foucault:

My aim was to cleanse it of all transcendental narcissism; it had to be freed from that circle of the lost origin, and rediscovered where it was imprisoned; it had to be shown that the history of thought could not have this role of revealing the transcendental moment [...] despite the efforts that had been made to find it here.<sup>33</sup>

With the publication of *Discipline and Punish* in 1975, Foucault's production undergoes – ironically enough – a moment of rupture and discontinuity in academic production and theoretical reflection. The concept of 'genealogy', which is more Nietzschean, has replaced the term 'archaeology,' with its structuralist overtones and emphasis on discontinuity.<sup>34</sup> Foucault began referring to his work as genealogical as a new 'genealogy of morals,' thereby indicating his new intent and his debt to Friedrich Nietzsche's writings.<sup>35</sup> However, one should not be hasty in describing Foucault as a Nietzschean by this obvious connection. In fact, Foucault himself addresses the so-called Nietzscheans with a certain tone of annoyance, condemning the poor quality of the research conducted by them and distancing himself from them:

I am tired of people studying [Nietzsche] only to produce the same kind of commentaries that are written on Hegel or Mallarmé. For myself, I prefer to utilise the

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<sup>32</sup> Gary Gutting, *Foucault* (Oxford University Press, 2019), 36–37.

<sup>33</sup> Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, 224.

<sup>34</sup> See Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1971; and Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 1984), 76–100.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 15.



writers I like. The only valid tribute to a thought such as Nietzsche's is precisely to use it, to deform it, to make it groan and protest. And if commentators then say that I am being faithful or unfaithful to Nietzsche, that is of absolutely no importance.<sup>36</sup>

It is also true that Foucault derived only part of his thinking from Nietzsche. Certainly, Foucault had nothing to do with the eternal return, about the beyond man, the will to know, the will to power. But at the same time, he grasped the thesis that knowledge and values are a reflection of existing power structures - which Foucault would later decline in the concepts of power-knowledge, apparatus and discipline. Foucault says that genealogical work "must record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous inality; it must seek them in the most unpromising places, in what we tend to feel is without history."<sup>37</sup> At the same time, however, the genealogist can also observe the character traits and abilities of individuals and note how elements that are thought to be natural and unchanging are actually the result of gradual processes of definition. Morality, propensity to sacrifice, guilt, forgiveness are constructions of relations of domination and control that have been built up over time.

The genealogist, however, does not follow the cause-and-effect principle. In this sense, he rejects the historical maxim of searching for the origins of events. Both Foucault and Nietzsche were aware of the fact that the uses and meanings of phenomena in the various steps that lead them to their ultimate version present a series of missing links that do not allow them to be traced back to the principle. There is a looking for processes of 'descent' and of 'emergence'. "*Herkunft* is the equivalent of stock or descent; it is the ancient affiliation to a group, sustained by the bonds of blood, tradition, or social class"<sup>38</sup> while "*Entstehung* designates emergence, the moment of arising. It stands as the principle and the singular law of an apparition". Even if, the moment of apparition must not be seen as "the final term of a historical development; the eye was not always intended for contemplation, and punishment has had other purposes than setting an example. These developments may appear as a culmination, but they are merely the current episodes in a series of subjugations".<sup>39</sup> Finally, the genealogist "disturbs what was previously thought immobile; it fragments what was thought unified; it shows the heterogeneity of what was imagined consistent with itself".<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Prison Talk: An Interview', *Radical Philosophy* 16 (1977): 15.

<sup>37</sup> Foucault, *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, 139–40.

<sup>38</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 145, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501741913-008>.

<sup>39</sup> Foucault, 148.

<sup>40</sup> Foucault, 147.

The idea, therefore, of reconstructing the irregular traces in the path of history through which the past has become present is the essence of the genealogical approach. It simultaneously considers the contingency of the past and takes an open and constructive look at the possibilities of the future, as nothing is an invariable given. In this sense, many scholars agree in describing Foucault's genealogy as an example of 'effective history'. Actual history is in this sense the method to avoid falling into the fallacy of truths revealed in history as a destabilising force. Since Gadamer's original formulation, in fact, it presents a critical method capable of grasping the jolts in the past that have made the present relevant. What matters is that what we consider truths can be historicised:

the very question of truth, the right it appropriates to refute error and oppose itself to appearance, the manner in which it developed. . . does this not form a history, the history of an error we call truth? Truth has had a history within history from which we are barely emerging.<sup>41</sup>

Following four major books on the very different archaeological model, Foucault turned to ancestry and the history of the present relatively late in his career. However, the reorganization of Foucault's ideas is less radical and abrupt than it initially seems. For instance, it's important to note that, despite being much less prominent, his archaeologies did contain elements of the "genealogical" goal of using historical research to challenge popular beliefs and promote change. For instance, he says the following in *The Birth of the Clinic*: "The research that I am undertaking here [...] involves a project that is deliberately both historical and critical, in that it is concerned [...] with determining the conditions of possibility of medical experience in modern times."<sup>42</sup> And in *The Order of Things*, he stated:

In attempting to uncover the deepest strata of Western culture, I am restoring to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws, and it is this same ground that is once more stirring under our feet.<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, in 1971, while working on *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault revealed to a reporter:

I was interested in [the subjects of his archaeologies] because I saw in them ways of thinking and behaving that are still with us. I try to show, based upon their historical establishment and formation, those systems that are still ours today, and within which

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<sup>41</sup> Foucault, 144.

<sup>42</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (Pantheon Books, 1973), 35.

<sup>43</sup> Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 1971, xxiv.

we are trapped. It is a question, basically, of presenting a critique of our own time, based upon retrospective analyses.<sup>44</sup>

By demonstrating how people in earlier eras had thought very differently (and, apparently, just as effectively), such comparisons could hint at the contingent nature of a particular way of thinking. However, a simple archaeological analysis was unable to shed any light on what precipitated the shift in thinking, and as a result, it was forced to disregard one of the strongest arguments for the permanency of current positions. The new technique, genealogy, which was introduced in *Discipline and Punish*, was created to address this shortcoming.

The genealogist challenges us to think more critically about the worth and significance of these phenomena by re-connecting contemporary practices (or contemporary bodies) with the historical struggles and power struggles that shaped their character. Experience has taught me that the history of various forms of rationality is occasionally more effective than abstract criticism in upending our certitudes and dogmatism, as Foucault stated in 1979.<sup>45</sup> The same year, it was stated once more, “Important and even invaluable political effects can be produced by historical analyses [...] The problem is to let knowledge of the past work on the experience of the present”, according to Foucault.<sup>46</sup>

A ‘history of the present’ functions within this genealogical framework. It starts by identifying a practice that is commonplace today but is also, in some ways, problematic or incomprehensible - the reformatory prison of the 1970s, for example, or the death penalty in the United States today - and then tries to trace the power struggles that led to it.<sup>47</sup> Genealogy is driven by a critical desire to understand the present rather than a historical concern to understand the past, though any historical claims it makes must be true and verifiable. It aims to identify the historical circumstances that still influence our current practices and trace the forces that gave rise to them.

Its goal is to use historical evidence to rethink the present, not to think historically about the past. Writing a history of the present, according to Michael Roth, “means writing history in the

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<sup>44</sup> John K Simon, ‘A CONVERSATION WITH MICHEL FOUCAULT’, *PARTISAN REVIEW*, n.d., 192.

<sup>45</sup> Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984* (Routledge, 2013), 83.

<sup>46</sup> M. Foucault, Arnold I. Davidson, and Graham Burchell, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979* (Springer, 2008), 130.

<sup>47</sup> See Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* and David Garland, *Peculiar Institution: America’s Death Penalty in an Age of Abolition* (Harvard University Press, 2012).

present; self-consciously writing in a field of power relations and political struggle.”<sup>48</sup> Or, as Nietzsche, the arch-critic of conventional history, would insist, it entails cooperating with forces at work right now rather than obsessing over the lifeless relics of bygone eras.<sup>49</sup>

### I.3 “the act and the criteria of the exclusion”: Foucault among the Italian historians between the 1970s and the 1990s

The impact of the Foucaultian agenda on Italian historiography is up for dispute. After thirty years, several interpretational hypotheses can be made. The immense confinement and objectification of the body by the clinical gaze, or the formation of regimes of logical truth via the exclusion of lunacy, are a few of his topics that, as has been mentioned, have aroused the area of social and cultural history. The establishment of disciplines and organizations for the domestication of organisms and the governance of people are two less-traveled paths. Even less, it must be said, has there been an “in-depth confrontation with his method: the archaeological search for discursive formations as historically determined principles of the constitution of knowledge; the genealogy that reconstructs the mobilisation of knowledge by exploring its truth effects; the microphysical conception of power as the product of a heterogeneous fabric of relations and as a complex of technologies that permeate the social body.”<sup>50</sup>

Despite the fact that further research would be necessary, we may point to several that, in part, relate to the unique cultural temperament that Italian historiography encountered in the 1970s and, in part, to more pervasive issues with using Foucault for historical studies. One of them, which is more widespread, can be linked to Foucault's disinterest in the issue of ‘causes’. In reality, the issue of why particular events occur is frequently the one that sparks a historian's love for their work before it becomes a principle of methodological underpinnings.

However, this subject has never been the focus of Foucauldian explanation, and when he has addressed it, he has not provided the most brilliant insights into his thought process. It was a means of pointing out that, under Foucault's methodology, there would be no place for the examination of popular culture and subaltern clans, as challenging and ambiguous that may be. The essential argument is that what is beyond the discourse order is at most evocable through aesthetic contemplation, fascination with alterity, and fascination with aesthetic contemplation,

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<sup>48</sup> Michael S. Roth, ‘Foucault's “History of the Present”’, *History and Theory* 20, no. 1 (1981): 43, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2504643>.

<sup>49</sup> Allan Megill, ‘Foucault, Structuralism, and the Ends of History’, *The Journal of Modern History* 51, no. 3 (1979): 492.

<sup>50</sup> Emmanuel Betta, Paolo Capuzzo, and Carlotta Sorba, ‘Un Filosofo-Storico?’, *Contemporanea* 17, no. 2 (2014): 289. My translation

but not integrable at the level of intellectual comprehension. This charge left a lasting impression on how Foucault was later received in Italian historiography, not the least because it surfaced just as microhistory was being promoted as the most compelling solution to the problem of big narratives.<sup>51</sup>

This method provided approaches that would look similar to Foucauldian microphysics by reconstructing networks of relationships, power relations, modes of formation, and utilisation of material and symbolic resources; in actuality, it presented the question of individual agency on a completely different foundation and was incompatible with the Foucauldian analytic of power/knowledge as producers of subjectivity. With the late Foucaultian work, when the French intellectual reinvented the concept of subjectivity and started to thematise its qualities differently in the Californian seminars, more and more positive prospects for confrontation would likely have been conceivable.

“Microhistory, in other words, at least in its most culturally attentive version, posed the theme of languages in ways that inevitably lacerated any systematisation of the discursive order and presupposed a plurality of voices in conflictual relationship with one another, irreducible to one another. The same intellectual posture adopted by Foucault and the microhistorians appeared quite distant: Foucault's cold and disillusioned analytical attitude, although sometimes illuminated by sudden flashes of fascination with the otherness that escapes the discursive order, scarcely discursive order, could hardly be reconciled with the ethical background of the materialist historian defined by Benjamin in his *Theses on the Concept of History*, whose work is plunged into the agonies of a struggle that seems to have no end.”<sup>52</sup>

The two approaches revealed strengths that were not without some complementarity, despite their fundamental differences: a detailed examination of the plurality of languages and the irreducible instability of the dimension of power; the capacity to comprehend the major tendencies in the construction of contemporary institutions and knowledge, with their ubiquitous force of neutralization, control, and influence. However, this gap prohibited a comparison that would definitely have been useful. The third order of causes, which mostly affects modern professionals, explains the challenging interaction between Foucault and Italian historiography.

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<sup>51</sup> See Carlo Ginzburg, John Tedeschi, and Anne C. Tedeschi, ‘Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know about It’, *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 10–35.

<sup>52</sup> Betta, Capuzzo, and Sorba, ‘Un Filosofo-Storico?’, 289.

Even if Foucault's quick forays into the history of the major mass regimes of the 20th century were able to point out areas of inquiry deserving of serious in-depth study, they remained internal to a genealogy of disciplinary authority and the governance of people in which little room could be found for the immense collective passions that had agitated and overrun the century. Today, though, as we've already mentioned, this path—despite its undeniable drawbacks—can be helpfully historicized. In doing so, one can see how much Foucault's work has helped to dismantle many of the ideological encrustations that have covered the most important current historical narratives, as well as the naïve subjectivism that was meant to resist them. This has insinuated vital and fruitful questions on the methods of generating subjectivity and on the frail purposeful origins of all historical activity. “And one can perhaps better grasp how much the Foucauldian worksite is dense with suggestions with which to continue to measure oneself today, perhaps better and more than yesterday.”<sup>53</sup>

Although the social sciences started to critically engage Foucauldian output with the publication of *The History of Madness*, the conflict between Foucault and historical inquiry was, to put it mildly, episodic until the mid-1970s. It was required to wait until 1977 for another history journal, the "American Historical Review," to return to debate one of Foucault's works with a review of *Discipline and Punish*, signed by Hayden White, another quite unusual name for historical study. Robert Mandrou had warmly praised that first work in the *Annales* in 1962, writing that *Madness and Civilization* presented a "decisive thesis [...] 700 pages of rare beauty that will be crucial to our understanding of the classical period."<sup>54</sup> Contrarily, in the Italian situation, the historicist and idealist matrix's mistrust of the Foucauldian genealogical method, which bears a Nietzschean imprint, “as Di Cori points out, seems to have had a substantial weight in the way Italian historiography has looked, or not looked, at Foucault's research: after the reprobation signed in 1976 by Carlo Ginzburg in the Introduction to *The Cheese and the Worms*, it would be necessary to wait until 2000, more than fifteen years after his death, for an Italian historian, Alberto Banti, in *The Nation of Risorgimento*, to make the comparison with Foucault one of the cornerstones of his research proposal.”<sup>55</sup>

The critique that Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi had towards Michel Foucault's work developed around the same period. Although it is almost impossible to envision the development of a paradigm like the circumstantial or micro-historical one without referencing

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<sup>53</sup> Betta, Capuzzo, and Sorba, 290.

<sup>54</sup> Robert Mandrou and Fernand Braudel, 'Trois Clefs Pour Comprendre La Folie a l'époque Classique', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 17, no. 4 (1962): 771–72.

<sup>55</sup> Betta, Capuzzo, and Sorba, 'Un Filosofo-Storico?', 286. My translation.

the historiographical rupture caused by Foucault's study,<sup>56</sup> it was Ginzburg who recommended a violent recusal of the French philosopher's theory, beginning with the volume on Pierre Rivière, in the prologue to *The Cheese and the Worms*. Foucault is accused of being irrational, starting with the volume on Pierre Rivière. Ginzburg claims that in the French philosopher's "archaeology of silence," the abnormal, the insane, the marginal, and more generally the victims of social exclusion, are treated as the archives of the only discourse that is fundamentally different from the lies of constituted society. In order to use it as a weapon against the logocentrism of power, it would then be necessary to recover this other discourse.

This type of skepticism seems paradoxical at first glance since behind it stand the studies of Michel Foucault, the scholar who, with his *Histoire de la folie*, has most authoritatively drawn attention to the exclusions, prohibitions, and limits through which our culture came into being historically. But on second glance, it is a paradox only in appearance. What interests Foucault primarily are the act and the criteria of the exclusion, the excluded a little less so. The attitude that led him to write *Les mots et les choses* and *L'archéologie du savoir* was already at least partly implicit in the *Histoire de la folie*, probably stimulated by Jacques Derrida's facile, nihilistic objections to the *Histoire*. Derrida contended that it is not possible to speak of madness in a language historically grounded in western reason and hence in the process that has led to the repression of madness itself. Basically, he maintained that the Archimidean point from which Foucault embarked on his research neither can nor does exist. At this point Foucault's ambitious project of an *archéologie du silence* becomes transformed into silence pure and simple—perhaps accompanied by mute contemplation of an aesthetic kind. [...] The analysis is based principally on the interaction of two languages of exclusion, the judicial and the psychiatric, which tend to cancel each other out. The person of the assassin, Pierre Rivière, is relegated to secondary importance—and precisely at the time when the testimony he had written at the request of his judges to explain how he had come to commit the triple murder is finally being published. The possibility of interpreting this text is specifically ruled out because it is held to be impossible to do so without distortion or without subjecting it to an extraneous system of reasoning. The only legitimate reactions that remain are “astonishment” and “silence.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> See Paul Veyne, 'Foucault Revolutionizes History', in *Foucault and His Interlocutors*, ed. Arnold Ira Davidson (University of Chicago Press, 1997), 146–82.

<sup>57</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (JHU Press, 2013), xvii–xviii.

However, Ginzburg - who picks up a famous critique by Jacques Derrida<sup>58</sup> - claims that research can only become bogged down in the rejection of analysis and interpretation or, worse, land in an absolute extraneousness that places itself beyond, or rather on this side of culture, since, in Foucault's opinion, it is impossible to speak of madness in a language that participates in Western reason. Therefore, Foucaultism would be a paradoxical form of neo-Pirronism that leaves nothing but utter silence, perhaps accompanied by mute aestheticizing contemplation.

This interview by Maria Lúcia G. Pallares Burke to Carlo Ginzburg goes even deeper by further revealing the reasons for the rejection of the French thinker:

I think Foucault is much more interesting than his followers. What is so uninteresting about them is that they take his metaphors as explanations, and that is absurd. And I would even say that Foucault before his metaphors is much more interesting than with his metaphors. [...] There are several Foucaults, and one of them was extremely brilliant. But as an original thinker he has been in my view highly overrated. He was a footnote to Nietzsche – but there are so few original thinkers, after all. [...] Personally, he was probably the most aggressive person I ever met. And also egocentric in a maniacal way, which allowed him to sell his image effectively. [...] That is why a sober approach to Foucault by someone who is not a follower would be very refreshing. A lot of rubbish has been written on him, and actually all those eulogies ultimately belittle him. It would be very good if somebody could rescue Foucault from this silly idolatry.<sup>59</sup>

### I.3.1 A 'unique' seminar in Venice

*Il dispositivo Foucault*,<sup>60</sup> a seminar that was held the previous year at IUAV, was the topic of a publication in December 1977 from the CLUVA publishing house in Venice. Franco Rella, Manfredo Tafuri, George Teyssot, and Massimo Cacciari were the speakers at the event—possibly the first in an Italian architecture school entirely devoted to a review of Michel Foucault's work. George Teyssot, who wanted to utilize Foucault's work to create a social history of places<sup>61</sup> using a number of materials that had not yet been translated into Italian, was largely responsible for organizing the Iuav seminar. These texts included the lecture Foucault gave on heterotopias at the Cercle d'études architecturales 10 years prior and the article on

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<sup>58</sup> Jacques Derrida, '2. Cogito and the History of Madness', in *Between Foucault and Derrida*, ed. ChristopherVE Penfield, Vernon W. Cisney, and Nicolae Morar (Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 29–61.

<sup>59</sup> Maria Pallares-Burke, *The New History: Confessions and Conversations* (Wiley, 2002), 208–9.

<sup>60</sup> The contents of the seminar were later published in the volume Massimo Cacciari, Franco Rella, Manfredo Tafuri, Georges Teyssot, *Il Dispositivo Foucault* (Cluva Libreria Editrice, 1977).

<sup>61</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, 'Eterotopie e storia degli spazi' in Massimo Cacciari, Franco Rella, Manfredo Tafuri, Georges Teyssot, *Il Dispositivo Foucault*, (Venezia: Cluva, 1977), 21-35



*Machines à guérir* that was published by the Institut de l'Environnement de Paris Teyssot's goals notwithstanding, the results of that research day were very different. The Italian reception of Foucault, as has been noted, "reflected the effervescence of the Italian political reality: the crises of historicism and secularism" throughout the 1970s.<sup>62</sup>

According to what has been stated, throughout the 1970s, the Italian reception of Foucault "reflected the effervescence of the Italian political reality: the crisis of historicism and secular and liberal culture, the emergence of a workerist left, alternative to the PCI, as well as a movement of political and social contestation in the factories and universities."<sup>63</sup> Political Foucault, one would say. However, which Foucault are we referring about here? According to Sandro Chignola, "Foucault's novels entered the catalogues of Italian publishers immediately after the period technically necessary for their translation, with the exception of *Naissance de la clinique* and *Raymond Roussel*."<sup>64</sup>

Therefore, between 1976 and 1977, the books on the archaeology of the human sciences and on the order of speech, the second edition of the *History of Madness*, as well as *Discipline and Punish*, were translated for Einaudi. These two volumes would have a significant influence on Franco Basaglia's anti-psychiatric movement<sup>65</sup> and on the battles for prison reform, particularly because Mario Sbriccoli's newspaper, *La questione criminale*.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, Foucault's article on Nietzsche had already appeared throughout the 1970s in the journal 'Il Verri'<sup>67</sup> - crucial for Manfredo Tafuri himself, who, as is well known, described himself as a Nietzschean historian<sup>68</sup> - and, from 1976, the Italian edition of Pierre Rivière<sup>69</sup>, which drew the curiosity of the micro-historians assembled around Carlo Ginzburg.

The collection of interviews and other articles that Einaudi put together in 1977 under the cautious supervision of Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino under the title *Microphysics*

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<sup>62</sup> Michel Foucault, '« Des espaces autres »', *Empan* 54, no. 2 (2004): 12–19, <https://doi.org/10.3917/empa.054.0012> and; 'La Politique de La Santé Au XVIIIe Siècle Michel Foucault', accessed 12 October 2023, <http://libertaire.free.fr/MFoucault265.html>.

<sup>63</sup> Philippe Artières, *Surveiller et punir de Michel Foucault: regards critiques, 1975-1979* (Presses universitaires de Caen, 2010), 305. My translation

<sup>64</sup> Sandro Chignola, 'Une rencontre manquée ou seulement différée: L'Italie', 244. My translation

<sup>65</sup> Mario Colucci, 'Quelle psychiatrie après Foucault?' in P. Artières, J.F. Bert, F. Gros, J. Revel, *Cahier de l'Herme. Michel Foucault* (Paris 2011), 300-301.

<sup>66</sup> Artières, *Surveiller et punir de Michel Foucault*, 305–6.

<sup>67</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, la genealogia, la storia', *Il Verri*, 39-40 (1972), 83-104 then translated in Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', in *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 139–64, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781501741913-008>.

<sup>68</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, 'Il progetto storico' in Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto. Avanguardie e architettura da Piranesi agli anni '70* (Einaudi, 1980), 6-8.

<sup>69</sup> Michel Foucault, *Io, Pierre Rivière, avendo sgozzato mia madre, mia sorella e mio fratello... Un caso di parricidio del XIX secolo* (Einaudi, 1976).

*of Power*<sup>70</sup> must also be included to the first set of texts; this is the sole instance in which Foucault gave his permission for the dispersed writings to be published. According to credible sources, *Microphysics* was published in Italy at the height of the protracted Italian 1968 uprising and will have a long-term impact on how different readers interpret Foucault's key works.<sup>71</sup> Contrary to the PCI academics, it was the social movements that gave it greater attention<sup>72</sup>:

The notion of the microphysics of power seemed appealing to numerous groups of the Italian extreme left in the 1970s who, by producing a violent critique of the state-form, were attempting to read into the whole of social relations, relations of power that were more malleable than the version promoted by Marxist orthodoxy. The Foucauldian hypothesis, consequently, was perceived as a threat by the intellectuals of the PCI: interpreted, in short, as a declaration of theoretical war, which was embodied in a metaphysics of power (Massimo Cacciari) incapable of providing the dominated classes with instruments of government (Alberto Asor Rosa). These reactions then prompted Foucault to respond to the Italian communists (notably in the long interview he granted Duccio Trombadori in 1978 and published two years later) to clarify his position.<sup>73</sup>

However, the analysis of power is at the heart of the conversation. The Italian political culture lacked a fundamental definition. In contrast to the irrational web of social relationships and conflicts, political power is a neutral and autonomous space that may bring order to the chaotic undercurrent of capitalist society. So, a separate area from which the fundamental choices affecting the shared life are produced. From this perspective, it is clear that both anti-institutional criticism and long-standing Italian lotto practices were completely implausible. The foucaultian machine, on the other hand, operates by incorporating the concept of class struggle in a novel way and adapting it to complex social forms. The same Foucault stated:

What I'd like to try and really grasp is power. Not in the usual sense of the word, crystallized within institutions or apparatuses, but power as it is across a whole social setting, the whole class struggle, if you like. I would say, for me, what it comes down to is that power is class struggle, that is to say all the force relations which are inevitably unequal but also subject to change, that there can be within a social setting and which are the actualizations, the daily dramas of class struggle. What happens within a family, for example, the power relationships at play between parents and children, husband and

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<sup>70</sup> Michel Foucault, *Microfisica del potere: interventi politici* (Einaudi, 1977).

<sup>71</sup> Artières, *Surveiller et punir de Michel Foucault*, 306.

<sup>72</sup> Sandro Chignola, 'Une rencontre manquée ou seulement différée: L'Italie', in P. Artières, J.F. Bert, F. Gros, J. Revel (ed.) *Cahier de l'Herme. Michel Foucault*, 245.

<sup>73</sup> Artières, *Surveiller et punir de Michel Foucault*, 307. My translation.

wife, upward and downward, young and old, etc., these force relations, these power relationships are relationships between forces, which somehow—and that's what needs to be analyzed—are the class struggle. That's where the difficulty lies perhaps and that's what you wouldn't admit. I wouldn't say, the class struggle's like that, at a certain basic level, and everything else is only the effect, the consequence. I'd say that class struggle, in concrete terms, is what we live. [...] If power is the class struggle, or the form that it takes, we have to replace the power within the class struggle. That's it. But I fear that, in many analyses, we often do the opposite and define the class struggle as the struggle for power. We would have to look at the works of Marx, but I don't think I'm being radically anti-Marxist in saying this.<sup>74</sup>

It is obvious that such a strategy not only allowed for a new interpretation of the conflicts of the 1970s but also fundamentally broke with the political attitudes and practices of the conventional workers' movement organizations. Foucault made accessible the proliferation of power relations and, concurrently, the dissemination of resistance, new political subjects and new practices.

Reading the seminar papers, it is clear that, unlike Massimo Cacciari and Franco Rella, Manfredo Tafuri has always been an 'avid reader' of Foucault.<sup>75</sup> Examining his concrete use of the French philosopher - from *Theories and History* to *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* - a complex and non-linear relationship of fascination and rejection emerges. Already in the first edition of *Theories and History*, Tafuri writes: "The archaeology of the human sciences attempted by Foucault could be verified in the history of architecture".<sup>76</sup> Now, despite the fact that, as is well known, Tafuri will never develop this intuition, it is not possible to agree with those who, like Teyssot himself or Anthony Vidler<sup>77</sup>, consider Tafuri unilaterally polemical towards Foucault. Thus, Tafuri in the 1976 seminar:

The Foucault problem is important for us, and since the specific problem of genealogy, against traditional history, will be dealt with by Rella I will limit myself to introducing

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<sup>74</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Power and Liberation', *Revue du MAUSS* 38, no. 2 (16 December 2011): 33–50.

<sup>75</sup> See Daniel Sherer, 'Tafuri's Renaissance: Architecture, Representation, Transgression', *Assemblage*, no. 28 (1995): 35–45, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3171448> and M. De Michelis, Manfredo Tafuri e a morte da arquitetura, lecture delivered in São Paulo (Brazil) on 24 February 2014.

<sup>76</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* (Laterza, 1968), 92.

<sup>77</sup> See Paul Henninger and Georges Teyssot, 'One Portrait of Tafuri: An Interview with Georges Teyssot', *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 25/26 (2000): 10–16 and; Anthony Vidler, 'Disenchanted Histories: The Legacies of Manfredo Tafuri', *ANY: Architecture New York*, no. 25/26 (2000): 29–36.

one of the main foundations of Michel Foucault's thought, relating to the question of the practices of power within various societies.<sup>78</sup>

But it is as if the Tafurian critical machine is stuck on one side - the paradoxically main side, of politics - and thus represses the insights allowed by theoretical analysis. History is rupture, clash, continuous contradiction. A fundamental acquisition, this. However, the 'Foucault device' does not allow, according to Tafuri, for the consequent thinking of praxis: "this dispersion, this dissemination of traces cannot give rise to any reconstruction".<sup>79</sup>

### I.3.2 Two classics, two different approaches

Two historians, Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini, managed to produce a classic piece of literature on prison history in parallel with the publication of *Discipline and Punish. The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the Penitentiary System* was in fact published in 1977, the same year in which the English edition of Foucault's work was released. As stated by the authors themselves in the introduction of 1981 to the English version:

Our initial interest in the history of prison was aroused during the late 1960s at a time when this institution in Italy (and elsewhere) was thrown into a deep crisis. As always happens at times like these, we were obliged to pose some basic questions concerning the very phenomenon of prison. In so doing, we were surprised to discover—and this discovery affected the way of thinking to which we had subscribed until then—that despite the existence of a great number of studies within various political approaches, no one had clearly posed a question which began to appear increasingly central to us: why prison? Why is it that in every industrial society, this institution has become the dominant punitive instrument to such an extent that prison and punishment are commonly regarded as almost synonymous?<sup>80</sup>

Although the themes and the period of publication coincide, it is relevant to note how the two volumes in fact apply different approaches, remaining at the time impervious to each other. Although, in fact, in the 40th anniversary reissue, Melossi titles the first section '*The Prison and the Factory' Revisited (2017): Penalty and the Critique of Political Economy Between Marx and Foucault* the distance turns out to be unbridgeable. On the one hand, in fact, Foucault proposed an analysis of the institution of the prison, free of any ideological preconstruction and without appealing to precise and defined chronological blocks. In the case of Supervision and

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<sup>78</sup> Manfredo Tafuri, 'Lettura del testo e pratiche discorsive' in Massimo Cacciari, Franco Rella, Manfredo Tafuri, Georges Teyssot, *Il Dispositivo Foucault*, (Venezia: Cluva, 1977), 37-46

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.* 44

<sup>80</sup> Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory: Origins of the Penitentiary System* (Macmillan, 1981), xxv.

Punishment, in fact, Foucault observes how, while it is true that with the birth of the prison, punishment has been softened compared to the past, it is also true that it allows for a more capillary and widespread control over those serving sentences. As Foucault himself said:

And 'reform' [...] was the political or philosophical resumption of this strategy, with its primary objectives: to make of the punishment and repression of illegalities a regular function, coextensive with society; not to punish less, but to punish better; to punish with an attenuated severity perhaps, but in order to punish with more universality and necessity; to insert the power to punish more deeply into the social body.<sup>81</sup>

At the same time, the prison became the prototype for the other buildings by which control over the social body was extended to the other spheres of life - school, factory, hospital to name but a few examples. However, this progressive definition of institutions and places of social control is not seen by Foucault as a plan perpetrated by political power but as an unintended consequence.

Disciplinary power is declined through three instruments that characterise it:

- Hierarchical observation: “the exercise of discipline”, Foucault states, “presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that the means of correct training make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible”.<sup>82</sup>
- Normalizing judgement: “it refers individual actions to a whole that is at once a field of comparison, a space of differentiation and the principle of a rule to be followed. It differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved. Lastly, it traces the limit that will define difference in relation to all other differences, the external frontier of the abnormal”.<sup>83</sup>
- Examination: represents a combination of the two previous instruments and can be seen as “a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and

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<sup>81</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Foucault, 170–71.

<sup>83</sup> Foucault, 182–83.

to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them”.<sup>84</sup>

Here, the genealogy of the prison places the body at the centre of historical research. Foucault tried to show how this place represented the way in which power had made human beings into ‘docile bodies’.<sup>85</sup> Bodies that could be studied in depth, broken down into their components and then optimised or modified according to the needs of those in power. This vivisection of human beings conducted in laboratories such as hospitals, schools, factories and, indeed, prisons, made it possible to maximise their usefulness as well as punish.

A key idea in Foucault's historical analysis of the modern penal institutions is precisely that “they operate with markedly different rationality than those that are aimed solely at retribution through pain. He effectively reveals the double role of the present system: it aims at both punishing and correcting, and therefore it mixes juridical and scientific practices”.<sup>86</sup>

Melossi and Pavarini, on the other hand, specified from the outset that:

This book then seeks to establish the connection between the rise of the capitalist mode of production and the origins of the modern prison: such (and that is all!) is the theme of the following two essays. This has led to a rather precise temporal (and spatial) definition of our theme. Its spatio-temporal dimensions coincided with those of the formation of a determinate social structure. What we had to deal with was an architectural detail of this whole structure. However, it is necessary to preface our discussion with a twofold warning relating to the ante and the post of our theme.<sup>87</sup>

Marx's examination of the process of prehistoric accumulation and, in particular, the emergence of a landless proletariat cut off from the means of production, serves as the foundation for Melossi's theory. The book *Punishment and Social Structure* by Georg Rusche and Otto Kirchheimer (1939) is heavily cited by Melossi. A Marxist study of the link between the current forms of punishment and the status of the labor market under historically changing modes of production was presented in *Punishment and Social Structure*. As a result, the initial stage of capitalist accumulation—which was incapable of using the people whose livelihoods it engulfed—created a large rise in vagrants, beggars, and the impoverished, which corresponds

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<sup>84</sup> Foucault, 184.

<sup>85</sup> See Foucault, 135–69.

<sup>86</sup> Gary Gutting and Johanna Oksala, ‘Michel Foucault’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Fall 2022 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2022), pt. History of the Prison, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2022/entries/foucault/>.

<sup>87</sup> Melossi and Pavarini, *The Prison and the Factory*, xxvi.

to the draconian sanguinary penalties of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. Rusche contends that the population fall at the end of the sixteenth and beginning of the seventeenth centuries, however, was what led to a decline in the use of the death penalty and the subsequent replacement of forced labor in workhouses as a form of punishment.

The remarkable parallel examination of the history of Italian jails in Melossi's essay's second section is quite fascinating. Melossi carefully outlines the unique national circumstances and class-related peculiarities that determined the forms of punishment inside each Italian "statelet" after being forced to confront the historical truth that no one national state had any influence on penal policies until late in the era under review. Overall, Melossi argues that the ongoing labor excess resulted in an extended Malthusian strategy on the side of Italian business, particularly in regard to the masses in the South, and the nearly complete lack of productive work in Italian jails. Melossi claims that throughout the first half of the nineteenth century in Italy, the peasantry backed banditry as a blatant manifestation of its resistance to the bourgeoisie and its desire for accumulation. Melossi comes to the conclusion that teaching in discipline and obedience is the primary goal of the Italian jail, as it is everywhere else. However, more so than in other countries, disdain for a consistently overworked workforce.

Part II of *The Prison and the Factory* is Pavarini's 'The Penitentiary Invention: The U.S. Experience of the First Half of the Nineteenth Century.' His essay is intricate and difficult to summarize. A historical investigation of the beginnings of prisons in early America serves as the foundation for Pavarini's attempt to establish a phenomenology of bourgeois legal punishments, which is more inspired by Foucault than by Rusche and Kirchheimer. According to Pavarini, familial control evolved into the archetypal phrase for the societal regulation of all other types of 'deviancies' throughout the colonial era. The family model, however, dissolved with the American Revolution and was eventually supplanted by the 'institutional hypothesis', "the factory/prison model of bourgeois dominance, especially after the economic takeoff of 1820."<sup>88</sup>

In this sense, this paper seeks to draw on this bibliographic reconstruction to try to investigate how Foucault has been received by the world of Italian historians. Now that we have highlighted how an interest in Foucault can already be discerned from a qualitative analysis, an attempt will be made to conduct an analysis this time of a quantitative nature in order to try to account for

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<sup>88</sup> Melossi and Pavarini, 107–8.

the interest that has just emerged from this point of view as well, whether or not it exists on closer and more systematic observation.



## II. Database Foucault: a research project

### II.1 A brief description of the project

The Database Foucault project consists of collecting and cataloguing the main papers written by Italian historians between 1970 and 1999 that have cited or analytically considered Foucault's works and thought. Starting from the size of the items that make up the database and their nature, we intend to draw initial observations on how and to what extent Foucauldian historical themes were received by the Italian academy in those years. In fact, the quantitative analysis allows us to give an actual account of how widespread Foucault was among Italian historians at a time when analyses conducted on the basis of local and circumscribed debates tend not to give a complete picture of the issue. The database currently has 105 items, the cataloguing methods of which will be explained later.

The software chosen for the realisation of the project fell on Omeka. Omeka is a GPL-licensed piece of free software for managing digital libraries.<sup>89</sup> The software's creators, the Center for History and New Media (CHNM) at George Mason University, are also responsible for Zotero, a program for managing bibliographies. The Omeka website began listing projects utilizing the technology in dozens at the beginning of 2013, and by the end of 2016, there were about thirty French-language sites listed, including Europeana.<sup>90</sup> This program is “focused to organizing, presenting, and uploading iconographic material together with its metadata to the Internet, making it very simple to publish on the Web.”<sup>91</sup>

Omeka S, a new version of Omeka created for institutional usage, was launched by the project in November 2017. It offers the option to host many sites that access a single pool of resources, in this instance Wikidata, using a third-party module. With an emphasis on supporting individual projects and instructors,<sup>92</sup> Omeka Classic, the original project, continue to operate alongside Omeka S.

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<sup>89</sup> Dan Cohen, ‘Introducing Omeka’, 20 February 2008, <https://mars.gmu.edu/handle/1920/6089>.

<sup>90</sup> For the list of websites using Omeka see ‘Omeka Classic - Directory’, accessed 13 October 2023, <https://omeka.org/classic/directory/>.

<sup>91</sup> Miriam Posner and Megan R. Brett, ‘Creating an Omeka Exhibit’, *Programming Historian*, 24 February 2016, <https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/creating-an-omeka-exhibit>.

<sup>92</sup> See Catherine E. Saunders, ‘Using Omeka and Neatline to Facilitate Student Research in a Core Literature Class’, *Innovations in Teaching & Learning Conference Proceedings* 7 (19 September 2015), <https://doi.org/10.13021/G8359P> and Allison C. Marsh, ‘Omeka in the Classroom: The Challenges of Teaching Material Culture in a Digital World’, *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 28, no. 2 (1 June 2013): 279–82, <https://doi.org/10.1093/lc/fqs068>.

## II.2 Sources

Trying to understand Michel Foucault's influence on the work and reflection of Italian historians implies first of all looking at the publications of some of the leading Italian academic journals. This selection is not obvious in both the choice of journals and the selection of works contained in them. Our approach was to start from Jstor's digital library by entering the search terms 'Michel Foucault' and then 'Foucault'. We then further refined the results by entering the linguistic localisation - Italian in this case - and the chronological span of interest of the publications - 1970 to 1999. From this selection, an analysis of the articles was then conducted in an attempt to understand whether and in what way Foucault and his works were cited. The result of this skimming revealed that, in the period of interest, the Italian academic journals in which Michel Foucault was cited knowledgeably and meaningfully by historians were: *Quaderni Storici*, *Studi Storici*, *Archivio Storico Italiano* and *Contemporanea*.

Starting from this observation, I consider it relevant to consider each of these individual journals and trace – albeit briefly – a historical and content profile. This may shed light on why these journals and not others have included among their publications texts that contemplate an analysis of historical phenomena in which Foucault is taken into consideration.

The il Mulino publishing company started *Quaderni storici*, a monthly dedicated to historical study, in 1966. *Quaderni storici delle Marche* was the name used up to 1969. The journal's pieces are often spread throughout a very wide temporal range (from ancient to modern history), focusing particularly on social and sociable history, economic history, and microhistory. The issues, which are published every four months, are divided into two parts: a monographic part that provides a multi-signed overview of key topic areas; and a research, sources, notes, and historiographical debate section. Authoritative historians, both Italian and international, including Fernand Braudel, Carlo Ginzburg, Pasquale Villani, Peter Burke, Maurice Aymard, Edoardo Grendi, Carlo Poni, and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, have worked with the organization from its founding and direction by the historian Alberto Caracciolo, which was then led for a considerable period of time by Giovanni Levi. Here is how the publication is presented and described by its editors:

*Quaderni storici* is home to some of the most influential international historical research.

The journal embraces a wide chronological span, from ancient to modern history, and encompasses social and economic history, gender history as well as microhistory. It has featured the contribution of Italian and international scholars, such as Alberto Caracciolo, Maurice Aymard, Carlo Ginzburg, Peter Burke, Carlo Poni, Pasquale

Villani, Christiane Klapish, and Gianna Pomata. Each issue comprises a dedicated section in which several authors develop a broad thematic canvas. The latest issues centred on the themes of slavery and conversions in the Mediterranean, on the historical-geographical research in recent years, on the re-elaboration of East-European memories after the Cold War, on the questions opened by the use of post-colonial sources, on the objects of science and the "systems of exception".<sup>93</sup>

The Istituto Gramsci established *Studi Storici* in 1959 as a quarterly history journal. The journal provides historical articles and discussions spanning antiquity to the present. Gastone Manacorda was its initial editor. Francesco Barbagallo has been in charge of the direction since 1983. The history of socialism and communism, both from the point of view of the history of thought (paying special attention to Antonio Gramsci), and from the point of view of political parties and movements in Italy, Europe, and the former Soviet Union, are the main themes of the magazine. The journal also discusses significant economic changes in Italy and throughout the world. Innovative studies of ancient, medieval, and modern history are also given plenty of room. Carocci Editore has printed and distributed *Studi Storici* since 1999.

*Studi Storici*, a journal of the Gramsci Foundation, was founded in 1959. Throughout its history, it has remained faithful to its original layout as an organ of study and in-depth study of a high scientific level, engaged in the most diverse areas of historical research, with a breadth of interests both chronological and thematic. *Studi Storici* is a journal of general history, ranging from antiquity to the contemporary age and dealing with the study of the past through multidisciplinary approaches; it promotes the critical and philologically rigorous study of the relationship between past and present; it encourages research on political and social movements, structures, ideas and institutions, with particular attention to the subjects and dynamics that in the long term have inspired and contributed to the construction of modern democracies. Publication of articles is subject to the double-blind peer review procedure.<sup>94</sup>

*Contemporanea* is a historical journal founded in 1998 by Francesco Traniello, published by il Mulino. *Contemporanea*, as stated in their homepage on Jstor, "encourages cross-generational academic interchange, continual engagement with global knowledge, and continuing discussions between academic historians and practitioners, instructors, and students."<sup>95</sup> Its pages allow for open discussion of sources, methodology, and current events, as well as of

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<sup>93</sup> 'Quaderni Storici on JSTOR', accessed 13 October 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/journal/quadernistorici>.

<sup>94</sup> 'Studi Storici', Carocci editore, accessed 13 October 2023, <https://www.carocci.it/prodotto/studi-storici-5-2>.

My translation

<sup>95</sup> 'Contemporanea on JSTOR', accessed 15 October 2023, <https://www.jstor.org/journal/contemporanea>.

research, education, and teaching. *Contemporanea* contains the results of a distinctive and cutting-edge research on political, social, and cultural issues of Italian, European, and worldwide history from the late XVIII century to the present day, undertaken by Italian and international specialists. It addresses crucial historical arguments and topics through a "written" conversation between Italian and international scholars in a continual interaction between history and social sciences. *Contemporanea* also includes critical reassessments of historical classics or important historical works, as well as of the most notable outcomes of current historical production. Additionally, it introduces the reader to unpublished sources and papers with introductions that are critical and philological by experts in the related fields.

*Contemporanea* selects, with the rigour of peer review, original and innovative research by Italian and foreign scholars on political, social and cultural aspects of world history from the late 18th century to the present; it informs on the most significant trends and themes of the international historiographical debate, addressing historical topics and problems of particular relevance, in a constant dialogue between history and the other social sciences and between generations.<sup>96</sup>

The oldest historical journal taken into consideration is the *Archivio Storico Italiano*. It was established in 1841 by Giovan Pietro Vieusseux and Gino Capponi and was first published the following year by the *Deputazione di storia patria per la Toscana*. It has been published by the publisher Olschki since 1925. Isidoro del Lungo, Francesco Novati, Pio Rajna, Carlo Morandi, Roberto Ridolfi, Arnaldo d'Addario, Ernesto Sestan, and Franco Cardini are a few of its principal authors.

The *Archivio Storico Italiano* is Italy's oldest ongoing historical journal and one of the oldest in the world. Its origin dates back to the initiative of Gian Pietro Vieusseux, who in 1842, together with a group of his first collaborators, wanted to begin the publication of 'works and documents hitherto unpublished or very rare concerning the History of Italy'. At one hundred and eighty years of uninterrupted life, with a total of almost seven hundred issues, the journal continues to host contributions on Italian and European history from the Middle Ages to the contemporary age, with a distinct focus on the study of unpublished documentation. Each year, ASI is published in four fascicles, which collect original essays (Memoirs), historiographical discussions and documents, as well as a selection of reviews and bibliographical news on the most recent releases in international historiographical production. [...] The *Archivio Storico Italiano* was one

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<sup>96</sup> *Contemporanea*, 2023, [https://www.mulino.it/isbn/?forcedLocale=it&fbrefresh=CAN\\_BE\\_ANYTHING](https://www.mulino.it/isbn/?forcedLocale=it&fbrefresh=CAN_BE_ANYTHING).

of the first historical journals to have its own website, launched on 20 May 1998, which is constantly updated and offers the up-to-date index of the annuals, the corpus of historical indexes and the abstracts of the issues published from 2011 to the present.<sup>97</sup>

### II.3 Data collection methodology

For this research, primary data were used, which have been described above. This data will be analysed both quantitatively through the use of graphs and qualitatively through the textual analysis of the papers collected in the database, the results of which will be presented in the following chapter.

As mentioned, the identification of the material was mainly done by consulting Jstor's digital library. Therefore, two searches were carried out having in common the chronological limits (1970 CE - 1999 CE) and the selected language (Italian). The first search was carried out by entering the terms 'Michel' and 'Foucault', and the second by entering only 'Focault'. Papers that have been published in academic journals in the field of history were selected. Unfortunately, Jstor's History filter - at least for Italian publications - is unreliable as it excluded certain publications that were related to historical research. Therefore, I personally conducted the selection according to this criterion on the 257 results of the first search and the 663 of the second, as shown in Fig. 1-2. Once these papers were identified, an analysis of the manner and significance of the quotations of Foucault's works from the papers was carried out. After this last selection, the papers were catalogued within the database in the manner that is explained in the next section.

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<sup>97</sup> 'Archivio Storico Italiano', accessed 13 October 2023, <http://www.deputazionetoscana.it/wordpress/>.

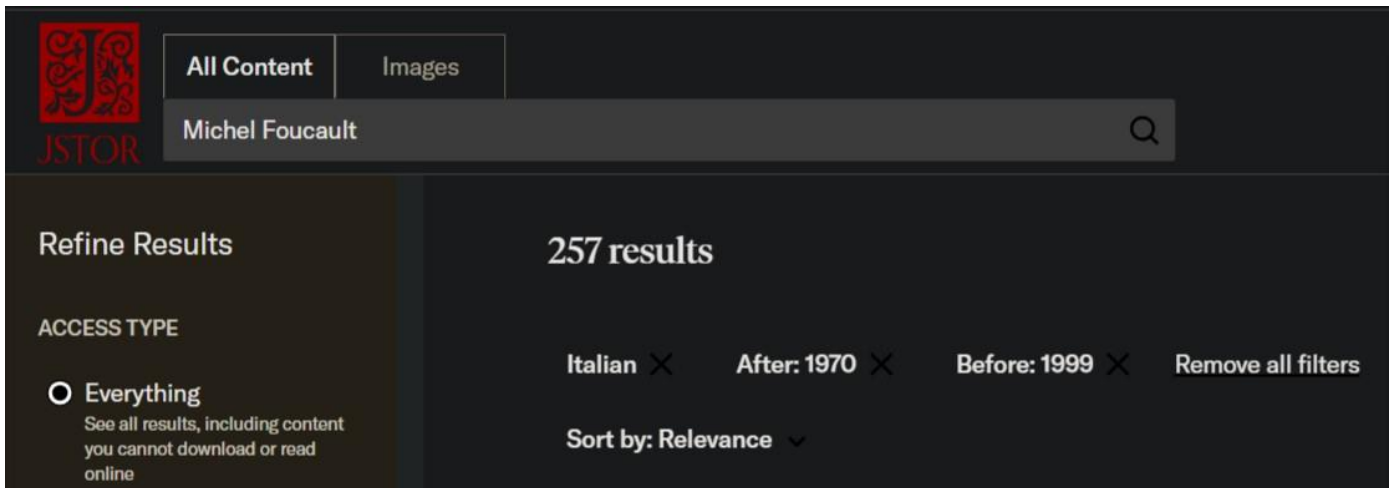


Figure 1

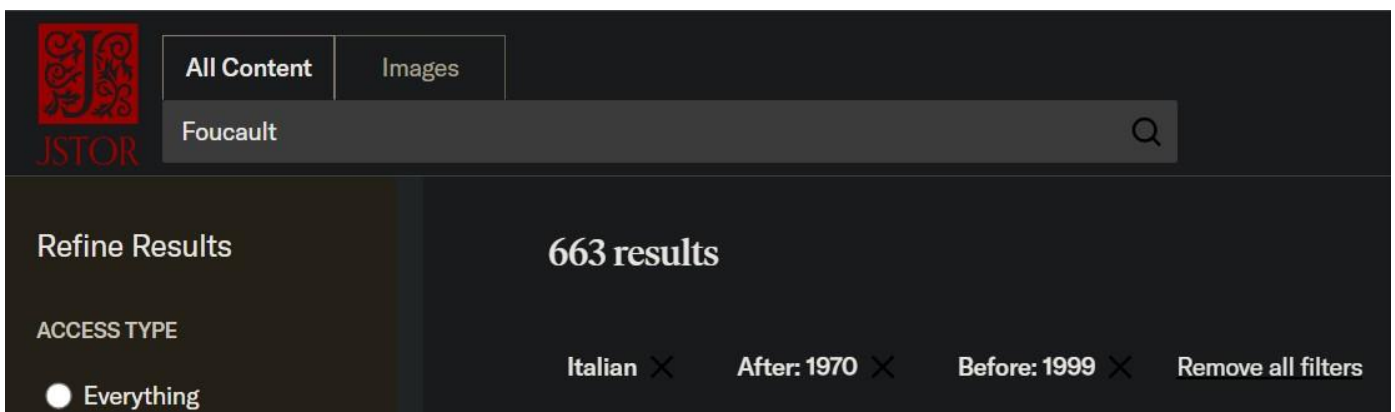


Figure 2

## II.4 Metadata

Since the first librarian made a list of the particulars on a shelf of handwritten scrolls, metadata has been. The word 'meta' is deduced from a Greek word that means "with, after, next," among other effects. 'Meta' is used extra these days in Latin and English to narrate to commodity transcendental or out of doors of nature. Therefore, metadata can be considered information about other information. It's the term used in the Internet period to describe the data that librarians have traditionally entered into registers, and it most constantly refers to descriptive data about Web coffers. A set of attributes, or rudiments, needed to describe the applicable resource, make up a metadata record. As an illustration, the library roster, a common metadata system, contains a set of metadata records with rudiments that describe a book or other library item author, title, date of creation or publication, subject content, and the call number indicating where the item is located on the shelf. The relationship between a metadata record and the resource it describes can be established in one of two ways the metadata is integrated into the resource itself, as opposed to being contained in a separate record like the library's roster record. The listing In Publication (CIP) data published on the reverse of a book's title runner or the TEI title in an electronic textbook are two exemplifications of bedded metadata that travels with the resource itself. Both types of relation aren't needed by numerous metadata norms in use moment, including the Dublin Core<sup>TM</sup> standard, which leaves the choice up to each perpetration. Despite the fact that the idea of metadata predates the Internet and the Web, interest in metadata norms and practices has exploded as a result of the rise of electronic publishing and digital libraries, as well as the preceding "information load" brought on by the enormous quantities of undifferentiated digital data that are now readily accessible online. According to Weibel and Lagoze, two authorities on the creation of metadata and digital libraries

The association of standardized descriptive metadata with networked objects has the eventuality for mainly perfecting resource discovery capabilities by enabling field-grounded (e.g., author, title) quests, permitting indexing of non-textual objects, and allowing access to the surrogate content that's distinct from access to the content of the resource itself.<sup>98</sup>

The Dublin Core, a collection of fifteen general, frequently used factors, including Creator, Contributor, Publisher, Title, Date, Language, Format, Subject, Identifier, Relation, Source,

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<sup>98</sup> Stuart L. Weibel and Carl Lagoze, 'An Element Set to Support Resource Discovery', *International Journal on Digital Libraries* 1, no. 2 (1 September 1997): 177, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s007990050013>.

Type, Coverage, and Rights, was first created in 1995 at a meeting in Dublin, Ohio. Its intended thing was to make it easier to find material on the Web, which was fleetly expanding, by bedding straightforward metadata in its runners in the form of card registers. The conception of attaining approximate interoperability across languages and fields through a core of participated semantics was explored and developed through a series of vibrant shops and conferences, drawing support from a wide community of librarians, technologists, and scholars. This community was drawn in two ways by farther advances in Web technology:

- Metadata grounded on record formats in relational databases and depositories, numerous of which are grounded on XML, an Extensible Markup Language, mainstream inventors have employed and continue to employ vocabularies like Dublin Core™ to express the contents of metadata entries as structured textbooks. Record format device emphasize textbook values, top-down compliance, unrestricted- world quality control, and dependence on well- known, time- tested software results. Interoperability across operations is measured by adherence to defined formats, similar as the good Dublin Core™ (2003), which has several dozen further DCMI metadata keywords in addition to its fifteen rudiments, and the dozens of other formats that have been released over the times. The record- grounded fashion could be nicely simple to apply, but in order to interoperate between similarly structured formats, ad hoc ‘crosswalks’ (mappings) are needed. These are delicate to use and maintain.
- Metadata grounded on recombinant statements working groups of the World Wide Web Consortium began pursuing the idea of a web of data, or Semantic Web, in the late 1990s. Resource Description Framework (RDF) and a worldwide Domain Name System (DNS) that could resolve URIs to Web spots made this idea possible. Dublin Core, one of the first vocabularies to be published in RDF with endless URIs in 2000, was featured in the first W3C Recommendation for RDF, which was released in 1999. RDF devices strive towards partial interoperability in the face of the open Web's chaos and complexity. In the RDF perspective, metadata was constructed of unbounded, schema-less graphs made up of infinitesimal assertions that could be intermingled, or "mashed up," by fusing different sources into the graph rather than separate, bounded records( documents) with a predefined structure. Interoperability across colorful



sources in statement- grounded metadata is achieved by exercising, or mapping to, participated URIs, immaculately from well- known vocabularies like Dublin Core™.<sup>99</sup>

RDF device viewed biographies as a starting point for constructing metadata that would compatibly fit into data graphs gauging different operations, in discrepancy to XML device who considered operation biographies as arrangements for producing validatable metadata records within a particular operation. DCMI's Singapore Framework (2007), which is the capstone of multiple best- practice design factors, provides the right operation profile to close this gap. The idea that a description is a collection of claims about a particular resource was at the center of it. A description set, which might be either kept directly as an RDF graph or encoded in a format intended to be converted into RDF, could contain the descriptions of many resources, such as Book and Author. Based on readily available RDF vocabularies, well stated entity models, and specifically stated functional requirements, a well-designed application profile would be created. This form of metadata can draw from a variety of RDF vocabularies, including 'Friend of a Friend' (FOAF), the 'Bibliographic Ontology' (BIBO), and Schema.org, rather than having to be based on the Dublin Core™.

Dublin Core™ can also be seen as a small language for making a specific class of statements about resources. Both elements (nouns) and qualifiers (adjectives), which make up the two classes of terms in this language, can be arranged into a straightforward pattern of statements. In this language, the implied subjects are the resources themselves. Dublin Core™ can be compared to a "metadata pidgin for digital tourists" in the diverse Internet world because it is simple to understand but not always effective at communicating complex relationships or ideas.

The main features of Dublin Core™ can be summarised as follows:

- Simplicity: The Dublin Core is a set of fifteen elements designed for non-catalogers to enhance the visibility of collections to search engines and retrieval systems. It is not meant to replace richer cataloging models like AACR2/MARC, but to provide a foundational set of description elements for straightforward resource descriptions by catalogers and non-catalogers. The majority of the elements have generally accepted semantics.
- Semantic Interoperability: The Internet commons hinders cross-disciplinary search due to different description models, such as libraries, museums, and geographic information systems. These standards reflect the unique requirements of these communities and have

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<sup>99</sup> See 'Metadata Basics', 15 December 2018, <https://www.dublincore.org/resources/metadata-basics/>.

developed independently. The fine-grained description level of these elements differs, such as the cloud-cover attribute for satellite images. However, most resources share a core set of characteristics common across disciplines, known as the Dublin Core. This promotes a set of core descriptors that increase the likelihood of cross-disciplinary search. For example, an author and creator can be considered the same attribute, promoting a more cohesive and efficient search..

- International Consensus: The creation of a successful discovery infrastructure depends on acknowledging the global reach of resource discovery on the Web. In many nations across the world, the Dublin Core has benefitted from active involvement and promotion.
- Flexibility: The Dublin Core, initially driven by the demand for author-generated resource descriptions, is gaining interest from formal resource description groups. As the variety of Web resources grows, trusted intermediaries like museums and libraries will become preferred suppliers of metadata. The Dublin Core is expected to offer a less expensive alternative to more complex description models, as it can represent the extra structure and complex semantics required for these applications..
- Metadata Modularity on the Web: The Dublin Core is a metadata package designed to aid in resource discovery, but it can also be used for terms and conditions, archive management, and administrative information. It has evolved under the Warwick Framework, which formalizes modularity and modularity. Other packages, such as Terms and Conditions metadata packages, may include information on rights holders, resource pricing, usage limitations, and more. The Dublin Core has evolved since the Warwick Workshop.
- A Metadata Architecture for the Web: The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) is focusing on developing a metadata architecture called the Resource Description Framework (RDF) to meet the diverse metadata requirements of vendors and information providers, with active participation from the Dublin Core project and digital library perspectives.<sup>100</sup>

Here I list the elements used to catalogue the items in the dataset and their meaning:

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<sup>100</sup> Further information at ‘Using Dublin Core’, accessed 13 October 2023, <https://www.dublincore.org/specifications/dublin-core/usageguide/>.

- Type: The resource's content type, a controlled vocabulary like DCMIType, describes broad classifications, purposes, genres, or material aggregation layers, while the FORMAT element characterizes the resource's analog or digital representation.
- Source: a mention of a source from which the current material was drawn. The source resource may have been used in whole or in part to create the current resource. I decided to reference the resource by the Web Archived link in order to provide an always valid link back to the original source.
- Relation: A citation of an associated source is necessary for connections to be stated in one way or both directions, provided the reference is precise. If text strings are used instead of identification figures, a formal bibliographic citation may be employed to direct observers to a specific point.
- Creator: the association in charge of creating the resource's content. A Creator might be a person, a group, or a service, for case. Generally, this element should be denoted by the name of the Creator. In our case, the names of the authors of the academic papers were used.
- Publisher: the association in charge of furnishing the resource. A person, a business, or a service are all exemplifications of Publishers. generally, the Publisher's name should be used to denote the element. The publishing house responsible for the academic journal was presented then.
- Rights: Rights information includes information about the rights held by a resource, such as Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), Brand, and other property rights. However, it's difficult to predict how these rights will be treated if the rights element is missing. In this case, academic journal publishers held the brand of the database particulars.
- Date: the date of an occasion throughout the resource's life cycle. Date is constantly linked to the product or availability of the material. The YYYY-MM-DD format is the recommended stylish practice for date value garbling as described in an ISO 8601 profile. The date then refers to the date of publication of the paper.
- Format: the resource's physical or digital manifestation. Generally, Format will mention the resource's size or media type. Size and duration are a many of exemplifications of confines. The software, tackle, or other outfit needed to display or use the content can be determined by the format.
- Language: language used in the resource's intellectual content. RFC 3066, in combination with ISO 639, specifies two- and three- letter primary language markers with voluntary subtags as the preferred stylish practice for the values of the Language

element. To give a many exemplifications," en" or" eng" for English," akk" for Akkadian, and" en- GB" for English used in the United Kingdom are all respectable bowdlerizations.<sup>101</sup>

- Subject: a reference to one of the relating themes of Foucault's exploration. This set of keywords was taken from a list collected by scholar Clare O'Farrell in the alternate excursus – entitled 'crucial generalities in Foucault's work' – to the book Michel Foucault.<sup>102</sup>
- Extracted TextThe text was converted from a paper into a.txt format using ABBYY FineReader PDF, an optic character recognition (OCR) operation. FineReader can identify new characters, choose redundant characters, add sphere-specific language to the built-in wordbook, and add new characters to the recognition ABC, such as Icelandic letters in a German textbook.<sup>103</sup> The program also allows druggies to compare documents, add reflections and commentary, and schedule batch processing.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> See 'Using Dublin Core'.

<sup>102</sup> See Clare O'Farrell, *Michel Foucault* (SAGE, 2005) For the list of concepts see; 'Key Concepts', *Foucault News* (blog), 19 March 2018, <https://michel-foucault.com/key-concepts/>.

<sup>103</sup> See Caroline Sporleder, Antal van den Bosch, and Kalliopi Zervanou, *Language Technology for Cultural Heritage: Selected Papers from the LaTeCH Workshop Series* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2011).

<sup>104</sup> 'ABBYY FineReader Pro Is an Unparalleled OCR Solution', Engadget, 15 July 2016, <https://www.engadget.com/2014-06-16-abbyy-finereader-pro-is-an-unparalleled-ocr-solution.html>.

MobiCore

SIGNED IN AS [Logout](#)  
matteo.salvemini@studenti.unipd.it

Search items

Sites

RESOURCES

- Items
- Item sets
- Vocabularies
- Resource templates

ADMIN

- Users

MODULES

- Custom Vocab
- DataScribe
- Item Sets Tree

RESOURCE TEMPLATES **TextF** Export

Class: Text

Original label	Data types	Alternate label	Alternate comment	Required?	Private?
Title	***			No	No
Creator	***			No	No
Date Issued	***			No	No
Is Part Of	***			No	No
volume	***			No	No
issue	***			No	No
page start	***			No	No
page end	***			No	No
Publisher	***			No	No
Bibliographic Citation	***			No	No
review of	***			No	No
Language	***			No	No
Format	***			No	No
Relation	***			No	No
Rights	***			No	No
Source	***			No	No
Subject	***			No	No
extracted text	***			No	No

Omeka S version 3.0.1 [System information](#) [User manual](#) [Support forums](#)

Figure 3: Template used for cataloguing the items

The screenshot displays the MobiCore interface for an item titled "Libertinismo e ateismo nel Seicento". The interface is divided into several sections:

- Navigation and User Info:** Includes "MobiCore", "SIGNED IN AS matteo.salvemini@studenti.unipd.it", and a search bar.
- Left Sidebar:** Contains navigation menus for "RESOURCES" (Items, Media, Item sets, Vocabularies, Resource templates), "ADMIN" (Users), and "MODULES" (Custom Vocab, DataScribe, Item Sets Tree).
- Item Details:** A table with two columns: "Metadata" and "Text".
 

Metadata	Text
Class	Text
Title (Dublin Core)	Libertinismo e ateismo nel Seicento
Creator (Dublin Core)	Lorenzo Bianchi
Date Issued (Dublin Core)	1979-11-01
Is Part Of (Dublin Core)	Studi Storici
volume (Bibliographic Ontology)	20
issue (Bibliographic Ontology)	4
page start (Bibliographic Ontology)	881
page end (Bibliographic Ontology)	886
Publisher (Dublin Core)	Fondazione Istituto Gramsci
Bibliographic Citation (Dublin Core)	Darnton, Robert. "An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris." <i>The American Historical Review</i> 105, no. 1 (2000): 1-35
review of (Bibliographic Ontology)	[nel caso di recensioni]
Language (Dublin Core)	ita
Format (Dublin Core)	pdf
Relation (Dublin Core)	La « governamentalità », in « Aut Aut », 167-168, pp. 12-29
Rights (Dublin Core)	Studi Storici © 1979 Fondazione Istituto Gramsci
Source (Dublin Core)	[URL - usare il DOI quando possibile]
Subject (Dublin Core)	[i temi ricorrenti in F.]
extracted text (Extract Text)	Nell'ambito del « libertinage érudit » il Theophrastus redivivus occupa un posto privilegiato ed emblematico. Questo lunghissimo manoscritto in lingua latina – opera di un anonimo autore francese e riscoperto dallo Spink alla Bibliothèque Nationale di Parigi – riassume infatti l'insieme dei temi del « libero pensiero » circolanti nella prima metà del XVII secolo (la data della stesura dell'opera, indicata nel manoscritto, è il 1659) e li porta a estreme conseguenze di stampo naturalistico e ateistico. Se già è difficile in sede storiografica dare un giudizio complessivamente unitario del libero pensiero, l'analisi del Theophrastus redivivus non facilita un lavoro in questa direzione. Opera essenzialmente erudita ma insieme esplicitamente atea, arsenale di polemica antireligiosa da cui attingeranno numerosissimi autori, essa è tuttavia il prodotto di un intellettuale isolato, estraneo agli esiti filosofici dei contemporanei Descartes, Gassendi o Hobbes, e il lavoro appare il risultato di una persona che « sotto molti aspetti è un uomo del Cinquecento più che del Seicento » (J. S. Spink, <i>Il libero pensiero in Francia da Gassendi a Voltaire</i> , trad. it. di L. Roberti Sacerdote, Firenze, 1974, p. 78). Rispetto a questa valutazione dello Spink più categorici e definitivi appaiono i giudizi di H. Busson e di R. Pintard che accusano il Theophrastus redivivus di essere un testo vecchio e fuori del proprio tempo, mentre più problematica e interlocutoria risulta la valutazione di E. Garin che propone una saldatura tra tematiche rinascimentali e filosofia moderna e riscontra questo intreccio di temi diversi « proprio nell'area del pensiero libertino della metà del.....
- Right Sidebar:** Contains "Visibility" (Public), "Created" (Sep 12, 2023), and "Owner" (Federico Mazzini).
- Footer:** Omeka S version 3.0.1, System information, User manual, Support forums.

Figure 4: Example of cataloguing

The Database Foucault currently consists of 105 items. Each of these elements represents a publication that has been identified as related to Foucault and has been catalogued through the definition of the indicated metadata. The database is an attempt to create a platform for historians to navigate among the publications that Italian historiography produced between the 1970s and the 1990s. In addition to a simple item-by-item browsing, their cataloguing through the metadata 'subject' makes it possible to conduct a thematic search through the key concepts of Michel Foucault's research.

Similarly, the other metadata allow the items to be indexed in the event of a specific search by author, publisher or year. In particular, through the 'Advanced Search' option, as shown in Fig. 5, it is possible to select a specific value and then customise that value so that the database presents the items associated with that value only. For example, should you wish to locate only those items associated only with a particular concept by Michel Foucault, simply go to the 'Search by value' section, indicate 'Subject' as the value in the first panel, then specify 'is exactly' and finally type in the concept you wish to explore - for example 'apparatus', 'culture', 'confinement' etc. In short, the database takes the form of an easy-to-navigate and flexible tool that allows different research paths to be followed.

*Fig. 5 The Advanced search interface offered by Omeka*

Two are the most obvious limitations of this database. The first is the fact that the works included in the database are protected by copyright. This obviously prevents them from being published without prior authorisation or agreement with the publishers who hold the rights to these academic papers. Until then, the database must be kept strictly private and used only for personal research.

The second problem is the limited size of the database. 105 articles is indeed a very small number, both as a database in itself and in comparison with the total number of academic publications over the same period, as will be noted below. However, this problem is due to an exogenous factor. In fact, the number of academic journals in the discipline of history that have undergone a process of digitalisation and digitisation is extremely limited. In fact, the lack of digitisation of other journals makes it impossible to carry out the type of analysis carried out here. Only the four academic journals considered here - *Quaderni Storici*, *Studi Storici*,

Contemporanea and Archivio Storico Italiano - have made their material available online in a format that allows the text to be extracted and converted into machine-readable form.

In this sense, in order to continue and extend the research carried out here, it would be necessary to enter into a dialogue with the publishers of other journals and urge them to carry out a similar process to that carried out by their colleagues here. Once this has been done, it would finally be possible to identify papers in these academic journals that have some connection with Foucault, extract their text and carry out textual analysis using software.

This would provide a more complete picture of academic historical research in Italy, as well as a clearer understanding of Italian historians' interest in Foucault and the research themes he introduced.



## III. Findings

### III.1 Methodology

In order to proceed with the analysis of the corpus of texts, it was first necessary to digitise and render the texts of the academic papers examined in a software-readable format. To do this, ABBYY FineReader PDF, an optical character recognition (OCR) developed by the Abbyy group of the same name, was used. The OCR “extracts and repurposes data from scanned documents, camera images and image-only pdfs. OCR software singles out letters on the image, puts them into words and then puts the words into sentences, thus enabling access to and editing of the original content.”<sup>105</sup>

Among the various functionalities that ABBYY FineReader provided, the one used for this research was that of creating and converting PDFs. In this way, by entering the document in .pdf format into the OCR, it was possible to modify it into a .txt format that is readable by Voyant's software. However, before moving on to analysis, two further verification and correction steps had to be taken.

Firstly, it was verified that the software did not make transcription errors, often caused by poor image quality, the font used or the type of layout in the paper under analysis. For example, words that wrap around are not understood as such by the software, which will keep them separate in the two parts. This, representing a potential limitation then for textual analysis, required that all new lines be reconstituted into the initial single word.

Secondly, the text had to be cleansed of those elements repeated in the paper due to the graphical and layout requirements of the papers for the various academic journals and the issues of copyright and origin of the paper that Jstor inserts. Elements such as the author's name and the title of the paper, for example, are repeated in the original version countless times in the text, and in order to prevent this from spoiling the whole analysis, the presence of these elements has been reduced to one, so as to maintain the information they imply. Similarly, the origin, time and academic institution through which the paper was downloaded - included by Jstor by virtue of its policies - have been removed as potentially disruptive to the Voyant software. Instead, the page numbers have been left in, as being unique elements would not impact the quality of the textual analysis.

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<sup>105</sup> IBM Cloud Education, ‘What Is Optical Character Recognition (OCR)?’, *IBM Blog* (blog), 5 January 2022, <https://www.ibm.com/blog/optical-character-recognition/>.

Once all these steps had been completed, all the OCR-derived .txt files were put together in a folder in order to form the corpus that Voyant was to analyse. The methods and results of this analysis were conducted as follows.

### III.2 A text analysis of the database material

As mentioned above, Voyant Tools was used to conduct the textual analysis, that is an open-source, web-based application for performing text analysis. The application was released in 2016 after development work led by Stéfán Sinclair - Associate Professor in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at McGill University, Canada. He passed away in August 2020 - and Geoffrey Rockwell - Professor of Philosophy and Digital Humanities at the University of Alberta, Canada - current leader of the project.

It is an application that has enjoyed widespread success among the academic population and beyond since its release. In fact, according to data from October 2016 alone - thus only a few months after Voyant's release – “there were 81,686 page views of Voyant from 156 countries that represent 1,173,252 tool invocations just on the main server. VoyantServer 2.0 has in turn been downloaded over 2,000 times.”<sup>106</sup> its interface consists of a series of panels housing the various tools through which the corpus analysis is conducted. Each of these panels can easily be exported where possible in the form of .png or .jpeg, embedded data or the raw data associated with that panel. This ensures that the results offered by Voyant can be easily integrated and displayed as part of one's own research, even if the tool prefers to share its content via the web rather than on text files.

It was developed from previous examples of textual analysis tools such as HyperPo, Tapaporware, and TACT, although Voyant is a significantly improved version in several respects. In particular,

- **Scalability:** “whereas HyperPo and Tapaporware could readily handle book-length texts for micro-analysis, both reach their practical limits when corpora grow to beyond a couple of megabytes. In contrast, Voyant is designed to handle much larger corpora (dozens of megabytes and beyond). There is still a practical (though undefined) limit to the size of corpora for Voyant given that it seeks to enable immediate micro-analysis, but the Voyant architecture is designed with scale in mind.”<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> ‘Voyant Facts | Hermeneuti.Ca’, 14 September 2018, <https://web.archive.org/web/20180914222459/http://hermeneuti.ca/VoyantFacts>.

<sup>107</sup> ‘About - Voyant Tools Help’, accessed 7 November 2023, <https://voyant-tools.org/docs/#!/guide/about>.

- Ubiquity: “much of the most compelling functionality of Voyant is interactive and requires considerable client-side scripting: our current approach is to provide a tiny snippet of HTML that is essentially an IFRAME that contains the necessary HTML elements.”<sup>108</sup>
- Referenceability: The status of text analysis tools as academic resources has been a point of debate over the years. [...] In any case, we have designed Voyant to be conducive to citation in various ways, including a general citation to Voyant and citations for static or dynamic results. An important component of academic knowledge is reproducibility and providing scholars with more information on the processes followed during research — including the use of text analysis tools — is sure to be useful.”<sup>109</sup>

Since its release, Voyant's fields of application have rapidly multiplied, ranging from literature, language teaching, healthcare and architecture.<sup>110</sup> In this sense, therefore, my intention is not only to explain the nature of the tools provided by Voyant, but at the same time to show how they can be used in the field of historical research, as a tangible contribution, from my own experience.

Among the tools made available by Voyant, the first one worth talking about is certainly the one called Terms. The tool in question takes the words that appear most frequently within the corpus and analyses their frequency over the course of the corpus as shown in Fig. 6.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> To have a look at some applications of Voyant Tools see Kenton Rambsy, ‘Text-Mining Short Fiction by Zora Neale Hurston and Richard Wright Using Voyant Tools’, *CLA Journal* 59, no. 3 (2016): 251–58; Tara McIlroy, ‘Exploring Poetry and Identity in a Language Learning Environment’, *Studies in Linguistics and Language Teaching* 24 (November 2013): 31–45; Inocencio Daniel Maramba et al., ‘Web-Based Textual Analysis of Free-Text Patient Experience Comments From a Survey in Primary Care’, *JMIR Medical Informatics* 3, no. 2 (6 May 2015): e20, <https://doi.org/10.2196/medinform.3783> and; Marie-Lise Moullec, Marija Jankovic, and Claudia Eckert, ‘Selecting System Architecture: What a Single Industrial Experiment Can Tell Us about the Traps to Avoid When Choosing Selection Criteria’, *AI EDAM* 30, no. 3 (August 2016): 250–62, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0890060416000238>.

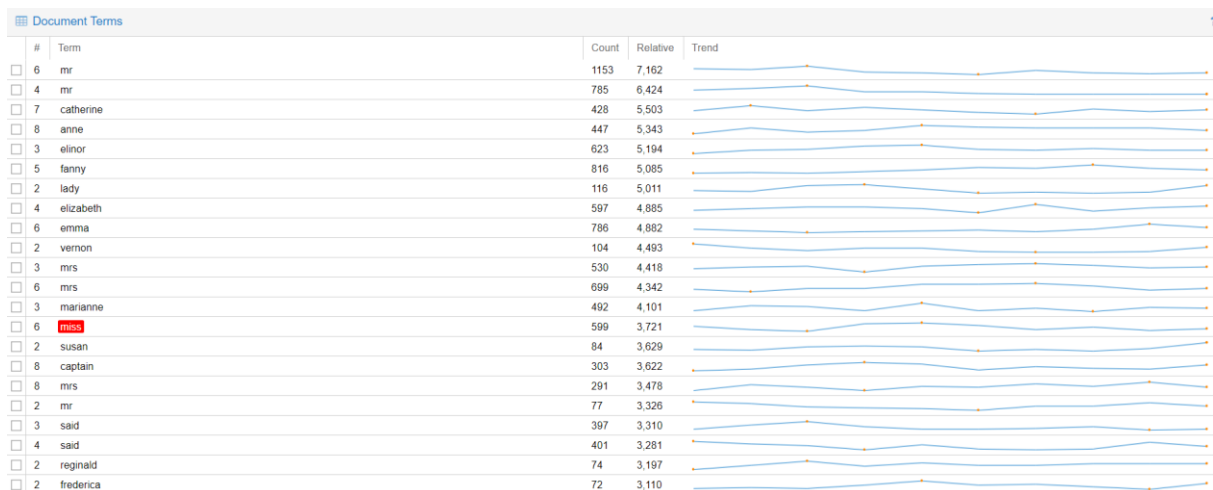


Figure 6 Example of the Terms tool

Divided into three columns, the first shows the list of terms, the second the number of times that word appears in the corpus, and the third a stylised graph showing the frequency with which the word appears in the corpus. Fig. 7 goes on to show that pressing on the plus symbol next to the individual words opens a dedicated window in which more detailed data on that term is shown. In particular, the distribution of the word in the corpus, the other words with which it is correlated the most, the number of correlations and finally the sentences extrapolated from the corpus in which the word is used are highlighted. Through 'Items' it is also possible to signal to Voyant the number of interactions and related terms to be shown.

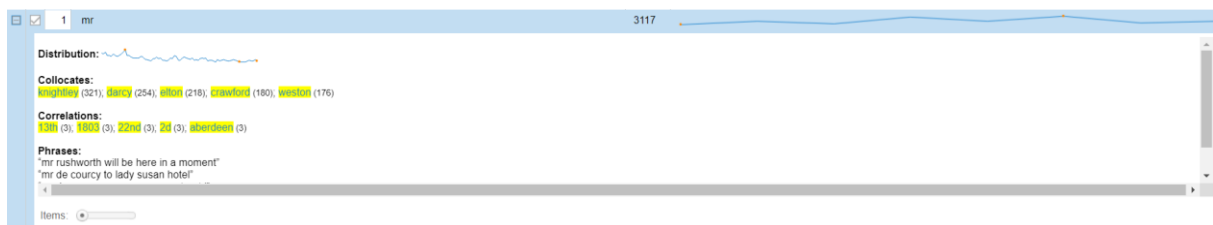


Figure 7 The detailed view of a term

In the case of historical research, this tool can be extremely valuable. In fact, if in the creation of the corpus, the various text files are saved by indicating the reference date as the first element in the file name (e.g., '1972-Bigalli-Recentipubblicaidi'), it will be possible to see in the 'Frequency' section the evolution of the frequency of that given term over time, allowing us to make chronological evaluations.

Perhaps Voyant's most popular tool is 'Cirrus'. It is a tool through which the most frequently occurring words within the corpus can be visualised via a word cloud (Fig.8). The size with which words appear within the word cloud emphasises their greater or lesser presence. Here in particular is where we make the list of stop words, i.e. those terms that we want Voyant to ignore



Next, the 'Termsberry' tool also offers some interesting insights. This tool in fact combines the frequency of words in the corpus with co-occurrence, i.e. “to what extent they appear in proximity with another.”<sup>112</sup> The higher frequency terms converge towards the centre of the display and their bubble is larger, as shown in Fig. 10. The colour of the various words indicates the proportion of documents where the term appears.

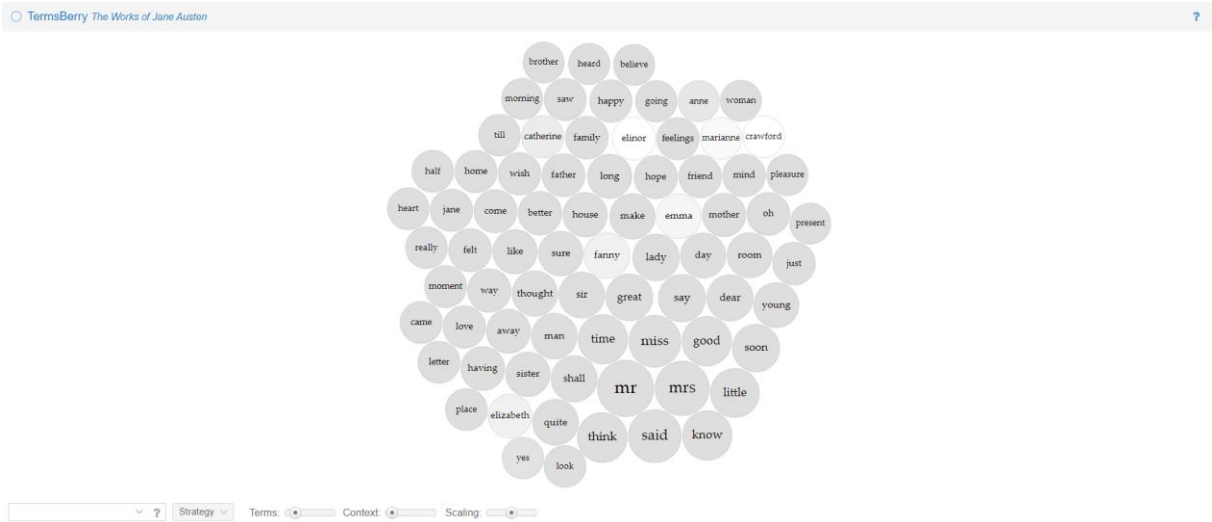


Figure 10 TermsBerry' tool as it appears by default

When you hover over a word with the mouse, as Fig. 11 shows, you will notice that it and some of the words around it will have numbers and will take on a different colour range than at the beginning. In fact, “when you hover over a term it becomes the keyword and then each of the other bubbles will indicate the collocate frequency for that term (within the specified context, by default two words the left and two words to the right). The darker the colour, the higher the collocate frequency. The hovering term also has a tooltip that appears and that provides the term frequency as well as the number of documents in which that term appears.”<sup>113</sup>

<sup>112</sup> ‘TermsBerry - Voyant Tools Help’, accessed 7 November 2023, <https://voyant-tools.org/docs/#!/guide/termsberry>.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

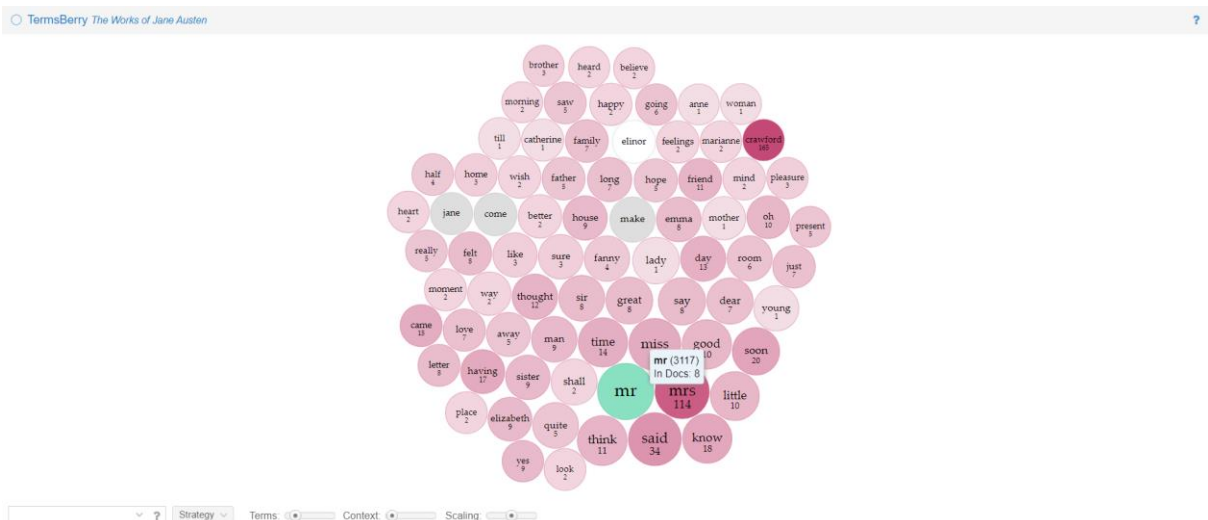


Figure 11 An example of what happens when you mouse over a term in the 'TermsBerry' tool

This tool thus makes it possible to enhance and visualise what was only sketched in the 'Terms' tool. In this way, we can be even clearer as to which terms are the main terms in our corpus and which terms predominantly go with them. Furthermore, through the configuration options of the tool, it is possible to isolate certain words with the search bar, to indicate how many words the tool should display, a slider called 'Context' to show how many terms to consider in context on each side of each term, and a final slider called 'Scaling' to determine how much scaling should happen for the size of the bubble between the highest frequency terms and the lowest frequency terms.

Next to the search bar to isolate terms, the entry 'Strategy' appears. This allows you to choose between:

- Top Terms: the highest frequency terms in the corpus
- Distinct Terms: a collection of distinct terms in each document<sup>114</sup>

If a number of historical sources are taken into account to form the corpus, it is clear that the tool makes it possible to visualise which words in the chronological span of the sources in the corpus were the most prominent and in which association and context they were used.

The 'Link' tool, on the other hand, allows an additional level of visualisation. Also called the 'Collocates Graph', it consists of a network graph in which to insert a series of words from the corpus - Voyant will choose the most recurring words by default - which are indicated in blue

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.





The technique that was considered by Voyant for this instrument is known as 'latent dirichlet allocation'. It works “as a generative probabilistic model of a corpus. The basic idea is that documents are represented as random mixtures over latent topics, where each topic is characterized by a distribution over words.”<sup>116</sup> The process is carried out through two substantial parts:

- The identification of the words that belong to a document, that we already know.
- The calculation of words that belong to a given topic or the probability of words belonging to a topic.<sup>117</sup>

The result is shown in Fig.8. The visualisation is spread over two columns. In the first, entitled 'Topics', the word clusters existing in the corpus are shown. The second, entitled 'Documents', shows the presence of each of those topics within the individual documents in the corpus. Each word cluster is identified through a colour and those same colours are used to identify its presence in the individual documents.

The tool's options allow you to search for certain words within the topics through the search box, to indicate the number of topics and words you want to display, to launch how many interactions you want through the topic modelling. By clicking on an individual document, it is then possible to observe in detail what percentage of the various topics appear within it, as shown in Fig. 13.

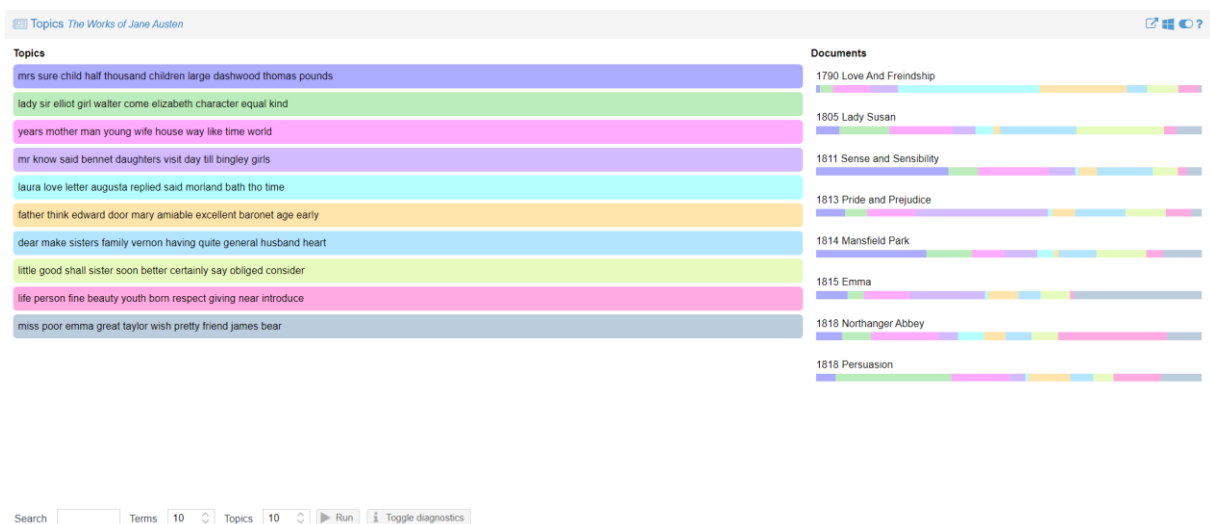


Figure 13 The tool 'Topics'

<sup>116</sup> 'Latent Dirichlet Allocation | The Journal of Machine Learning Research', accessed 7 November 2023, <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.5555/944919.944937>.

<sup>117</sup> See Ria Kulshrestha, 'Latent Dirichlet Allocation(LDA)', Medium, 28 September 2020, <https://towardsdatascience.com/latent-dirichlet-allocation-lda-9d1cd064ffa2>.

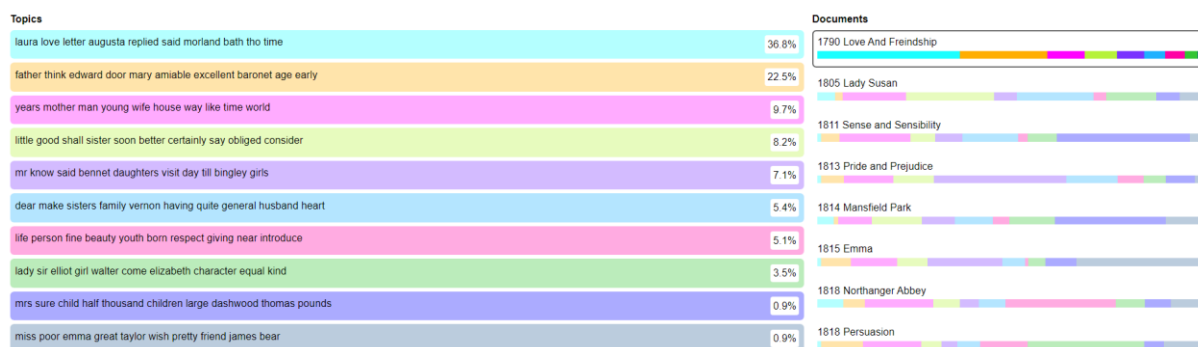


Figure 14 Example of how various topics are displayed in a single document

This sophisticated tool thus makes it possible to understand from the corpus sources what the dominant themes are and how they are distributed among the various sources. If one has indexed the documents by indicating as the first element the date of publication or the date to which the source refers, it is possible to analyse how these same themes have evolved over time or in what percentages they are present in given sources.

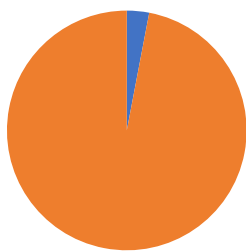
Now that the potential of Voyant as applied to historical research has been explained, a practical application of Voyant will be shown on the merits of the paper's question. As mentioned, the research will be conducted from the items collected in the Foucault Database. It consists of 105 papers that were published from 1970 to 1999 and were taken from the academic journals Quaderni Storici, Studi Storici, Archivio Storico Italiano and Contemporanea. The tools available will be used to understand whether or not there was an influence of Foucault on Italian historiography between the 1970s and 1990s and on what issues or themes the influence occurred.

### III.3 Final result

The first question to be answered was to ask what percentage of the academic journals and authors surveyed have more or less cited or even considered Foucault's work and thought in the timeframe considered here.

In order to do this, the total number of publications in academic journals between the 1970s and 1990s was taken and compared with the number of publications in the same journals that referred in some way to Foucault. This ‘reference’ to Foucault was determined by considering both those publications that directly cite books or writings by Michel Foucault as well as papers in which Foucault's name is cited as a reference for research conducted in a particular sector or field of research. The result is shown in Figs. 15-16-17-18. Here it can be seen that the publications associated with Foucault in relation to the total for the various academic journals account for a rather small proportion. In fact, they range from a measly 1% without ever reaching more than 3% of the total. In this sense, the journal that has contributed the most is Quaderni Storici, as the data show. On the other hand, Archivio Storico Italiano has the lowest number of contributions, representing only 1% of the total. Obviously, in the case of the journal Contemporanea, one must always bear in mind that it is a journal whose contribution spans only two years compared to the time span examined, as it was founded in 1998.

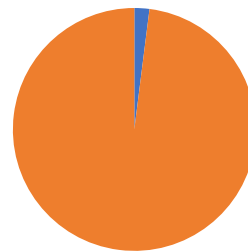
QUADERNI STORICI



■ FOUCAULT ■ NON FOUCAULT

Figure 15

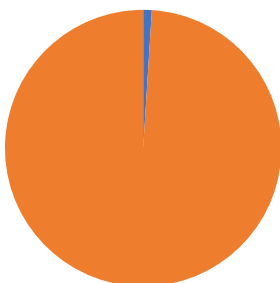
STUDI STORICI



■ FOUCAULT ■ NON FOUCAULT

Figure 16

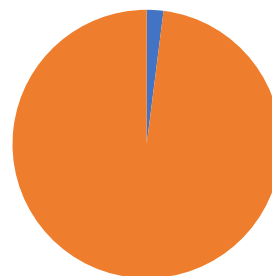
ARCHIVIO STORICO ITALIANO



■ FOUCAULT ■ NON FOUCAULT

Figura 17

CONTEMPORANEA



■ FOUCAULT ■ NON FOUCAULT

Figure 18

Starting from this basic observation, however, it is interesting to analyse the body of publications that have considered Foucault and his work in order to observe their trends and characteristics through Fig. 19-20.

First of all, we note that the two years with the highest number of citations are 1982 and 1983, with six citations each. These peaks can be justified by conducting a search from the items in the database referring to the years 1982 and 1983. An analysis of the 'Subjects' reveals that the concepts most associated with the publications of these two years are 'surveillance', 'confinement', 'discipline' and 'institutions'. This also coincides with the publication in 1979 of Melossi and Pavarini's volume 'Prison and Factory', which was previously examined, and with the fact that one of the periods with the highest number of citations is between 1979 and 1984. This allows us to observe how this is the period of greatest success of *Discipline and Punish* in Italian historiography due to the strong interest in the themes of prison and incarceration.

As regards the periods from 1987 to 1991 and from 1994 to 1999, in the first case in particular the emergence of the themes of Marxism and sexuality can be observed. This is a sign of the strong reaction of the academic world to Foucault's provocative remarks about Marx's thought and the curiosity induced by Foucault in the topics of prostitution, marriage practice and family-type arrangements.

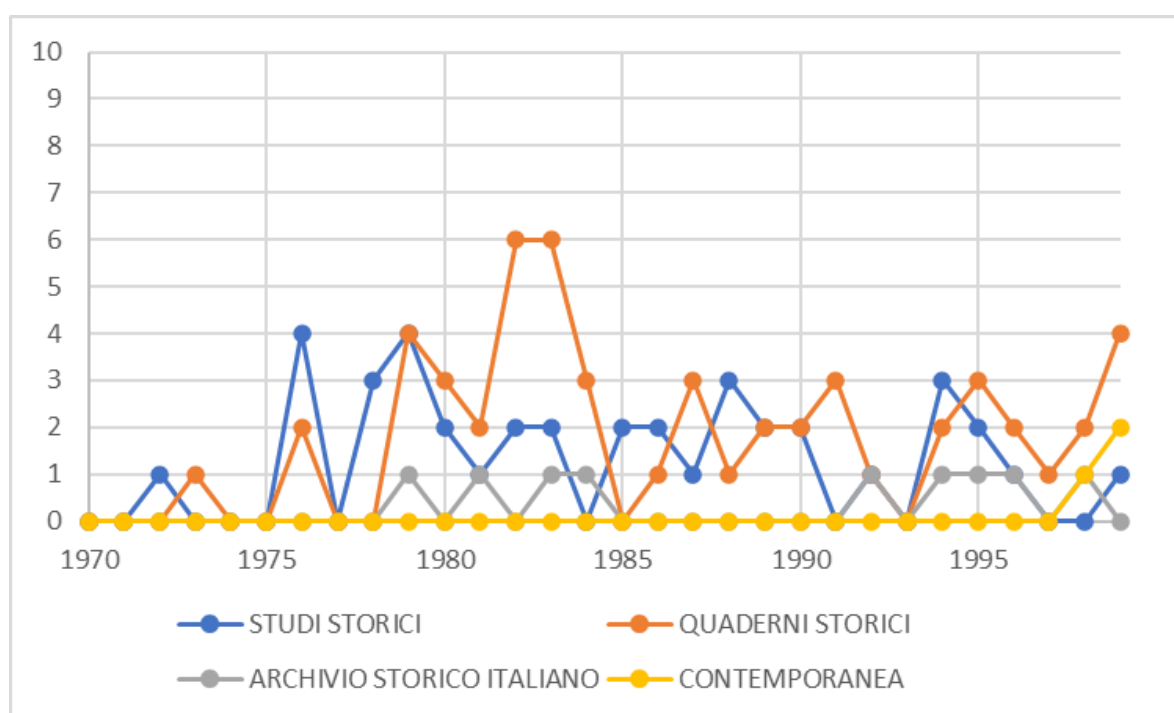


Figure 19 Foucault citations in Italian Journals (1970-1999)

YEAR	STUDI STORICI	QUADERNI STORICI	ARCHIVIO STORICO ITALIANO	CONTEMPORANEA
1970	0	0	0	0
1971	0	0	0	0
1972	1	0	0	0
1973	0	1	0	0
1974	0	0	0	0
1975	0	0	0	0
1976	4	2	0	0
1977	0	0	0	0
1978	3	0	0	0
1979	4	4	1	0
1980	2	3	0	0
1981	1	2	1	0
1982	2	6	0	0
1983	2	6	1	0
1984	0	3	1	0
1985	2	0	0	0
1986	2	1	0	0
1987	1	3	0	0
1988	3	1	0	0
1989	2	2	0	0
1990	2	2	0	0
1991	0	3	0	0
1992	1	1	1	0
1993	0	0	0	0
1994	3	2	1	0
1995	2	3	1	0
1996	1	2	1	0
1997	0	1	0	0
1998	0	2	1	1
1999	1	4	0	2

Figure 20 Foucault quotations year by year

In addition to the simple number of quotations, it is also interesting to look at which of Foucault's main works and writings have been cited by Italian historians. Fig. 21-22 show exactly this, from the analysis of the quotations given in the 'Database Foucault'. We observe by far that the most widely cited work is *Discipline and Punish*, which is not surprising considering the worldwide success the latter has had and the fact that it is by far his best-known work. More interesting, however, are the following positions. The second most cited work is *Madness and Civilization*. A possible explanation for this may lie in the fact that this was the work with which Foucault made himself known to the academic and non-academic public - his debut work in fact, *Mentall Illness and Psychology*, received very little interest and was only taken up again much later. In third place, finally, appears *The Will to Knowledge*, perhaps the

most unexpected of the three. Indeed, the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* seems to have been more successful than a preliminary assessment would have suggested - certainly a greater success among Italian historians than the volumes published in 1984, which ranked with only four citations. Again, an observation of the database focusing on the items related to the volume *The Will to Knowledge* shows a strong interest especially from scholars of modern history who have dealt with the study of prostitution, confessionality, femininity associated with and normalised by religiosity, sodomy and sexuality in general, who have evidently found in Foucault's analytical and interpretative schemes a new and fruitful ground for conducting research on those topics as it had never been conducted before.

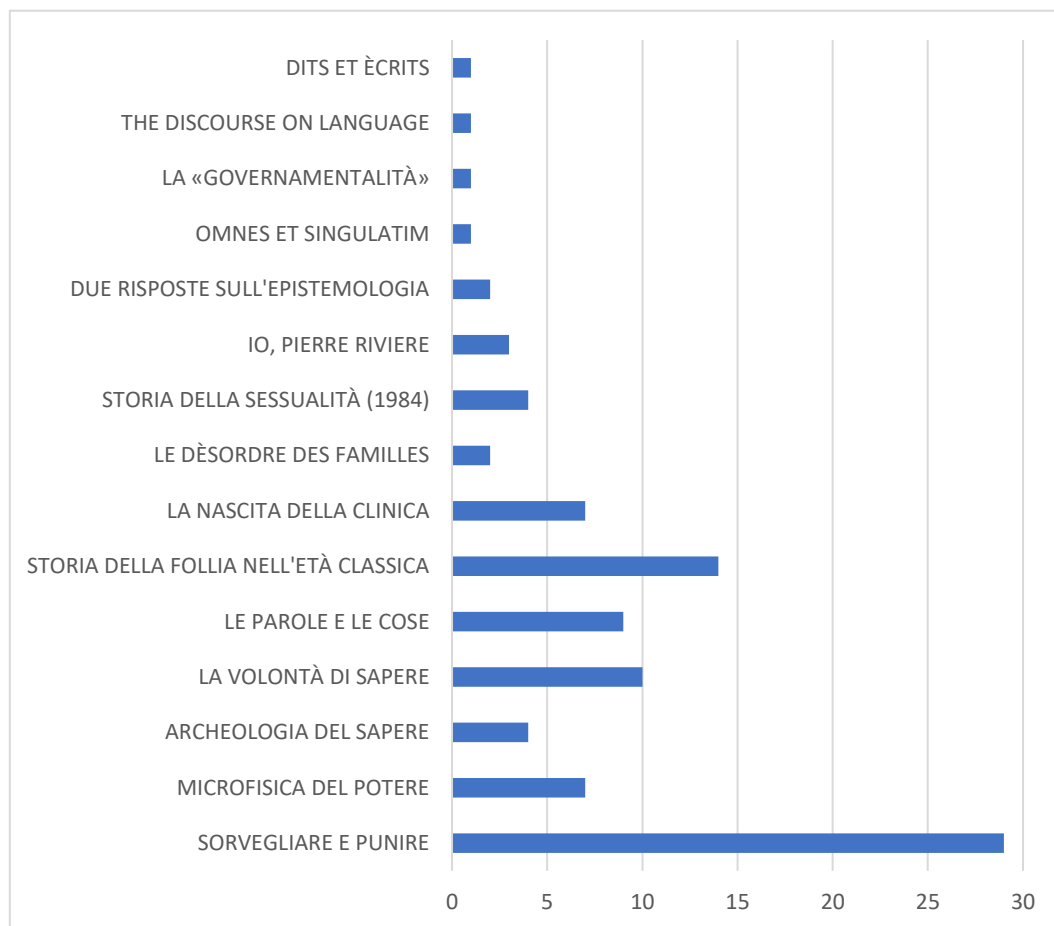


Figure 21 Books and writings by Foucault cited

<b>SORVEGLIARE E PUNIRE</b>	29
<b>MICROFISICA DEL POTERE</b>	7
<b>ARCHEOLOGIA DEL SAPERE</b>	4
<b>LA VOLONTÀ DI SAPERE</b>	10
<b>LE PAROLE E LE COSE</b>	9
<b>STORIA DELLA FOLLIA NELL'ETÀ CLASSICA</b>	14
<b>LA NASCITA DELLA CLINICA</b>	7
<b>LE DÈSORDRE DES FAMILLES</b>	2
<b>STORIA DELLA SESSUALITÀ (1984)</b>	4
<b>IO, PIERRE RIVIERE</b>	3
<b>DUE RISPOSTE SULL'EPISTEMOLOGIA</b>	2
<b>OMNES ET SINGULATIM</b>	1
<b>LA «GOVERNAMENTALITÀ»</b>	1
<b>THE DISCOURSE ON LANGUAGE</b>	1
<b>DITS ET ÈCRITS</b>	1

*Figure 22 Raw numbers of these citations*

One element that comes not directly from this data, but from the corpus grouped in the database, is the total absence of reviews of Foucault's work. In fact, not a single review of any of Foucault's works can be found in any of the academic journals examined. This element is also significant, as it underlines a lack of responsiveness on the part of the Italian historical community in taking into consideration and evaluating the potential contribution of Foucault's work. It should be noted that these same journals present reviews of other volumes in the same time period. Thus, the absence of Foucault reviews cannot be associated with little or no reviewing activity on the part of these academic journals and their authors.

Another consideration that also comes from the Foucault Database is the nature of the Italian historians for whom interest in Foucault has been greatest. The largest number are certainly historians of the modern age, whereas among contemporary historians the focus is mostly on historiographical issues and reflection around Marxism and power. But this will be explored in more detail later. Finally, it should be noted that a not insignificant number of publications that ended up in these Italian academic journals are not actually original contributions, but

translations made by Italian historians of papers by foreign scholars, from the French, English and German areas.<sup>118</sup>

From this preliminary analysis, it has been possible to observe how, on a quantitative level, Foucault's works, writings and quotations have changed over time. Obviously bearing in mind that we are talking about a very small part of the Italian historical research of those years, some observations that have generally been made about Foucault in Italy have been questioned in this paper, in particular the lack of consideration of one of his perhaps most stimulating works, *The History of Sexuality*, especially in its first volume published in 1976 and the fact that the interest of Italian historians in Foucault is a recent thing.

Once the quantitative analysis has been concluded, there follows an exposition and commentary on the results of the textual analysis conducted with the tools provided by Voyant. An initial observation lies in the choice of the chronological analysis of the corpus. In addition to analysing the corpus in its entirety, it was decided to conduct the same procedure by separating the documents by decades: the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It was hoped in this way to shed light on whether there were keywords and main themes that marked the historical research associated with Foucault or not.

Having concluded the quantitative analysis, there follows the exposition and commentary of the results given by the textual analysis conducted with the tools provided by Voyant. An initial observation lies in the choice of the chronological analysis of the corpus. In addition, in fact, to the analysis of the corpus as a whole, it was decided to conduct the same procedure by separating the documents by decades: the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. It was hoped in this way to shed light on whether there were keywords and main themes that marked the historical research associated with Foucault or not.

### III.3.1 The general Corpus

Starting with the complete corpus, the main results of Voyant's tools are presented. Starting with 'Cirrus' and 'Summary' (Fig. 23-24) we observe how the words that most frequently recur within the corpus are *storia* (2424 occurrences); *sociale* (1523); *società* (1260); *politica* (1134); *città* (933); *lavoro* (915); *vita* (897); *cultura* (877); *sociali* (837); *tempo* (812).

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<sup>118</sup> The names of these foreign scholars who have been translated in Italian and published on these Italian history journals are Roy Porter, Chris Wickam, Richard Banégas, Dainà Lozoraitis, Oskar Negt, Laurence Fontaine, Alain Boureau, Christian Jouhaud, Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, Kathy Stuart, Roger Chartier, Samuel Cohn jr., Yvon Garlan, Edith Saurer, Matthew Ramsey, Marie Noëlle Bourguet e Wietse de Boer. They still represent a small portion of the corpus since the translations are 16 out of 105 items.





On the other hand, the word 'lavoro' (Fig. 26) is linked to terms such as 'relazione', 'storico', 'divisione' and 'mercato'. Foucault's interest in his reflections on capitalism and Marxism mentioned earlier is evident here. Foucault's rupture and thus innovative position on Marx seems to have strongly attracted the reflections of Italian historians who were concerned with theoretical reflection around the Marxian system in its historical context.

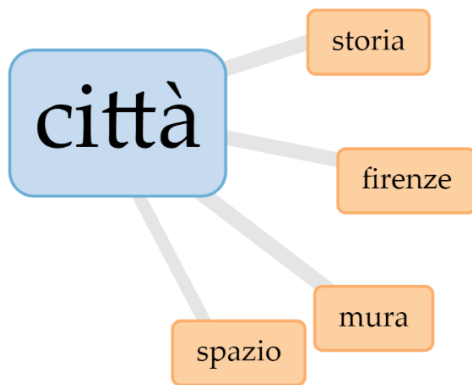


Figure 25

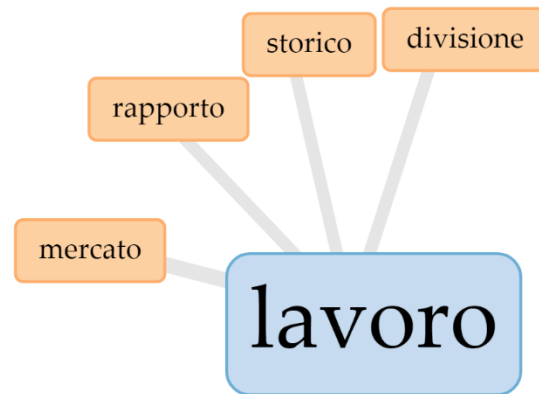


Figure 26

On such a crucial word as 'storia', one can see how the connections of the word are definitely important to emphasise. The links (Fig. 27) that are presented in fact are 'sociale', 'sociali', 'cultura', 'politica', 'tempo', 'società'. TermsBerry (Fig. 28) highlights how by far the strongest of these links is with the word 'social'. Both of these observations make it possible to grasp how among historians the social and cultural traits of Foucauldian analysis are consistent with the fact noted above of Foucault's two most cited works: *Madness and Civilization*, *Discipline and Punish*. Concepts such as 'normalisation', 'pathological', 'body', 'apparatus', 'surveillance', 'discipline' and 'irrationality' are just a few examples that explain why the data we observe emerge.



By analysing the frequency of these words, it is possible to identify the period in which these terms received their greatest use. Between the mid-1980s and the first half of the 1990s, the words 'tempo', 'storia', 'società', 'sociale', 'politica' and 'città' reached their highest frequency. In the 1970s, on the other hand, the peak was reached by words such as 'sociali', 'lavoro', 'vita' and 'cultura'.<sup>119</sup>



Figure 29 Main topics of the general corpus

The topics (Fig. 29), on the other hand, not only confirm what has emerged so far, but also reveal a line of research of extreme interest that has so far remained under the radar. The cluster in fact includes 'donne fatto luogo chiesa femminile persone privilegio donna vita patronage'. It appears with a considerable percentage in the 1979 publication "LO SPIRITO DELLA FORNICAZIONE: VIRTÙ DELL'ANIMA E VIRTÙ DEL CORPO IN FRIULI, FRA '600 E '700" by Luisa Accati. It then reappeared significantly in the 1980s where it maintained a constant presence, particularly from 1983 to 1989.

Dwelling on the words 'donna' and 'donne', it was observed how these words are related to the rest of the corpus. The presence of words such as 'liberazione', 'moglie', 'uomini', 'uomo', 'sociale', 'marito' (Fig. 30) and the fact that TermsBerry (Fig. 31) finds that the strongest correlation for these two words is 'storia' confirms the interest in the *History of Sexuality*, especially as treated in *The Will to Knowledge* regarding the productive role of the married couple, scientia sexualis and the deployment of sexuality.

<sup>119</sup> See <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=5af495d479ccfae95b07a0e36006cf03&lang=en&stopList=keywords-458bd92cf8dc116d44f05e2734ce8975&view=CorpusTerms>

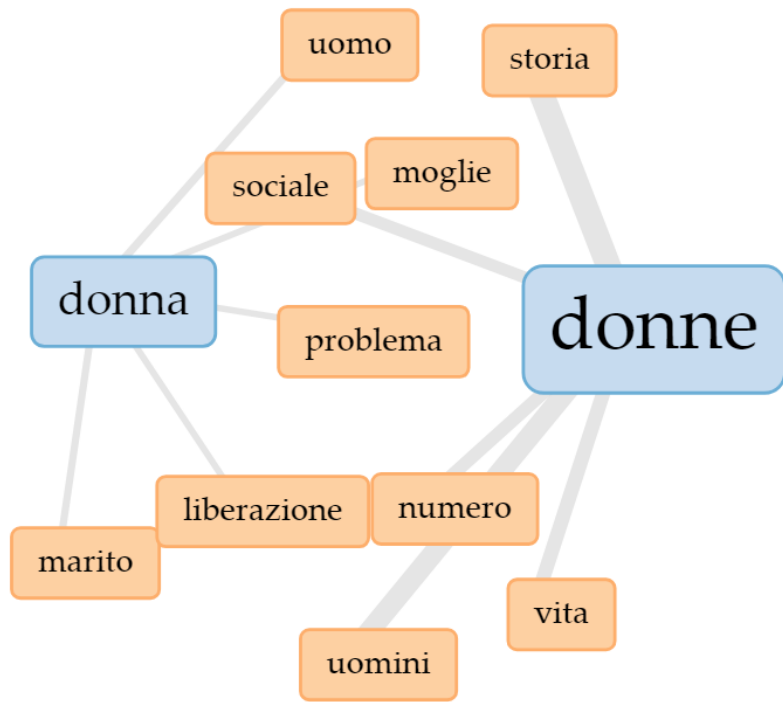


Figure 30

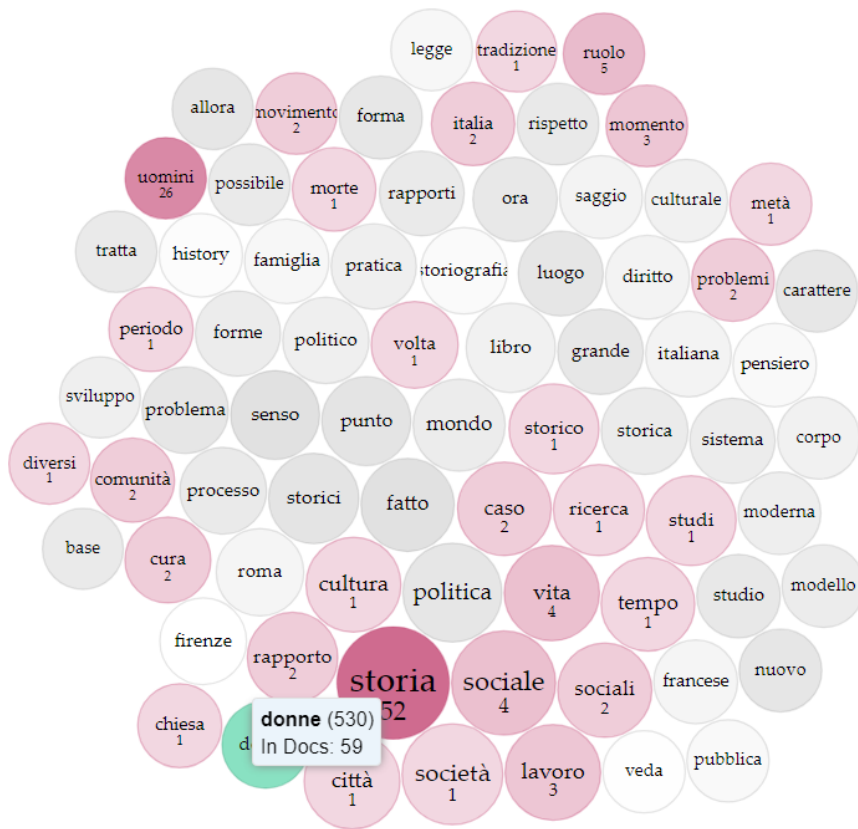


Figure 31

### III.3.2 Corpus through 1970s, 1980s, 1990s

From the database, it is documented that the number of publications amounted to 20 papers for the 1970s, 47 papers for the 1980s and 38 for the 1990s. This allows us to highlight how the 1980s represent the period of highest concentration of research around Foucault. Furthermore, it is possible to highlight an upward trend in publications from the 1970s to the 1980s, while they remain fairly stable between the 1980s and the 1990s, as Fig. 32 shows.

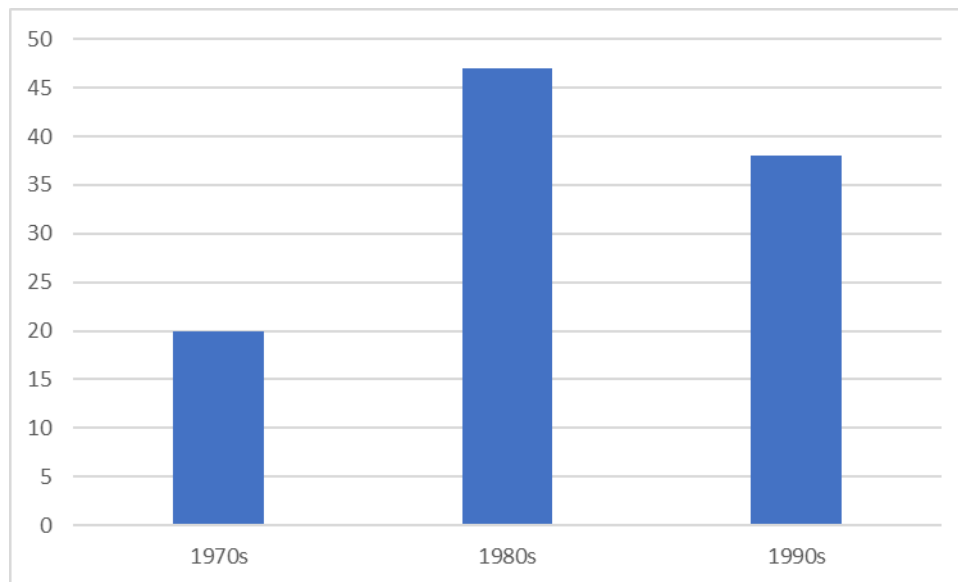


Figure 32 Academic publications related to Foucault through the decades

Beginning with the documents in the corpus that are dated to the 1970s, few but significant discrepancies can be observed with respect to the general corpus. Firstly, among the most frequent words 'storiografia' appears. This reached its peak with the publications of 1976 and 1978 - in the latter year Mazza's paper "Ritorno alle scienze umane. Problemi e tendenze della recente storiografia sul mondo antico".<sup>120</sup> According to TermsBerry, the strongest co-occurrences are with 'storia' and 'italiana' further confirming this. The links (Fig. 33) also show how this historiographical interest came in particular from scholars of the ancient world.

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<sup>120</sup> See <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=14cb676097aec25b02202dc786ea7687&view=CorpusTerms&stopList=keywords-ff608c2bee2ced4fee4280b76d0bfedc&lang=en>

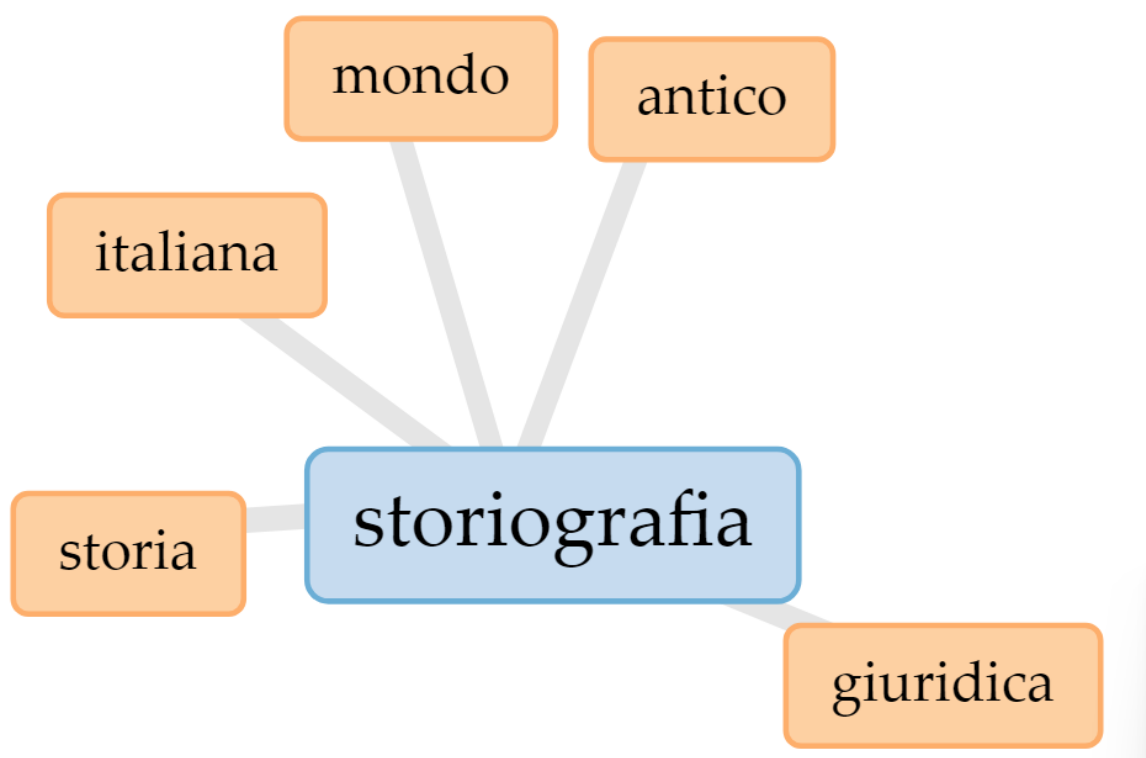


Figure 33

This is also reflected in the distribution of topics within the corpus of the 1970s.<sup>121</sup> A significant novelty also emerges from the topics. The presence in fact of the cluster ‘cultura classi modello ginzburg popolare processo struttura politico centro mediazione’ demonstrates the importance of Ginzburg and his consideration of Foucault for the inclusion of the French thinker in Italian historical reflection, as discussed above. Finally, the theme designated by the terms ‘fatto storici medicina corpo volta popolari ceti luogo aver tempo’ notes the consideration of Michel Foucault in the history of medicine, mediated by the work of Luigi Donvito and the translation of Roy Porter's writings.<sup>122</sup>

In the 1980s, on the other hand, the main peculiarities emerge from topic analysis. The cluster ‘marx marxismo history fatto verità centro monza fogel marxista’ shows that it was during this

<sup>121</sup> See <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=14cb676097aec25b02202dc786ea7687&stopList=keywords-ff608c2bee2ced4fee4280b76d0bfedc&panels=corpustermes,termsberry,collocatesgraph,summary,topics&view=T>

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

period that Foucault's consideration of Marxist theory was concentrated, as the links to the word 'marx' confirm (Fig. 34). Also, the presence of the topic focused on words 'caso tempo tipo forma libro prostituzione struttura studio termini classe' indicates how the reflection on sexuality deepens further and begins to consider further facets of Foucault's thinking.<sup>123</sup>

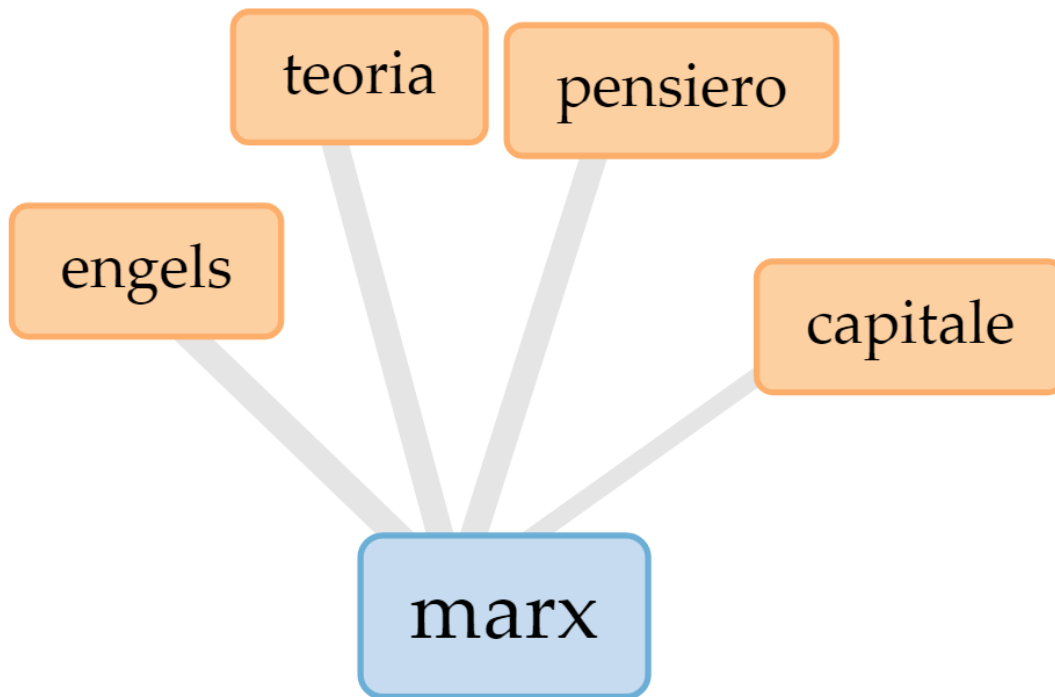


Figure 34

The 1990s, on the other hand, present essentially the same themes and fundamental keywords (Fig. 35) that we have already observed in the general corpus - except for specifications and clarifications - a sign that by this point, reflection on Foucault had stabilised on those points on the part of Italian historians.

<sup>123</sup> See <https://voyant-tools.org/?corpus=5696fa4cce5db5b6b6d0c23a262532fb&stopList=keywords-f4e1ef0c8c21713ab7b455d4309e9cd4&panels=cirrus,reader,collocatesgraph,summary,topics&view=Topics>





Figure 35 The topics of the 1990s corpus

The last operation performed is to compare the ten keywords per decade and those of the general corpus to observe how they have evolved over time. In the case of clusters, this same procedure is not possible, both because of the text modelling employed and because the variety of themes and terms inside the clusters per corpus prevents effective and meaningful comparisons from being made.

Apart from the word 'storia', which remains in first place in any case, the other words vary. 'sociale' remains in second place always except for the corpus of the 1990s where it is replaced by 'politica'. We see that in the 1970s the word 'città' is completely absent, in the 1980s it appears in ninth place, and finally in the 1990s it reaches its highest frequency coming in third place. 'Cultura' occupied third place in the 1970s, did not even appear in the 1980s, and then reappeared in the 1990s but only in tenth place.

			Term	Count
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	storia	2424
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	sociale	1523
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	società	1260
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	politica	1134
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	città	933
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	lavoro	915
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	vita	897
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	cultura	877
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	sociali	837
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	tempo	812

Figure 36 Top 10 keywords of the general corpus

			Term	Count
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	storia	611
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	sociale	339
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	cultura	334
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	politica	303
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	società	273
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	lavoro	245
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	sociali	241
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	storiografia	198
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	vita	189
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	storico	186

Figure 37 Top 10 keywords from 1970s corpus

			Term	Count
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	storia	826
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	sociale	701
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	società	515
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	lavoro	410
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	tempo	375
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	vita	372
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	caso	372
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	sociali	352
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	città	314
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	donne	297

Figure 38 Top 10 keywords from 1980s corpus

			Term	Count
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	storia	943
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	politica	543
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	3	città	512
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	4	società	456
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	5	sociale	453
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	6	mondo	345
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	7	libro	339
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	8	tempo	328
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	9	vita	322
⊕	<input type="checkbox"/>	10	cultura	284

Figure 39 Top 10 keywords from 1990s corpus

## IV. Conclusions

The initial intention was both to construct a method for making a 'history of the influences of ideas' and to determine whether and how much influence Michel Foucault had had on historical production in the Italian academy.

On the first part, the foundations that have been laid could be promising and sow the seeds for a further series of research in this direction. Being able to create a procedure by which it is possible to define who has influenced what and to what extent is certainly a fascinating mission to which one hopes to have made a tangible and constructive contribution. Obviously, this kind of method is possible if and only if one has at one's disposal a substantial body of sources, originally well preserved, and whose graphical resolution is of high quality for transcription.

While the limitations are therefore clear, one cannot hide the fact that the potential is there and by broadening the field beyond Voyant and its tools and considering other means of carrying out Natural Language Processing (Python and C++ above all) it would be possible to offer useful and clarifying results on certain questions. Relational semantics, Lexicon semantics and discourse analysis are just some of the tasks that can be applied in historical research, opening up new horizons and allowing certain questions to be tackled with greater attention and knowledge.

Its application here in the case of Foucault's influence on historians is an example. By means of the quantitative and textual analysis of the corpus of historical and related publications from 1970 to 1990 in the Italian context, a more complete and clarifying picture has been gained than has been observed so far.

The results that emerged in fact, while confirming that in Italy there has not been in the years taken into consideration a true historical movement inspired by Foucault and his innovations in historical research, it cannot be denied that between the 1970s and 1990s there was a reception of the themes and research objects proposed. *Discipline and Punish*, *Madness and Civilisation* and *The Will to Knowledge* are works that entered Italian historiography and outlined some significant contributions that took into account the concepts and analytical tools introduced there by Foucault.

Urban history and the construction of spaces as a form of control and domestication were not only addressed in the 1977 Venetian seminar, nor were they advocated only by Manfredo Tafuri, but they took on an importance and centrality in the reflection starting with Foucault that would otherwise have been ignored. Likewise, the impact of the *Volonta di Sapere*, which is often

underestimated but which instead, as we have seen, offered keys to interpretation that have been grasped in the study of certain themes such as women, marriage and prostitution. And this is what emerges from a partial reconstruction of what was historical research in Italy between the 1970s and 1990s. Unfortunately, in fact, the available material was represented by only four academic journals, which, although important, do not represent a complete picture. In order to provide further depth and material for this type of research, it would be necessary to push for the publishers of academic journals or in any case those who hold their archives to promote a massive digitisation process so that scholars can conduct this type of analysis.

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