

Chapter 3

From Foucault's Anxiety to my Experience Book: The Practice of Writing in and against Discourse

This Chapter seeks to explore the 'inside' of discourse through reconstructing what we could call the subjective, 'lived experience' of Foucault's modes of being in discourse and his strategies of resisting its subjectivating pulls. It starts from the expressions of Foucault's anxiety at his inaugural lecture and the ways in which he externalized the effects of discourse on us, subjects through staged dialogues. The exploration then proceeds with the diagnosis Foucault set up regarding our epistemic relationship to 'discourse', characterized by both logophobia and logophilia. Turning to the ways in which Foucault managed to break out from both of these mentalities, the Chapter turns to his very practice of writing 'in' and 'against' discourse, the ethos of truth-telling of the final Foucault and the strategic resource of the 'experience book'.

An ethos of self-transformation, in my experience at least, did not fall from the sky. For me the desire to work on how I think, and not only to change the kinds of thoughts I was thinking but also to try to find a different relationship to my thought processes emerged from a lot of discontent and frustration with how I used to live the 'disciplinary life' of IR. The desire to change my academic mode of being came from the experience of how I became more and more alienated from the world and myself through the scholarly persona I developed, which now I was able to locate and identify as such, as a 'scholarly self', turning it into an object that I can discuss here in this thesis. Some detachment from the 'fictive distancing' turned out to be very

helpful for being able to see and understand the distance of the detached observer *as* distance and not only as some nameless chagrin lingering over my efforts to produce knowledge of a particular kind. It is still hard to move around in this space, let alone move away from this conditioning, from that particular mode of doing and being in academia that assumes a strong sense of Cartesian thinking. And I keep constantly falling back into what I wanted to avoid: the same objectivizing logic, which, when turned inwards, made the separation in me between the scholar and the person in the first place. Until I managed to become a bit more aware of what bothered me in these practices I was nearly unable to make any sense of Foucault's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France titled "The Order of Discourse" from 1971, roughly the middle of Foucault's scholarly activity. When I read this text for the first time some time in the course of my second year, 'discourse' was nothing else but a strategic concept for me, a very important one nonetheless for conducting my proposed discourse analyses of a specific circle of academic narratives theorizing European and American foreign policy. Reading "The Order of Discourse" left me disappointed because it seemed it did not offer a good working definition for 'discourse' apart from a few inconclusive statements scattered around in the text, and the rest just sounded so overly complicated that I thought there was no point in trying to pursue it any further. I couldn't quite imagine how Foucault's painstakingly detailed account of the internal rules, external conditions and the mechanisms of societal control over discourse could potentially make my work sound well-supported, authoritative, unambiguous and straightforward. I did not quite see how Foucault's incredibly complex analysis of 'discourse' could make my account of specific discourses *true*: if discourse can only be thought in such and such complicated ways then Foucault's thoughts seemed rather unhelpful for trying to trap 'sovereignty' in discourse and pin it down as a discursive object. No wonder that the lure and seduction of 'sovereignty' must have installed a very particular view of any possible 'beyond' in me: I wanted discourse to give 'sovereignty' away, to unveil it as something that can be grasped in its embeddedness in words so that I can put a finger on its nature and operations. For this aim, of course, 'discourse' had to be pinned down first to reassure me: this is where I need to look, in this box, among these lines. A solid working definition of discourse that I could apply to the academic texts I selected, something that could bring 'order' to the messiness and contingency of textual practices: that was all I

thought I needed. As my recollections of how I used to read this text might already suggest, this is certainly something I never got from “The Order of Discourse”.

And what I clearly couldn't see at that point either was Foucault himself in the very order of discourse, including the discourse of his own. Needless to say, I was completely unaware, too, of my own involvement in discourse as a ‘desiring subject of sovereignty’ and the straight lines of Cartesian coordinates that dominated my thinking and delimited my scholarly subjectivity at that time. Reflecting on all this is only possible from the threshold from where I am writing now, and what this place also allows me to see is something that I would have found very unsettling in the middle of my search for certainty and security in a particular kind of knowledge if I had been able to register it back then.

It is Foucault's anxiety.

What reading “The Order of Discourse” *now* unveils is a very particular mode of being and acting in discourse, something that now appears as a manifestation of the practice of Foucault's critical attitude, of how a particular lived experience translates into practical critique, which also works towards re-making this experience. As Robert Young notes, Foucault's inaugural lecture is delivered in the form of auto-critique, which, in my reading, is also an auto-critique of the academic discipline within the confines of which he was working.¹ In the course of performing the ritual of his professorial inauguration Foucault problematizes the very experience of such ‘beginnings’, with which he disrupts and transforms the routine *from within* the routine. Foucault was anxious about discourse and the fact that we are always, already, inevitably in discourse whenever we speak, think or write because, unlike me, he already knew what discourse did, how it worked, he already encountered and researched its subjectivating and objectifying effects as well as how we subjectify ourselves in it and as such, why studying ‘discourse’ required such care and caution.

The recognition that “we live in a world completely marked by, all laced with, discourse, that is to say, utterances which have been spoken, of things said, of affirmations, of interrogation, of discourses which have already occurred” not only triggers anxiety since, as Butler put it, the ‘sociality’ of discourse always precedes

¹Robert Young, “The Order of Discourse”, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, Robert Young ed. (London: Routledge, 1981), 48.

and exceeds us, living beings, but also because, as Foucault himself observed, language in use, the practice of speaking and writing inevitably does violence to things, or ‘at all events’, he writes, discourse is a “practice we impose upon them”.² Just like “the use of words like ‘ohm’, ‘coulomb’, and ‘volt’ to describe electrical quantities does violence to an otherwise undifferentiated physical force”, explains Said, ‘language in use’ for Foucault is never ‘natural’, which at the same time, tends to treat ‘nature’, the world it speaks about as accident, as chance.³ And discourse’s violence is a very particular kind of violence. It is so subtle that we don’t even register it as such. As Said explains further, discourse is the “organized social ethic of language”, that is, things that are actually said in relation to what could possibly be said according to the rules of grammar in a given period of time. In this sense, discourse is also the process through which the ‘signs’ are made through which we read and form the world where the making of signs already contains a judgement that ‘those particular signs *shall* be’.⁴ Such affirmation that is already inherent in the act of speaking and writing inevitably institutes forms of exclusion: of what is *not* said by the one who speaks. More importantly though: to affirm something by saying it also provides the statement with a certain *effectiveness*. As Said notes, “to affirm with force even as one excludes much else”, is also to “modify other effective statements”, it is to make things ‘last’, and open up the possibility for them to be ‘re-activated’ or ‘re-appropriated’ in different times and contexts.⁵ What is once said is irrevocably there, it excludes, it affirms, it is effective and with that it perpetuates, solidifies, reinforces. We are not only dispossessed as we emerge in discourse as a narrative ‘I’, since, as Butler notes, the terms and time of discourse is not *ours*, but we are also in many ways disempowered in relation to what we may say as a narrative ‘I’, the things we say take on a life of their own and function according to an ‘ethics of language’, that is, the internal rules and exteriority of discourse. As Foucault said elsewhere, “spoken words in reality are not, as people tend to think, a wind that passes without leaving a trace, but in fact, diverse as are the traces, they do remain” and as such “spoken language, as a language that is already present, in one

²Michel Foucault, ‘The Order of Discourse’, in *Untying the Text*, 67.

³Edward Said, “Michel Foucault as an Intellectual Imagination”, *boundary 2* 1 (1972): 2.

⁴Edward Said, “An Ethics of Language”, *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* 4 (1974): 35.

⁵*Ibid.* 34-5.

way or another determines what can be said afterward either independent of or within the general framework of language.”⁶

Discourse is a very special kind of ‘trace’: it has a life of its own, its own universe. As Foucault writes, “in discourse something is formed, according to clearly definable rules; that this something exists, subsists, changed, disappears, according to equally definable rules; in short, that alongside everything a society can produce (alongside: that is to say, in a determinate relationship with) there is the formation and transformation of ‘things said’.”⁷ Among many other things, in discourse we ourselves are forming and being formed, too: as he writes elsewhere discursive practices are characterised by a “delimitation of a field of objects, the definition of a legitimate perspective for the agent of knowledge, and fixing of norms for the elaboration of concepts and theories”.⁸ Importantly, the subtle moves through which something is forming in discourse, that language spoken acquires a certain effectiveness that creates its own reality, a microcosm of which we become subjects and objects and through which we relate to ourselves and to the world is something that, as Foucault says, Western societies refuse to acknowledge. As he notes, “Western thought has taken care to ensure that discourse should occupy *the smallest possible space between thought and speech*.”⁹ And as such the ‘act of discoursing’ appears to us nothing more than “a certain bridging between thinking and speaking”, a vehicle through which communication takes place and in which we express ourselves as sovereign, foundational subjects, as ‘knowers’ who found their knowledge in the very activity of their own thinking.

Yet it is not only about how we think, but also how we know. As Young notes, the ‘order of discourse’ is also “the conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced”, and as such, the rules and categories of discourse are those conditions that we no longer think about, not only because some of them may have been in place long before us, and as such remain completely ‘unvoiced and unthought’, but also because “their effect is to make it virtually impossible to think outside them. To think outside them is, by definition, to be mad, to be beyond

⁶Michel Foucault, “An Interview with Michel Foucault by Charles Ruas”, in *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 179.

⁷Michel Foucault, “Politics and the Study of Discourse”, in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon, and Peter Miller eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 63.

⁸Michel Foucault, “History of Systems of Thought”, in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, Donald F. Bouchard ed., (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), 199.

⁹Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, 65. My emphasis.

comprehension and therefore reason.”¹⁰ As Young continues, “it is in this way that we can see how discursive rules are linked to the exercise of power; how the forms of discourse are both constituted by, and ensure the reproduction of, the social system, through forms of selection, exclusion and domination.”¹¹ In our societies when we speak and write we experience these activities as the expression of thought in language, but as Foucault’s performance of his inaugural lecture shows, there is a lot more at stake there.

In this lecture Foucault was already speaking from a threshold, from a place where he could see ‘discourse’ for what it was, and how we constitute ourselves as subjects of a particular experience in which we invest ourselves in a discursively constituted ‘self’ with a specific gaze directed at specific objects according to fixed norms while we try to suppress those forces around us, the powers inherent in discoursing which might challenge this particular understanding of who we are, not the least because we have also been constituted through them.

Unavoidably, Foucault was speaking in discourse *conscious of discourse*.

Being in discourse while being aware of discourse and its effects inevitably produces a particular relationship to both discourse and self, which installs a certain distance into the usual ways and modes of speaking that makes it impossible to go on as usual, to speak as one always does. When the routine of speaking and the routine of attaching ourselves to such routines are broken, it is hard to keep up a ‘fictive distance’. It would have been impossible for Foucault to speak about discourse as a concept and an object of study from a ‘space beyond’ discourse. Not that he would ever have studied anything in a strong Cartesian fashion, but in this case the experience of being in academic discourse, one that is framed as a distinguished one in the very discourse he was speaking in, and what could be identified as his object of inquiry in scientific terms just fell too close to each other; the abstract and the literal sense of ‘discourse’, once discourse is also experienced and not only thought, are no longer clearly separable, creating an infinite series of doublings. Speaking about ‘discourse’ *in discourse* while being aware of how discourse works, what it does and how it relates to that particular act of speech can only be seen and

¹⁰Young, *Untying the text*, 48.

¹¹Ibid.

experienced as unproblematic if experience, and with that, the person, life's excess over discourse is denied both in discourse and in the one who speaks.

This certainly was not the case for Foucault, and what is particularly interesting here, especially for my attempts to write differently in a specific academic discourse and to explore and nurture this liminal space from where I write, is the way in which Foucault negotiated his relationship to both discourse and himself in his inaugural lecture. Now that I am more aware of the stakes involved, many questions spring to mind. As I am writing this chapter I realize that I need to go back to the actual text so I am reading Foucault's lecture, *again*. And now I wonder how did Foucault choose to speak then knowing *all that*? What was Foucault's discourse like in discourse and what did it do to 'discourse', eventually? And how do these aspects fit into, or perhaps gesture towards that ethos of self-transformation that is so clearly present in his late lectures? I am secretly hoping though that some of these questions will just turn out to be the wrong questions to ask as I go along in the light of what *else* may actually unfold from a new reading of the same text.

Yet it seems I have to stop where Foucault begins. In fact, Foucault began his speech by expressing a desire of *not* wanting to begin. In addressing his colleagues and students, his new scholarly community, he said

I wish I could have slipped surreptitiously into this discourse which I must present today, and into the ones I shall have to give here, perhaps for many years to come. I should have preferred to be enveloped by speech, and carried away well beyond all possible beginnings, rather than have to begin it myself. I should have preferred to become aware that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me, so that I should only have needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its interstices, as if it has signalled to me by pausing, for an instant, in suspense. Thus there would be no beginning, and instead of being the one from whom discourse proceeded, I should be at the mercy of its chance unfolding, a slender gap, the point of its possible disappearance.¹²

Foucault's anxiety about beginning to speak, which already and immediately places one within discourse, within a particular practice of doing things, in a particular subject position in a given institutional context as well as in society, derives from that mode of being in discourse, from that place where one already knows what

¹²Foucault, "The Order of Discourse", 52.

discourse does and how it works. The difficulty of beginning to speak comes from the awareness that as soon as one speaks, in a way, one is already spoken by that greater institutional and social context that gives power and authority to discourse itself. More importantly though, it is not only about how we are turned into subjects in discourse and how a certain mode of being and experience of subjectivity is constituted through that, but also how we subjectify ourselves in discourse and the ways in which discursive rules and categories have already become part of how we relate to ourselves. In his speech Foucault exposes this internal, subjective dimension, the very processes of subjectivation and subjectification by turning it outwards, by staging it as a conversation between the speaker's 'desire' and the 'institution' in the act of speaking. In Foucault's rendition, this is how the voices of 'desire' and that of 'the institution' keep interacting with each other in our heads, that is, at the site where our thoughts turn us into subjects:

Desire says: 'I should not like to have to enter this risky order of discourse; I should not like to be involved in its peremptoriness and decisiveness; I should like it to be all around me like a calm, deep transparence, infinitely open, where others would fit in with my expectations, and from which truths would emerge one by one; I should have to let myself be carried, within it and by it, like a happy wreck.'

The institution replies: 'You should not be afraid of beginnings; we are all here in order to show you that discourse belongs to the order of laws, that we have long been looking after its appearances; that a place has been made ready for it, a place which honours it but disarms it; and that if discourse may sometimes have some power, nevertheless it is from us and us alone that it gets it.'¹³

What Foucault performs in this imaginary dialogue is what Gilles Deleuze described as the main aim of his generation: to 'catch things where they were at work, in the middle', to capture the emergence of 'actuality' by 'breaking things open, breaking words open'.¹⁴ Foucault breaks 'discourse' open, its logic and operations through exposing and enlarging the subjective dimension where 'inside' and 'outside' meet, where the powers through which discourse subjectivates us and the thoughts through which we relate to and subjectify ourselves become indistinguishable. In fact, more often than not these forces are always, already indistinguishable: this is how the

¹³Ibid. 48-49. My emphasis.

¹⁴Gilles Deleuze, "Breaking Things Open, Breaking Words Open", in *Negotiations (1972-1990)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 86.

‘mentality’ aspect of governmentality operates by facilitating the creation of a world within, in ourselves that mirrors the world outside, or in Deleuze’s terms, this is how our subjectivity, our sense of self is created by the folding of the outside.¹⁵ In the ‘era of governmentalization’ we become governable subjects and we are governed through our own self-government in everyday life. What Foucault’s imaginary dialogue enacts is the opening up of a moment *in* discourse when this dynamic is operative as a structure of the unthought. In listening to him or reading his text we may catch ourselves being subjects to this experience, we may recognize ourselves as being caught between the opposing pulls of ‘desire’ and the ‘institution’ which we might not have noticed before and more importantly, that there might be a dialogue like this in our thinking in the first place, with similar voices, arguments and desires. To make such logic of the unthought felt and thought for the first time which is otherwise very much present in how we think and write in our institutional practices is a manifestation and effect of Foucault’s critical ethos as a “limit attitude” in action: as he suggested, “we have to move beyond the outside-inside alternative; we have to be at the frontiers”. And as such, “criticism indeed consists of analyzing and reflecting upon limits”.¹⁶ Yet again, being at the limits of our constitution as subjects is not a concept to be thought but something to be experienced: it entails capturing the emergence of actuality in ourselves, in our thinking process from a place where we are no longer *that* caught up in thinking. To be ‘at the frontiers’ requires us to manoeuvre ourselves to a place from where it is possible to reflect on how we came to be constituted in a particular way through the social order, through the disciplinary rules and norms of our profession; the frontier, the limit, the threshold is a space in our head from where we can see and think for the first time an instance, an aspect of how we come to experience ourselves as ‘knowers’, thinkers, academics.

As Foucault suggested, however, an ‘ontology of ourselves’, of ‘who we are’ in our present calls for a form of reflexivity that goes beyond the mere recognition that we are part of the processes and phenomena that we examine, analyse, theorize or critique: Foucault’s is a pragmatic, practical critique that also exposes and opens up *how* it is that we have a role in them as both ‘elements’ and ‘actors’ at the register

¹⁵Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 97-98.

¹⁶Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” In *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 45.

of experience.¹⁷ For me, this exercise has become an account of self, which uses a narrative ‘I’ to uncover what I can’t see about my own conditioning and to move forward, to transform myself through the practice of writing without knowing in advance where I am going, leaving it as something to be discovered and uncovered later and as I move along, I am trying to expose this process to you, the reader. In Foucault’s inaugural lecture it took the form of externalizing an internal mechanism as an imaginary dialogue that confronts us and makes us reflect on something in us that might have been hiding from us in the routine of everyday practices. Giving an imaginary voice to the opposing forces of ‘desire’ and the ‘institution’ is also the ‘etho-poetic’ moment of thought, an opening that allows us to relate to this experience differently, or in Rajchman’s words, it is to propose “a freedom of choosing possible experience outside a prior knowledge or truth about ourselves.”¹⁸ And here a new set of questions arises making me wonder about how exactly this ‘freedom’ may be constituted and performed in Foucault’s saturated, nearly caricatured depiction of such an experience? How is it lived in his own being-in-discourse and how is it opened up for others to be experienced?

As I am reading this lecture again, I not only register the institution’s words but this time, I can also feel them, they resonate strongly with what I came to see and address as a ‘problematic experience’ in my academic life. The institution’s sarcastic reply enacts a play on a sense of security that we usually derive from our affiliations with (social) institutions: a security established through the continuity of the legal, established order which embeds the act of speech into well-identifiable norms and importantly, into which our acts of speech *fit* (“a place has been made ready for it”). When we speak and speak as we should, as we are expected to speak, it is ‘honoured’ as an affirmation of this order and at the same time, it is necessarily ‘disarmed’ by this ‘fit’: even if what we say may express critique, the ‘meaning’ loses its critical potential by the act of the utterance. However, as Foucault’s imaginary play suggests, we don’t mind such diminishment of the responsibility of beginnings, the ethical implications of the act of speaking because, in the institution’s depiction, it is *safe* for us to speak: discourse has little to do with power and even if it “may sometimes have power” it is a power that is under control. In this sense, it never matters *too much* that

¹⁷Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983* (New York: Picador, 2010), 12.

¹⁸John Rajchman, “Ethics after Foucault”, *Social Text* 13/14 (1986): 170.

we speak: there is no ‘risk’, no ‘peremptoriness’ and as such, it is suggested, there is no responsibility involved in it. The institution’s voice, a voice we might already hear within, nudges us towards a particular mode of being in discourse: one that provides us with security and at the same time makes us forget that we are already in discourse, which is *not* a neutral context to be in. Even more puzzlingly, this voice already knows how to talk to ‘desire’ and it tries to seduce it: it presents ‘security’ as something to be wanted. As Foucault explains, “the institution’s reply is ironic, since it solemnises beginnings, surrounds them with a circle of attention and silence, and imposes ritualised forms on them, as if to make them more recognizable from a distance.”¹⁹ This is particularly interesting in the light of what the desire of ‘desire’ is pointing towards: it imagines discourse to be otherwise, as a ‘calm, deep transparency, infinitely open’, where others can be encountered in their immediacy and unmediatedness and as such, ‘truths would emerge one by one’ in the actuality of the practice of speech. Discourse re-imagined in this way, however, would also mean the end of desire: desire would appear as no longer wanting but as one that lets itself be carried in the flow of utterances as a ‘happy wreck’. The institution’s discourse seeks to incite desire, *our* desire, trying to keep it within its confines: as Foucault notes, discourse is not something that only manifests or hides desire as psychoanalysis would show, but it is “also the object of desire; and since, as history constantly teaches us, discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized.”²⁰ The institution’s reply is therefore doubly conservative: it seeks to reinforce that particular, silent and unnoticed mode of operation for discourse that we no longer reflect on (since we tend to understand the act of speaking as an expression of our own thoughts) and at the same time, it nudges us towards a particular mode of being in discourse, one that makes discourse the object of struggle and as such, it turns our attention away from what discourse does or how it works.

As I am putting these thoughts into words, it strikes me that while I had many things to say about the institution’s reply I am feeling somewhat resourceless to engage with the voice of ‘desire’ in more depth. I could read myself easily into the text as a subject of similar institutional procedures, somewhat astonished to see those

¹⁹Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, 52.

²⁰Ibid. 53.

assumptions at work in Foucault's imaginary dialogue which make it is so easy for us to avoid thinking about those everyday acts of writing, speaking and thinking that we do not usually consider to be worthy of reflection. Yet I can only *imagine* discourse to be otherwise, *maybe* as a "calm, deep transparency, infinitely open". But this is perhaps where an etho-poetic moment arises for me, for my writing from that threshold where I am no longer *that* embedded in the disciplinary routines of the field: if I can't fully relate to what 'desire' imagines, maybe this is an opportunity for me to try to see how *I* could imagine being in discourse otherwise and more importantly, how I could cultivate that mode of being in and through my own writing practice.

The task, however, that Foucault set for himself at this point was very different.

While I am writing this thesis with the benefit and inspiration of his insights, especially those in his late lectures at the Collège de France, for Foucault the aim was to re-problematize discourse as an event, to draw his audience's attention to those forces operating in everyday practices that Western societies keep out of sight, yet their presence, if we look a bit closer, are still felt in many indirect ways. What Foucault wanted to illustrate through the imaginary dialogue is that the way 'the institution' and 'desire' speak is not only indicative of a struggle for control over discourse's mode of operation and our mode of being in it but is also a manifestation of what is being ignored and suppressed. Anxiety takes on a slightly different meaning as Foucault continues:

perhaps the institution and this desire are nothing but two contrary replies to the same anxiety: anxiety about this transitory existence which admittedly is destined to be effaced, but according to a time-scale which is not ours; anxiety at a feeling beneath this activity (despite its greyness and ordinariness) power and dangers that are hard to imagine; anxiety at suspecting the struggles, victories, injuries, dominations and enslavements, through so many words even though long usage has worn away their roughness.²¹

Anxiety in this sense is not only the anxiety of the speaker speaking from the threshold, knowing how discourse is and what it actually does, but it is revealed as a

²¹Ibid. 52.

certain fear coded into our everyday modes of being and doing, something that our contemporary practices are virtually designed to hide. As Foucault asks,

What civilization has ever appeared to be more respectful of discourse than ours? Where has it ever been more honoured, or better honoured? Where has it ever been, seemingly, more radically liberated from its constraints, and universalised? Yet it seems to me that beneath this apparent veneration of discourse, under this apparent *logophilia*, a certain fear is hidden. It is just as if prohibitions, barriers, thresholds and limits had been set up in order to master, at least partly, the great proliferation of discourse, in order to remove from its richness the most dangerous part, and in order to organise its disorder according to figures which dodge what is most uncontrollable about it. It is as if we had tried to efface all trace of its irruption into the activity of thought and language. No doubt there is in our society, and, I imagine, in all others, but following a different outline and different rhythms, a profound *logophobia*, a sort of mute terror against these events, against this mass of things said, against the surging up of all these statements, against all that could be violent, discontinuous, pugnacious, disorderly as well, and perilous about them – against this great incessant and disordered buzzing of discourse.²²

The ‘hypothesis’ Foucault put forward that night relates to those mechanisms through which our logophobia is managed and seemingly, mitigated in everyday practices: ‘in every society’, states Foucault, “the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose roles is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality.”²³ Foucault gives a detailed account of the procedures of exclusion that govern discourse, such as prohibitions and taboos which cannot be spoken about, divisions and rejections which determine the capacity to speak (such as the one between madness and reason), and our ‘will to truth’ that animates our ‘regimes of truth’ in society, of what can pass as a true statement, as well as those ‘internal procedures’ that control discourses from within, such as how ‘commentary’, the ‘author function’ and the requirements of scientific ‘disciplines’ produce, reproduce and give identity to specific discourses. Foucault also discusses the ways in which control is exerted over the ‘application’ of discourses by different ‘rituals’, ‘doctrinal groups’, ‘societies of discourse’ or the ways in which society appropriates certain discourses e.g. in ‘education’. In his thorough and rigorous explication of what discourse does and those practices through

²²Ibid. 66. My emphasis.

²³Ibid. 52.

which we become subjects to the rules and forces governing its operations – e.g. how ‘disciplines’ re-actuate rules, what we write and do not write about as ‘authors’, what qualifications, gestures and behaviour we have to adopt to be able to formulate specific statements – Foucault makes ‘discourse’ an object of study in a fashion that it also destabilizes those subjectivities, *ours*, that are customarily formed in (academic) discourse when we are unaware of these procedures. These three groups and their many different aspects, by themselves, are easy to read as a long taxonomy; in fact, this is how I read them for the first time, as a series of additions to the things to be known about ‘discourse’. What Foucault really does here is walking his colleagues and students through those aspects that affect that pre-discursive, unthought layer of our thinking, writing and speaking, or as Colebrook put it, that “ground of thought” whose “force, effect and power” we have refused to consider.²⁴ For our Cartesian mindsets this ground lies in a particular mode of thinking through which we relate to the world we study, to ourselves as ‘knowers’, which is present in our practices of reading and writing. As Foucault himself described the academic discipline of philosophy, in such practices “discourse is no more than a play, of writing in the first case, of reading in the second, and of exchange in the third, and this exchange, this reading, this writing *never put anything at stake except signs*.”²⁵ As such “discourse is annulled in its reality and put at the disposal of the signifier”: we locate ‘truth’ in what is *said*, in the “utterance itself, its meaning, its form, its object, its relation to its reference”. As Foucault emphasizes, in contrast to ancient Greek practice, in modernity truth has been “displaced from the ritualised, efficacious and just act of enunciation”, and as such we experience life through what we say, through ‘meaning’ and not in or through the act of speaking or writing. Foucault’s hesitation with which he began his speech, his expression of anxiety in discourse draws our attention away from the actual ‘meaning’ of what is being said, disrupting the usual ways in which we experience reading or listening to lectures. Foucault’s wish to “have slipped surreptitiously into this discourse” re-problematizes the moment of beginnings by re-claiming the responsibility involved in it: to begin to speak is an *event*, something happens *there*. As Said notes,

²⁴Claire Colebrook, *Philosophy and Post-structuralist Theory: from Kant to Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 171.

²⁵Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, 66. My emphasis.

for to be an author is to take on the responsibility for what one says. But what Foucault discovers is that the order of discourse, and discourse itself, allay this fear of responsibility. By being the order of spoken things, organized, controlled, and made to function by society, discourse reduces the author's authority. *His "real" beginning then is his awareness of being already inserted in the order of discourse.*²⁶

Foucault's 'real beginning' is a new experience of subjectivity in discourse, something that also paves the way for opening up this experience to others, to his audience. Through voicing and sharing his personal experience of anxiety, 'anxiety' is turned into a tool, a resource for re-making experience, of crafting a little 'freedom' when it is revealed to be present as one of those unthought logics that animate how it is exactly that we speak and write in our everyday lives, how the fear of facing what discourse really does makes us talk and write more and more in the hope of finding and producing 'meaning'.²⁷ Foucault uses his research to change his mode of being in discourse and the transformation he went through is manifested in that sense of anxiety that he chose to express in his lecture and through which he is able to ground his talk differently, not in the work of the intellect but in a place from where this work can be observed, studied and thought. As such, the real 'danger' involved in the 'fact that people speak and that their discourse proliferates to infinity' is that we speak in a way that makes it nearly impossible for us to reflect on the life being formed in discourse and as such what is to be re-problematized is the relationship we have to what we do when we speak and write. Foucault's anxiety is a point of access to re-thinking that more general sense of anxiety, in fact, a *phobia* in us that has been socially coded into our use of language and that corresponding experience of subjectivity through which we assert and understand ourselves in discourse. As Foucault described this experience elsewhere, we think of ourselves as "the gentle, silent and intimate consciousness which expresses itself" in discourse as a matter of "the intentional continuity of lived experience". As such, the "person hopes and believes he put something of 'himself' into his own discourse, when he takes it upon himself to speak" and we hold on to our "little fragment[s] of discourse – speech or writing, it matters little – whose frail and uncertain existence is necessary to prolong [our] life in time and space."²⁸ What Foucault came to see, however, was

²⁶Said, "An Ethics of Language", 37. My emphasis.

²⁷Foucault, "The Order of Discourse", 52.

²⁸Foucault, "Politics and the Study of Discourse", 71.

“the limits and necessities of a practice” and the powers of “an obscure set of anonymous rules” that constitute our subjectivities as ‘foundational subjects’ of our knowledge in discourse.²⁹ As he said, it is a ‘thankless’ job to reveal how historically different ‘discursive fields’ have been operating on us, how our speech and writing are affected by a “whole group of regulated practices which do not merely involve giving a visible outward embodiment to the agile inwardness of thought, or providing the solidity of things with a surface of manifestation capable of duplicating them”.³⁰

The experience Foucault’s inaugural lecture worked towards destabilizing was the ways in which we habitually construct ourselves in and through discourse. He mockingly illustrated this experience of subjectivity elsewhere, putting forward a reminder for anyone who speaks or writes not to attach ourselves too much to the ‘meaning’ of our words, which then perhaps could open up a possibility to engage with the ‘act’ itself. As he said to his interviewer, and possibly with his future readers in mind,

In each sentence you pronounce – and very precisely in the one that you are busy writing at this moment, you who have been so intent, for so many pages, on answering a question in which you felt yourself personally concerned and who are going to sign this text with your name – in every sentences there reigns the nameless law, the blank indifference: ‘What matter who is speaking; someone has said: what matter who is speaking.’³¹

Foucault’s self-(trans)formation in his scholarly practices unfolded in relation to those ‘nameless laws’ in discourse that ignore the person, the life and singularity of the living being and yet to which we seem to attach ourselves in ways that our sense of ‘self’ is constituted through how we usually participate in discourse as sovereign, founding subjects who express thoughts through the vehicle of words. The source of anxiety is not the mere discovery that what we might not be as free in expressing ourselves as we might assume, or that our sense of ‘freedom’ might be a discursive construct already, but rather, that we relate to discourse in a fashion that we think we experience life through that and that *this has become a dominant life experience in our Western modernity*. Our being in discourse is inevitable and so are the presence and operation of the nameless laws of discourse. But once we become aware of how

²⁹Ibid. 70.

³⁰Ibid. 63.

³¹Ibid. 72.

we have been produced as ‘knowers’, writers, readers, speakers in and through the particular discourses we participate in our everyday lives, there is also an opening to think and “ask what we might become” and what else we might be able to do in discourse.³² As Butler notes, there is no self-crafting outside of what we have been constituted to be, and as such, “no self-making outside of the norms that orchestrate the possible forms that a subject may take.”³³ In a way, these constraints might even be helpful as “one invariably struggles with the conditions of one’s own life that one could not have chosen”, which is “also made possible, paradoxically, by the persistence of this primary condition of unfreedom.”³⁴

Foucault’s discussion of the ‘author function’ as an ‘internal procedure’ of discourse, in this sense, is a particularly important juncture in his auto-critique. This is where the usual, everyday practice of writing, perhaps also in contradistinction to the solemnity of the distinguished occasion of the inaugural speech, is ‘eventalized’ in its embeddedness in discourse. This is where the ‘everyday’ really enters and so does Foucault’s life, his ‘regular’ scholarly practices in that infinite project of self-transformation which provided the grounds for his inaugural lecture in the first place, that “endless questioning of constituted experience” turned back on the self that made space for a different kind of anxiety to arise, one that could make our usual experience of being in discourse appear as ‘problematic’ and work towards destabilizing that logophobic anxiety underlying it.

This is also where I and my narrative ‘I’ in the practice of writing can learn the most.

So I will try and be as alert as I possibly can as I continue to unpack some of the practical implications of Foucault’s critical ethos in the practice of writing and from the subject position of the ‘author’. Foucault’s authorship, and authorship in general, as he writes, is a ‘function’ of discourse “by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses; in short by which one impedes the free circulation, the free manipulation, the free composition, decomposition and recomposition of fiction.”³⁵

³²John Rajchman, “Ethics after Foucault”, 166.

³³Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 17.

³⁴Ibid. 18-9.

³⁵Michel Foucault, “What is an Author?”, in *Aesthetics, Method, And Epistemology: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 2*, James D. Faubion ed. (London: Penguin, 1998), 221.

And whoever may take up this function, that “individual who writes and invents”, says Foucault, he as

the author is asked to account for the unity of the texts which are placed under his name. He is asked to reveal or at least carry authentication of the hidden meaning which traverses them. He is asked to connect them to his lived experiences, to the real history which saw their birth. The author is what gives the disturbing language of fiction its unities, its nodes of coherence, its insertion in the real.³⁶

And as such, “what he sketches out, even by way of provisional drafts, as an outline of the oeuvre, and he lets fall by way of commonplace remarks - this whole play of differences is prescribed by the author-function, as he receives it from his epoch, or as he modifies it in his turn.”³⁷ The ‘chance’ element of what can be said is limited by a “play of an identity which has the form of individuality and the self”, that is, *the* author, through which we not only appear in our texts but we also appear to ourselves in the process of writing.³⁸ Taking up the author function in an “awareness of being already inserted in the order of discourse”, as Said comments, triggers a “vacillation between writing as discourse (the author is a function of the discourse, in this case, of interpretation) and writing *against* discourse.”³⁹ Foucault’s ‘vacillation’ in his inaugural lecture, which Said takes to be “of the greatest interest”, emphasizes and makes felt

the extent to which writing is necessarily caught between conflicting pressures which, in a large, relatively unforced view of them, are ultimately cultural and political. Every writer, as he writes, uses other writings, draws upon his ego, addresses others and his own sense of himself. How much in his writing is originality, how much repetition and re-combining of “the order of discourse,” how much exploitation of the discourse, how much exploitation by the discourse, how much exploitation of whatever silent voices may be hidden and excluded by discourse?⁴⁰

What is really interesting in Foucault’s work is how he negotiates his relationship to the subject position of the author, that functional principle in the text that gives it a certain identity and at the same time, marks the person who ‘writes and invents’ as

³⁶Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, 58.

³⁷Ibid. 59.

³⁸Ibid. 59.

³⁹Said, “An Ethics of Language”, 37.

⁴⁰Ibid.

the one who inserts the work in the 'real' by assuming a certain responsibility for its coherence. To be seen and recognized as 'the author' manifests the subjectivating forces of discourse, of those social norms that orchestrate this particular mode of subjectivation whose function is to exert a particular kind of control over what is being said or written through invoking a 'figure' that "at least in appearance, is outside it and antecedes it".⁴¹ What is particular about this subject position, however, is that what the person who writes takes on is a form of subjectivity that appears in the text as the absence of the person. As Foucault writes,

using all contrivances that he sets up between himself and what he writes, the writing subject cancels out the signs of his particular individuality. As a result, the mark of the writer is reduced to nothing more than the singularity of his absence; he must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing.⁴²

The 'death of the author' as a subject position, in Butler's words, can be seen as that 'condition of unfreedom' that is necessarily involved in our contemporary practices of writing. As Foucault writes, in writing, "freed from the theme of expression", the point is "not to manifest or exalt the act of writing, nor is it to pin a subject within language; it is rather, a question of creating a space into which the writing subject constantly disappears".⁴³ When we write, especially in the genre of social science, we customarily write ourselves out of our texts, where the author's 'death' becomes the criterion of the objectivity and scientific legitimacy of the 'omniscient social scientific prose'. So how did Foucault himself relate to what was offered to him as a form, a position in which he, a person who writes, passes into that subject, 'the author' that emerges in the corporeality of social-material relations? Foucault's imagined dialogue between 'the institution' and 'desire' already manoeuvred us to the site where the subjectivating forces of social norms and our relationship to ourselves and these norms, that is, our own subjectification constantly interweave, but I have always been interested in trying to find out how he himself understood his work and his involvement in it at the intersection of these different pulls and modes of 'exploitation' *in discourse*.

⁴¹Foucault, "What is an Author?", 205.

⁴²Ibid. 206-7.

⁴³Ibid. 206.

I have always wondered how did Foucault ‘write against’ discourse *in* discourse, literally?

His oeuvre, the ways in which his attention shifted from one subject matter to another, together with that ‘outside’ in relation to which his thought kept forming, be it language, the body or subjectivity, is already an illustration, illumination, manifestation and commemoration of the ways in which Foucault wrote in order to change himself and in “order not to think the same thing as before.”⁴⁴ Perhaps there are myriads of textual sites at which Foucault’s practice of ‘writing against discourse’ can be caught, but now it is my lack of familiarity with the authorly conventions of his age, of how the ‘death of the author’ was conventionally performed in the act of writing in his time, including the nuances of the profession and the established ways of being in those particular discourses that might prevent me from recognizing them as such. What I could easily register, unsurprisingly, were those gestures and reflections in his texts and interviews where Foucault gave an account of how he used to write and how he experienced and negotiated his presence behind his words. These are those passages that somehow never failed to catch my attention; these are those sites in the text which now, after having read some of Butler’s work, I could call the ‘living space’ of Foucault’s ‘I’. I have to admit that I have been collecting these statements for a couple of years now, never entirely sure why exactly I needed them or what I was going to do with them, especially in a project which had academic narratives about foreign policy as its focus for a very long time. A bit like Butler’s reference to telling stories over wine that instantly personify the seemingly objective storyteller of *Giving an account of oneself*, Foucault, too, made many remarks about writing, its purpose and effects on his own life. And just as with Butler’s comment on the wine, there is not very much to analyse about such traces of the person either. I read them as affirmations of that life that is usually written and read out of scientific texts and perhaps the best way to appreciate them as such is to present them *as they are*, as fragments that nonetheless convey a certain spirit and ethos of how Foucault lived his work and in that, how he formed himself. To bring out this ‘life’ as something lived and living, and perhaps also to intensify somewhat those dispersed and scattered thoughts that never actually

⁴⁴Michel Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, James D. Faubion ed. (London: Penguin, 1994), 240.

came to constitute the subject matter of Foucault's research, I will try to arrange some of these self-reflexive comments, somewhat arbitrarily, as a textual montage. In trying to go beyond the routine of the usual analytical mode of thinking, I will try to heighten the sense of fragmentedness and at the same time, create a sense of belonging among these random statements, something that also involves me both as 'reader' and 'writer' in them:

As Foucault once said, "for me, to work is to try to think something other than what one thought before."⁴⁵ But "I'm no prophet", he said elsewhere, "my job is making windows where there were once walls".⁴⁶ "I am an experimenter in the sense that I write in order to change myself and in order not to think the same thing as before."⁴⁷ "To be the same is really boring", he remarked, "the relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation".⁴⁸ The Interviewer says: "It seems to me that the reader will experience two kinds of strangeness. The first in relation to you, yourself, to what he expects of you...". Michel Foucault responds: "Excellent. I accept this difference entirely. That's the game I'm playing."⁴⁹ "Someone who is a writer is not simply doing his work in his books, in what he publishes, but that his major work is, in the end, himself in the process of writing his books. The private life of an individual, his sexual preference, and his work are interrelated not because his work translates his sexual life, but because the work includes the whole life as well as the text. The work is more than the work: the subject who is writing is part of the work."⁵⁰ Hence "one writes to become someone other than who one is". Hence "there is an attempt at modifying one's way of being through the act of writing. It is this transformation of his way of being that he observed, he believed in, he sought after, and for which he suffered horribly."⁵¹ But then, "I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am." - he said. "The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning. *If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think that you would have the courage to write it?*"⁵²

⁴⁵Michel Foucault, "The Concern For Truth" (Interview), in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture – Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, Lawrence D. Kritzman ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 256.

⁴⁶Cited in Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes this World: Mischief, Myth and Art* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998), 283.

⁴⁷Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault", 240.

⁴⁸Michel Foucault, "Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity", in *Foucault Live. Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*, Sylvère Lotringer ed. (New York: Semiotext(e), 1996), 385.

⁴⁹Michel Foucault, "The Concern for Truth", 258.

⁵⁰Foucault, "An Interview with Michel Foucault by Charles Ruas", 186.

⁵¹Ibid. 184.

⁵²Michel Foucault, "Truth, Power, Self: An Interview with Michel Foucault", in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, L.H. Martin et al. eds. (London: Tavistock, 1988), 9.

I certainly wouldn't, and perhaps that is one of the reasons why I embarked on a journey in this thesis that undertakes to expose the process in which subtle and sometimes hardly noticeable transformations and changes are enabled and created in the writing process itself. Yet Foucault's Introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* provides a highly illustrative example of how this transformative aspect took place in the course of writing and how it affected the writer's life. Here Foucault looks back on his previous book *The Order of Things* and comments on 'the absence of methodological signposting' there, which, as he writes, "may have given the impression that my analyses were being conducted in terms of cultural totality."⁵³ In his new book he gives an account of how writing *The Order of Things* and what now may appear as its faults enabled his new project and perspective, which also meant breaking away from some of the conventions of historical analysis: he had to work and write against them. As it unfolds from Foucault's words though, there needed to be a medium, a ground where this transformation could take place and take shape. He writes:

It is mortifying that I was unable to avoid these dangers: I console myself with the thought that that they were intrinsic to the enterprise itself, since, in order to carry out its task, it had first to free itself from these various methods and forms of history; moreover, without the questions I was asked, without the difficulties that arose, without the objections that were made, I may never have gained so clear a view of the enterprise to which I am now inextricably linked.⁵⁴

In this introduction Foucault speaks from a liminal place: he worked himself out of the usual confines and style of historical analysis, but at the same time, it is hard for him to move forward, or anywhere else: there seems to be no beaten track before him. Later in the book he re-tells this experience of how he forced himself to think otherwise and what kinds of risks 'writing against discourse' entailed. In Foucault's words:

one is forced to advance beyond familiar territory, far from the certainties to which one is accustomed, towards an as yet uncharted land and unforeseeable conclusion. Is there not a danger that everything that has so far protected the historian in his daily journey and accompanied him until nightfall (the destiny of rationality and the teleology of the sciences, the long, continuous labour of

⁵³Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2009), 19.

⁵⁴Ibid. 18.

thought from period to period, the awakening and the progress of consciousness, its perpetual resumption of itself, the uncompleted, but uninterrupted movement of totalizations, the return to an ever-open source, and finally the historico-transcendental thematic) may disappear, leaving for analysis a *blank, indifferent space*, lacking in both interiority and promise?⁵⁵

Writing against the usual routines of thinking and writing in one's discipline not only destabilizes the 'objects' and 'method' of a particular kind of scientific inquiry, exposing the absent ground of the authority of the discourse itself, but as Foucault's accounts shows, it also destabilizes the 'knowing' subject's subjectivity in the process of writing. *The Archeology of Knowledge* in this sense is a new 'beginning', not as a socially recognizable unit of someone's 'oeuvre', but as a new awareness of the writer's insertion in the order of discourse, the structure of this order, the blank spaces underlying it and with that, the unfolding and experience of a precarious place *within*. "Hence the cautious, stumbling manner of this text", writes Foucault,

at every turn, it stands back, measures up what is before it, gropes towards its limits, stumbles against what it does not mean, and digs pits to mark out its own path. At every turn, it denounces any possible confusion. It rejects its identity, without previously stating: I am neither this nor that. It is not critical, most of the time; it is not a way of saying that everyone else is wrong. It is an attempt to define a particular site by the exteriority of its vicinity; rather than trying to reduce others to silence, by claiming that what they say is worthless, I have tried to define this *blank space* from which I speak, and which is slowly taking shape in a discourse that I still feel to be so precarious and so unsure.⁵⁶

Yet again, Foucault is at 'the frontiers' where the 'blank space' within coincides with the 'blank, indifferent' space of the social order. When we let go of the usual grids of intelligibility of social phenomena, there may just not be much left for analysis, and when we experience ourselves, of who we are and how we are in a situation like that, our writing cannot but take on a new beginning. Manoeuvring ourselves to this 'blank space' means working ourselves out from both the recognizable confines of institutional routines, such as what to look for and how to explain certain occurrences in our analysis, and also from our usual ways of thinking and writing, which, just as the 'objects' of our analysis, turn out to be lacking any pre-given foundations. What is opened up for experience is that there is no *a priori* ground either to the social

⁵⁵Ibid. 42-43. My emphasis.

⁵⁶Ibid. 18-19. My emphasis.

order or to our writing in it, of it. Writing ‘against’ discourse, in this sense, does not mean writing *in opposition* to discourse, and as such, to social norms: rather, it entails a different mode of being and acting *in* discourse, one that allows the functions and operations of discourse to be seen and for us to transform ourselves through them. We can only write ‘in’ *and* ‘against’ discourse: we can never position ourselves outside of it and as such, we can only choose a different experience of how we are in it.

In Butler’s reading, what Foucault’s ‘critical attitude’ entails in practice is to “break the habits of judgment in favor of a riskier practice that seeks to yield artistry from constraint”, which then results in our ‘desubjugation’, risking our “deformation as a subject, occupying that ontologically insecure position which poses the question anew: who will be a subject here, and what will count as a life”.⁵⁷ And as there is “no self-making outside of the norms that orchestrate the possible forms that a subject may take”, that ‘freedom’ that such ‘conditions of unfreedom’ make possible, that ‘ontologically insecure position’ from which we speak, as Foucault’s closing lines will show, somehow also reflect the constraints against, or rather, through which it has been formed.⁵⁸ Foucault closes his introduction to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* with another staged dialogue, this time between himself and his imaginary critics. This imaginary scene centers on how Foucault’s self-transformative practices in the process of writing appear in discourse, in relation to those social norms and control mechanisms that seek to keep discourse’s real powers at bay and with that, encourage us to take up a mode of being in discourse that make us appear as the foundational subjects of knowledge, that “gentle, silent and intimate consciousness” that expresses their thoughts in words in an unmediated fashion, and such, diverting our attention from engaging with what discourse is and what it does.

The critics’ voice says:

‘Aren’t you sure of what you’re saying? Are you going to change yet again, shift your position according to the questions that are put to you, and say that the objections are not really directed at the place from which you are speaking? Are you going to declare yet again that you have never been what you have been reproached with being? Are you already preparing the way out that will enable you in your next

⁵⁷Judith Butler, “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue”, in *The Political* (Blackwell Readings in Continental Philosophy), ed. David Ingram (London: Blackwell, 2002), 226.

⁵⁸Butler, *Giving an account of oneself*, 17.

book to spring up somewhere else and declare as you're now doing: no, no, I'm not where you are lying in wait for me, but over here, laughing at you?'

Foucault responds:

'What, do you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in writing, do you think that I would keep so persistently to my task, if I were not preparing – with a rather shaky hand – a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse, opening up underground passages, forcing it to go far from itself, finding overhangs that reduce and deform its itinerary, in which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. I am no doubt not the only one who writes in order to have no face. Do not ask who I am and do not ask me to remain the same: leave it to our bureaucrats and our police to see that our papers are in order. At least spare us their morality when we write.'⁵⁹

Here Foucault gives a very clear account of what he does when he writes *in and against discourse*, how he uses that 'space' that is customarily created in the process of writing "into which the writing subject constantly disappears", for the purposes of self-transformation, for forming and cultivating his own discourse beyond the surface of discourse where he appears in the text and to our eyes as the functional principle of 'the author'.⁶⁰ To write "in order to have no face", even if with a 'shaky hand' denies any fixity to the writing subject: in fact, the practice of writing is used as a form of resistance to the mentality, morality and subjectivating powers of social institutions. Yet again, writing in and against discourse translates into accepting the role of the author *and* trying to change what 'authorship' entails in practice, as experience, through inhabiting this subject position differently, in his own way. Foucault's transformative ethos capitalizes on what discourse really is and what it really does, making use of the potential that in discourse something is 'forming', allowing himself to be formed in unpredictable and unforeseeable ways in the act and at the price of 'losing himself'. Yet the process of forging such 'concrete freedom' in the writing practice also takes place in relation to the very 'unfreedom' of discourse, behind the presupposed unity, coherence and identity of the text provided by the author figure and its 'death'. Slowly but persistently, Foucault opens up 'underground passages' and experiments with his own 'discourse', 'forcing it to go

⁵⁹Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 19.

⁶⁰Foucault, "What is an author?", 206.

far from itself' while at the same time, he works himself out and away from the Cartesian fixity of the subject-object relation.

But perhaps there is even more at stake here.

As I read Foucault's imaginary dialogue between his critics and himself as the person who writes, Foucault's critical attitude in practice seems to foreshadow something important from the late Foucault's relationship to discourse, what he called the 'dramatics of discourse' in his readings of ancient Greek and Roman texts on the practice of truth-telling, *parrēsia*. The subject, the speaker, the writer there becomes the focus of the research, and with that, the way in which the subject and discourse are thought changes remarkably. While the 'pragmatics of discourse' in conventional discourse analysis would look into how the situation or the status of the subject speaking modify or affect the meaning and value of the statement, that is, for example, the difference between the effect of who says that "the meeting is open", the "dramatics of discourse' shows "how the very event of the enunciation may affect the enunciator's being".⁶¹ From the subjectivating effects of discourse the late Foucault's attention clearly shifts to the person's relationship to themselves in discourse. Discourse itself becomes a tool for self-formation, which is what McGushin identified as the main difference between modern scholarship that aims to "objectify the subject in discourse" and the practices of antiquity, where one aims to "produce discourse (knowledge) that has a transformative effect on the subject."⁶² Foucault's dialogue in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* in 1969 exposes and externalizes for one brief moment Foucault's transformative work on himself that is secretly in progress under the surface of discourse and behind the 'author function'. The imaginary dialogue between 'the institution' and 'desire' in "The Order of Discourse" from 1971 uses discourse to put a mirror to us, readers and listeners through a saturated and caricatured depiction of a moment of subjectivation/subjectification, enabled through the work Foucault had already done on himself and as the effect of that liminal space from where he spoke. In both of these cases the subject as the person asserts its presence but only in a transitory

⁶¹Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 67-68.

⁶²Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 125.

fashion. In the late Collège de France lectures there is no longer a need for imaginary dialogues: Foucault's discourse, his reading of ancient texts becomes the site of self-transformation, where the philosopher's discourse, his being in discourse already performs a continuous transition towards new experiences of subjectivity.

I have to admit that at this point I can only give a relatively sketchy account of the ethos of the late Foucault that has been so inspiring for my own project. There is still a lot I need to process, experience and experiment with, for myself, in the course of my writing to be able to offer a reading of those aspects of these lecture series that turned out to be the most significant for what I am trying to do here. I can certainly identify one aspect in particular though which now I realize I might have been working towards in this chapter. It concerns that sense of oneness, a sense of self-sameness that I mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, now in relation to 'discourse' but maybe somewhat counter-intuitively, as infinite 'otherness'. In *The Courage of Truth* lecture series Foucault discusses the Cynic form of life in terms of an 'other world' and an 'other life' which appear as two ways in which a sense of 'otherness' emerges in the practice of truth telling, in the subject's relationship to herself *in discourse*. Foucault describes the basic structure of truth telling in *The Government of the Self and Others* in terms of a double affirmation of how one is and what one does when one speaks:

the subject in parrēsia says: This is the truth. He says that he really thinks this truth, and in this he binds himself to the statement and to its content. But he also makes a pact in saying: I am the person who has spoken this truth; I therefore bind myself to the act of stating it and take on the risk of all its consequences.⁶³

The affirmation of "I am telling truth" leads to contemplating "who is this self, this me who's telling the truth", opening up the possibility of an 'other world' within, of thinking about ourselves as someone 'other' than our usual sense of self.⁶⁴ The self's presence in "I am telling the truth" as a form of doing invokes the possibility of an 'other life' that constantly re-creates the 'truth' of this life through the 'truth' of our actual practices, which are always, necessarily 'other'. That 'strangeness', the 'game' Foucault plays emerges in the very act of truth-telling, through the person's

⁶³Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 65.

⁶⁴Ibid., see also Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth, Lectures at the Collège de France 1983-1984*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 246.

relationship to themselves in the act of speaking. Foucault traces the ways in which the ‘truth’ of the historically changing practice of parrēsia unfolded in different times and different places, giving rise to different experiences of subjectivity, which, in the Cynic practice of truth-telling locates truth in what is ‘other’, in an opening towards something different. As Frédéric Gros’s summary suggests, this is what Foucault both emphasized and performed in his last lecture series, namely, that “the hallmark of the true is otherness: that which makes a difference in the world and in people’s opinions, that which forces one to transform one’s mode of being, that whose difference opens up the perspective of an other world to be constructed, to be imagined.”⁶⁵ “The philosopher”, such as Foucault, “thus becomes someone who, through the courage of his truth-telling, makes the lightning flash of an otherness vibrate through his life and speech.”⁶⁶

Self-formation in the course of reading and lecturing thus *becomes* Foucault’s discourse and his mode of being in it. The philosopher’s gaze is turned inwards, the outside of thought becomes a place within, which emerges as the new focus of Foucault’s work: being in discourse is now experienced in a fashion that there is not much to be said or written *against* discourse anymore. As Rayner notes, “there is a marked change in the prose of Foucault’s writings, a new clarity and economy of style. While always confident and conversational in seminars and interviews, Foucault, in this period, seems to relax back into his material, and displayed an increasing willingness to reflect on the philosophical presuppositions of his work.”⁶⁷ As Foucault speaks about truth-telling he is also in the process of discovering the truth about himself as ‘knower’, that is, the truth, *his* truth, of the process of becoming a subject.⁶⁸ This is also the truth of subjectivity experienced as a process, as something that is always ‘other’. As Foucault remarked in an interview, the subject “is not a substance; it is a form and this form is not above all or always identical to itself”.⁶⁹ The experience of the late Foucault, however, may even go further than that: it is perhaps no longer about the different forms in which the subject relates to the games of truth in society, such as, in Foucault’s explanation,

⁶⁵Frédéric Gros, “Course Context”, in *The Courage of Truth*, 356.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Timothy Rayner, *Foucault’s Heidegger: Philosophy and Transformative Experience* (New York: Continuum, 2007), 117.

⁶⁸See McGushin, *Foucault’s Askesis*, xxviii.

⁶⁹Michel Foucault, “The Ethic of the Care of the Self and the Practice of Freedom” (Interview), in *The Final Foucault*, James Bernauer and David Rasmussen eds. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), 10.

that “you do not have towards yourself the same kind of relationships when you constitute yourself as political subject who goes and votes or speaks up in a meeting, and when you try to fulfil your desires in a sexual relationship.”⁷⁰ Rather, it seems to come closer to experiencing that “subjectivity” itself, a certain constituted sense of the self as “only one of the given possibilities of organization of a self-consciousness.”⁷¹ It probably means an even broader and more nuanced perspective on ‘who we are’, which may not only destabilize constructed identities but may illuminate identity construction as only one possible way of relating to ourselves and others.

As McGushin notes, the relationship the late Foucault develops to himself and to his audience through his practice of reading can be best described as an exercise in philosophical life, as a particular, practical manifestation of the care of the self. The late Foucault thus turns discourse into a tool of self-making, and as such, it is his own mode of being in discourse that becomes not only an instance and example of the care of the self but also as a form of non-oppositional resistance towards those social structures that he diagnosed in his previous writings. It must have taken a lot of work and effort, in fact, decades of research, writing and thinking to get to the place where the opening of ‘underground passages’ and experimentation behind the mask of the author could take the form of a form of life that is no longer formed secretly, in-between the lines. To assume and historically, to resume a philosophical life of self-transformation, a form of the care of the self in our times must also have already required quite some distance from the apparatuses of social and political government and their subjectivating forces. To be like this, to live this Foucaultian ethos is not exactly a ‘choice’ readily available to anyone. McGushin’s summary of the stakes of this Foucaultian undertaking also gives us a reference point of where we might be at now. McGushin writes:

the moment when philosophy ceases to conceive of itself as care of the self [...] political government arises as an ensemble of relations, institutions, and technologies for producing subjects who are normal: politics starts to take care of people. The modern philosophical neglect of the self (life, the body, pleasure, pain, the passions, desire, and so on) as a material to be formed in order to fashion a subject open to the truth, and to the truth of her self, goes along with the movement by which institutions of disciplinary

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Michel Foucault, “The return of morality” (Interview), In *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 253.

power absorb the poetics of subjectivity, the care of the self. The care of space, time, bodies, and existence is now primarily managed by disciplinary experts (such as doctors, psychiatrists, teachers, nutritionists, life coaches, self-help gurus) within disciplinary institutions (schools, hospitals, health clubs, and so on) and is oriented toward the construction of normal (healthy, well-adjusted, productive, predictable) individuals and lives. Bodies, space, time, and relations are managed by disciplinary and normalizing procedures; they are arranged in precise ways that induce specific effects. In this way, the Cartesian moment and the advent of biopolitics (power over life, the power to form subjects productively) arise and function together. These developments are irreducible to each other but are always interrelated.⁷²

In this sense, the real task is to become aware of our ‘insertion’ in discourse first and to try to loosen the grip of its powers on us, of those ways of knowing, thinking, writing and being that make us into Cartesian subjects trapped in their thinking processes. In a way, philosophy has already ceased to be a practice of care; as Foucault asserted, Western metaphysics were made possible by the forgetting of the philosophical life, and such neglect “has meant that it is now possible for the relation to truth to be validated and manifested in no other form than that of scientific knowledge”.⁷³ Our starting point, in this sense, is this “impoverishment of the relationship between subjectivity and truth” that characterizes contemporary scientific practices as well as our involvement and implication in them.⁷⁴ And as my own process of writing has shown many times, our conditioning in the strategic relationship of knowledge, which, as Foucault wrote, harbours a will “not to bring the object near to oneself or identify with it but, on the contrary, to get away from it and destroy it” is stronger than what we, or at least, I might have assumed first.⁷⁵ How to cultivate a distance from these processes and those unthought structures that condition our thinking is yet something to be explored and experimented with. While up to this point I mostly concentrated on the more personal aspects of Foucault’s writing in and against discourse and how he negotiated his own involvement and presence in his research, his oeuvre also provides us with many important points of reference for how to detach ourselves from these social and institutional structures.

⁷²McGushin, *Foucault’s Askesis*, 283.

⁷³Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, 236-7.

⁷⁴McGushin, *Foucault’s Askesis*, 238.

⁷⁵Michel Foucault, “Truth and Juridical Forms”, in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, James D. Faubion ed. (London: Penguin, 1994), 11.

The ‘experience book’ is one such strategic resource.

In my reading, Foucault’s ‘experience books’ of how some of the dominant forms of experience came to be constituted in ‘our modernity’ – such as ‘madness’, ‘criminality’ and ‘sexuality’ - and with that, how we became subjects of these experiences, not only provide a diagnosis of the present but also explicitly work towards the possibility of detachment from the subjectivating forces of discourse. As Foucault’s account of what he aimed to achieve in *The History of Madness* shows, an experience book draws writer and reader together in a shared and to a certain extent, ‘fictioned’ experience of how some of these familiar modes of being and doing could be experienced differently, which at the same time also offers us a mode of being in discourse that strikes a creative balance between what discourse says as well as what it is and what it does. As Foucault said:

Because for me – and for those who read it and used it – the book constituted a transformation in the historical, theoretical, and moral or ethical relationship we have with madness, the mentally ill, the psychiatric institution, and the very truth of psychiatric discourse. So it’s a book that functions as an experience, for its writer and reader alike, much more than as the establishment of historical truth. For one to be able to have that experience through the book, what it says does need to be true in terms of academic, historically verifiable truth. It can’t exactly be a novel. Yet the essential thing is not in the series of those true or historically verifiable things but, rather, in the experience the book makes possible.⁷⁶

Foucault’s emphasis is therefore placed on “the experience the book makes possible”, yet as he adds, “an experience is always a fiction: it’s something that one fabricates oneself, that doesn’t exist before and will exist afterward.” This statement shows us something very important about the direction of Foucault’s self-making and how he also forges an alternative understanding of ‘truth’ in the process. As he said elsewhere,

I am fully aware that I have never written anything other than fictions. For all that, I would not want to say that they were outside the truth. It seems plausible to me to make fictions work within truth [...] and in some way to make discourse arouse, “fabricate” something, which does not yet exist, thus, to fiction something. One “fictions” history starting from a political

⁷⁶Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, 243.

reality that renders it true, one “fictions” a politics not yet in existence starting from a historical truth.⁷⁷

The experience made possible by the experience-book is necessarily *fictive* in the light of the already existing games of truth: while what appears as ‘fiction’ is already embedded in the web of true and false statements characterizing a particular historical era, it also means a new addition in relation to these structures, something that is not there yet but at the same time, resonates with what is already there. It is this distance between what can be recognized as the established ‘truth’ and what the process of writing and reading an experience book might ‘fabricate’ that makes detachment possible. In Foucault’s words:

So this game of truth and fiction – or if you prefer, of verification and fabrication – will bring to light something which connects us, sometimes in a completely unconscious way, with our modernity, while at the same time causing it to appear as changed. The experience through which we grasp the intelligibility of certain mechanisms (for example, imprisonment, punishment and so on) and the way in which we are enabled to detach ourselves from them by perceiving them differently will be, at best, one and the same thing.⁷⁸

Through the experience made possible by the experience book both writer and reader “grasp the intelligibility” of the examined social phenomena, while simultaneously, this enables them to change their relationship to the subject-matter of the book in a fashion that establishes a certain distance from it. In fact, Foucault’s aim is not only to facilitate a change in what we know about something, but also to enable a change in the way in which we know, for example, ‘madness’. As he said,

The book makes use of true documents, but in such a way that through them it is possible not only to arrive at an establishment of truth but also to experience something that permits a change, a transformation of the relationship we have with ourselves and with the world where, up to then, we had seen ourselves as being without problems – in short, a transformation of the relationship we have with our knowledge.⁷⁹

⁷⁷Michel Foucault, “Interview with Lucette Finas”, in *Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy*, Meaghan Morris and Paul Patton eds. (Sydney: Feral Productions, 1979), 75.

⁷⁸Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, 244.

⁷⁹Ibid.

As the example of the *History of Madness* illustrates, the experience book might make such transformation in how we know and of our subjectivities as ‘knowers’ possible in many different ways for reader and writer. This book in particular exposes a very particular way in which what discourse says and what discourse does is negotiated in Foucault’s writing. Here Foucault sought to perform an archaeology of the silence of the mad in society, trying to recapture the point in history when madness was still “undifferentiated experience”, the “zero degree of the history of madness”, and the “still undivided experience of the division itself”, when *logos* and its other were still one.⁸⁰ However, writing *about* madness, which is already excluded from the *logos* of philosophical language, would defeat such a purpose: madness, or as Foucault put it, the “lyric glow of illness”, cannot be represented in discourse without further violence. Moreover, ‘madness’ by definition cannot speak and as such, it cannot be spoken for either. As such, an interesting problem arises here: the mere act of separating ‘madness’ out as an object of knowledge not only reinforces its exclusion but also takes us very far from that moment in time when ‘madness’ wasn’t marked as something separate from what we now might call ‘sanity’. As Derrida observed, however, madness is still rendered present “metaphorically, through the very pathos of Foucault’s book”.⁸¹ The notion ‘madness’ in Foucault’s book, as Shoshana Felman shows, is “a notion which does not *elucidate* what it connotes, but rather, participates in it: the term madness is itself pathos, not *logos*; literature, not philosophy”.⁸² Madness’ therefore does not function as a scientific or philosophical concept for Foucault: rather, it constitutes a “literary overflow”, it appears as a metaphor for pathos whereas pathos is already metaphorical. As such, it is the *thing* that remains after philosophy and reason have been subtracted from the text. Madness, writes Felman, may only speak at the “point of silence where it is no longer we who speak, but where, in our absence, we are spoken”.⁸³ What Foucault does, in practice, is that he lets madness speak through him, he lets its ‘lyric glow’ shine through the pages of text, and in this way, he conveys an experience of the undivided existence of madness and reason, that of a life that embraces both *logos* and its excess. Finding madness in the fabric of the text but also, the possibility of

⁸⁰Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2010), xxvii.

⁸¹Cited in Shoshana Felman, *Writing and Madness (Literature/Philosophy/Psychoanalysis)*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003), 52.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid. 55.

such co-existence in ourselves, both as readers and participants of a society which has already enacted the division between mad and sane, is what constitutes another *limit-experience*: an experience of the limits of society, the threshold between the silence and the voice of madness, and the limits of ourselves as subjects within such constellations of order. In this way we can experience the being-otherwise of things, and in this opening, writes Foucault, “the I who wrote the book and those who have read it would have a different relationship with madness, with its contemporary status, and its history in the modern world.”⁸⁴

Importantly though, what Foucault’s discourse *says* about the ways in which discourses constitute madness as a problematic experience in society is inseparable from *how* he writes about madness, that is, from what his discourse *expresses* and the ways in which he transforms himself out of the grasp of such discourses. Fictioning an experience of the undividedness of ‘madness’ and ‘reason’, in this sense, constitutes its own ‘truth’, in fact, *a* ‘truth’ with multiple layers: a truth about Foucault, the person who writes, the experience of madness in him, ‘Foucault’, the author of the book, ‘madness’ in society, and what these may open up for us, readers. To be able to see some of these aspects perhaps already means a transformation in our perspective, but crucially, a transformation in our relations to ‘discourse’ necessarily results in greater degrees of detachment from it and as such, it creates further opportunities to think about “what we might become” once its grip has been loosened on us and our thinking.

This thesis as experience book concerns itself with experiences and ‘truths’ of such kinds. Foucault’s anxiety, his modes of being in discourse as well as his strategies of resistance and self-transformation open up multiple vistas to explore the ways in which different experiences and subjectivities are formed in academic discourse and how they might possibly be remade and unmade. The next chapter refocuses on the lived experience of being in discourse in IR, mapping some of the most important subjectivating forces and sites of resistance which have characterized my professional and personal journey there. Chapter 4 thus takes us back to the subfield of ‘Foucaultian IR’ and revisits some of the disciplinary practices from the perspective of writing in and against discourse.

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⁸⁴Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, 242.