

Chapter 4

Formation(s) in Discourse : We as 'We'

After having re-read some of Foucault's writings on 'discourse' from the perspective of the lived experience of 'being in discourse', this Chapter takes us back to the realm of IR and particularly, to the sub-field of 'Foucaultian IR' which constitutes a particularly influential site of my academic formation. The first person perspective illuminates some of those subjectivating forces and pulls of the discipline that have been framing my journey there. Through embracing Foucault's ideal of 'community' as an undefined, ever-changing 'we', the Chapter seeks to re-imagine the practice of 'literature review' as an active engagement with the 'disciplinary life' of 'Foucaultian IR' and as a potential site for cultivating alternative modes of being in discourse.

Foucault's and Butler's thoughts and words about 'discourse', or rather, their thoughts and words about discourse in relation to how they inhabit discourse and in the light of their presence in their texts made me become more aware of the *actuality* of my own writing practice, such as the actuality of writing *this, now*. As these words hit the page as they usually do, I pause for a moment. While these words are only meant to start something off, to serve as a vehicle through which *something else*, something supposedly *more* important can be brought into textual existence – a thought, a statement, even an argument perhaps – it already feels that something is in motion, something is in formation here. This is going to be a new chapter, perhaps in more than one way. A 'chapter' now appears less and less as a functional unit of a bigger whole called the 'thesis' but rather as an experience of a 'new awareness' of my (and perhaps your) 'insertion in discourse' and a tool to turn this opening into an

exercise, an experimentation, something that a Foucaultian ethos of self-transformation would strongly encourage us to do. With each chapter there is a new responsibility of ‘beginning’, and as such, some hesitation (on my part for sure) but ultimately, there is a new story and many new ‘unknowns’ in the making through the work and journey of the narrative ‘I’. Many things are in formation here, in the text, in the writing process, in your reading and as such, we are in formation, too, as writing, reading, knowing subjects and as persons writing, reading, thinking.

As I am writing this it also strikes me, however, that it is still surprisingly easy to forget about the condition of being in discourse in the process of writing. In fact, this is something I might have been relatively ignorant of in my own writing practice so far. Thinking about writing *from within* the actual writing process, what appears to be the most important part of my work, something like a ‘natural’ instinct, is what I am writing right now because this is what is clearly and tangibly in formation *in this moment*. My attention is mostly where my words are (here and then *here*), or more precisely, it keeps oscillating between my thoughts and their expression in words, trying to find the best fit and the most expressive statement. Just as Foucault’s diagnosis of Western modernity’s relationship to ‘discourse’ suggested, in many ways, it is still too easy to ignore the forces and dynamics of ‘discourse’ and to find myself inhabiting that narrowly defined distance between ‘thought’ and ‘language’ as the sovereign ‘knower’ of their ‘order’ and connections. Of course, it would be hard to reflect on what else might be in formation, especially on my own formation as knower and writer in the course of crafting these sentences. As Butler emphasized, the latter would be particularly impossible.

Yet if I take a step back and look back on the writing process as a whole, it appears that up to this point I might have just been too focused on cultivating a ‘living space’ for the narrative ‘I’ in the text and not the least, a comfort zone for myself in writing *like this*. My explorations regarding what narrative writing can do and what I can do through writing in a first person perspective might have just been too much absorbed in an effort of ‘resistance’ to the scholar vs. person divide of the conventional academic genre and a project of its narrative unmaking. My accounts of my academic formation and some of the previous practices within the discipline, such as how I used to read, write and think, and how I might still be trapped in some of the habits I internalized and invested myself into while researching ‘sovereignty’ and ‘governmentality’, were primarily driven by the need to write myself back into

my academic texts, to be more present in the text as the person who writes. As such, these accounts sought to re-instate a place for ‘the personal’ in relation to and perhaps even more so, against those discursive rules and disciplinary structures that made its exclusion necessary in the first place. And as a result, the frustrations of the ‘fictive distancing’ have certainly lessened: the narrative ‘I’ is very much alive in the writing practice and that is how I feel, too. Yet it would be dangerous to get too comfortable here; the job - whatever it might turn out to be in the end – is surely far from being done. Since what might be escaping me at this juncture is the very condition of writing *in* discourse and its significance for any ‘against’ that might emerge in the course of such practices. The journey of the narrative ‘I’ is as much about what discourse says and does as the person writing. In many ways and senses, the narrative ‘I’, too, is a discursive construct.

The experience of detachment from the scholar vs. person division that the practice of narrative writing has been working towards so far, however, is also an opening for engaging with the actual dynamics of disciplinary discourse. It is an opportunity for turning back on the disciplinary constitution of (scholarly) subjectivities, our modes of being in discourse, on those pulls and subjectivating effects that a ‘subjective’ re-reading of Foucault’s writings on ‘discourse’ identified in the previous Chapter. Undoubtedly, my being in discourse in IR has been the predominant site of my academic formation. This is where, together with countless others before and after me, I have become a particular kind of writer, thinker and knower, and with that, a desiring subject of sovereignty, a ‘Foucaultian’, a ‘governmentality’ scholar, and now, apparently, a narrative writer (who at the same time, works hard not to let it become a new ‘identity’). This is where my narrative ‘I’ has been forming as well and although this thesis might be my very first attempt to put it into work seriously and in a thought-through fashion, this is where its emergence was paved in the past three and a half years. Importantly, this is also where *we* have emerged (and continue to emerge) as ‘we’ and not only you as reader and me as writer in the particular context of this text but as members of that scholarly community that is always, already implied and implicated in any scholarly activity in what we recognize as our ‘field’ and where we are being recognized as its participants. As Butler emphasizes, the narrative ‘I’ not only presupposes a ‘you’, without whom my story would be ‘impossible’, but also an entire system of social norms that condition, precede and exceed this ‘I’. As Butler writes,

If I ask “Who might I be *for myself*?” I must also ask “What place is there for an ‘I’ in the discursive regime in which I live?” and “What modes of attending to the self have been established as the ones in which I might engage?” I am not bound to established forms of subject formation or, indeed, to established conventions for relating to myself, but I am bound to the sociality of any of those possible relations. I may risk intelligibility and defy convention, but then I am acting within or on a socio-historical horizon, attempting to rupture or transform it. But I become this self only through an ec-static movement, one that moves me outside of myself into a sphere in which I am dispossessed of myself and constituted as a subject at the same time.¹

As such, there is no unmediated knowledge or experience of self as one is necessarily “compelled and comported outside oneself”. As Butler explains further, “one finds that the only way to know oneself is through a mediation that takes place outside of oneself, exterior to oneself, by virtue of a convention or a norm that one did not make, in which one cannot discern oneself as an author or an agent of one’s own making.”² Disciplinary rules and conventions work in a similar fashion: we are inevitably made into subjects of particular experiences of what we do and how we are in the ‘disciplinary life’ of IR. No matter in what professional quality we might be entering the discipline, a certain ‘we’ as a professional identity is already offered to us, a sense of ‘we’ that is inseparable from our disciplinary constitution as writing, thinking, speaking, knowing subjects in relation to what we research, what method we follow, or where we might stand in different institutional contexts. In fact, there might be many different and perhaps even conflicting senses of ‘we’, also in ourselves; some of them might be asserted strongly from time to time, for example when we publish, argue, present our work to others, and in other cases, other ‘wes’ might just be quietly present in our everyday practices as hidden assumptions, as *savoirs*, or perhaps as those voices of the ‘institution’ in our heads that we no longer recognize as such. It is nearly impossible to tell where a different, perhaps non-institutional sense of self might begin (a necessarily ‘social’ self nonetheless) as what Butler describes as the ‘outside’, a complex compound of social, institutional, disciplinary norms that have been there long before us are already part of our constitution, even if we are in the process of trying to ‘rupture’ or ‘transform’ them. The ways in which we are turned into subjects and we turn ourselves into subjects

¹Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 114-5.

²Ibid. 28.

are always deeply intertwined processes and as such, a much broader sense of ‘we’ has perhaps always been more actively and formatively present in my Foucault-inspired narrative ‘I’ than what the writing process itself might have acknowledged so far. My writing against discourse keeps referring back to the confines of a particular disciplinary discourse (by which it is still conditioned); my reading of Foucault has built on numerous other readings of his oeuvre; my narrative writing draws support from the work of other narrative writers.

Writing *against* discourse, as it now appears more clearly, is always already writing *in* discourse.

This makes me realize though how differently I used to think about ‘being in discourse’ in IR before engaging with Foucault’s and Butler’s work and my personal involvement in it. My reflections on how my work relates to other people’s work in ‘Foucaultian IR’, which never actually got anywhere near to thinking about it as lived experience, used to take one highly specific form: that of the ‘literature review’. The institution of the ‘literature review’ requires no introduction to either of us. For me it used to function as a showcase of what I have already read and learnt, demonstrating my familiarity with the relevant critical junctures of current IR scholarship though giving brief summaries and analyses of a variety of texts, arguments and ‘contributions to knowledge’. It used to be an exercise that, with hindsight, confined both me and my analysis to what discourse said and made my scholarly gaze search for those aspects in the ‘literature’ that made my own intellectual position feel more secure in terms of ‘sameness’ or in relation to what I identified as ‘difference’. Either way, writing a ‘literature review’ was also about ‘identity’, of how I saw myself positioned in the discipline and with what streams of thinking I could identify myself with. And as such, writing a ‘literature review’ was a game of attachments and belonging, too, of negotiations of loyalties and the strategic framing of ambitions.

In the past I never actually reflected on how I might have been affected as a ‘subject’ and a person by what I *did* when I was working on a ‘literature review’. From this place where I am writing now, however, the practice of writing a ‘literature review’ not only appears as a mechanism of identity formation but also a site of potential transformation in a Foucaultian ethos. It could be turned into an

opportunity to cultivate a perhaps more balanced engagement with what ‘discourse’ says and does and as such, instead of repeatedly performing it as a formal examination of texts it could also be seen and experienced as an active engagement with the formation of relations to self and others. Foucault’s critical ethos of self-transformation took these different processes of subjectivity formation very seriously, and while he transformed the disciplinary practices of his profession into sites for changing himself through ‘straying afield of himself’³, he also envisioned and worked towards a sense of ‘we’ that is equally resistant to any fixed sense of identity or institutional categorization. Any ‘we’, for Foucault, is always an emergent ‘we’, a community in the making through *practice*. As he wrote:

I do not appeal to any “we”—to any of those “wes” whose consensus, whose values, whose traditions constitute the framework for a thought and define the conditions in which it can be validated. But the problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a “we” in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a “we” possible by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that “we” must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result—and the necessary temporary result—of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it. For example, I’m not sure that at the time when I wrote the history of madness, there was a preexisting and receptive “we” to which I would only have had to refer in order to write my book, and of which this book would have been the spontaneous expression. Laing, Cooper, Basaglia, and I had no community, nor any relationship; but the problem posed itself to those who had read us, as it also posed itself to some of us, of seeing if it were possible to establish a “we” on the basis of the work that had been done, a “we” that would also be likely to form a community of action.⁴

Foucault’s experience books are potential tools and resources of community formation, of partial and temporary ‘communities of action’ that are established on the basis of ‘the work that had been done’, and as far as the mechanisms of the experience book are concerned, in the processes of research, writing and reading. Foucault’s books, as O’Leary explains, “not only convey the experience of the author, or change the experience of the reader, but [...] also constitute both an experiment which the author carries out on him or herself, and an experiment in

³Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality 2* (London: Penguin, 1992), 8.

⁴Michel Foucault, “Polemics, Politics and Problematizations”, in *Ethics: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 1*, Paul Rabinow ed. (London: Penguin, 1994), 114-115.

which the reader too can participate – thus participating in the subjective transformation that the book makes possible”.⁵ What brings writer and reader together is that the transformative experience through which we change ourselves through changing our relationship to knowledge “must be capable of being linked in some measure to a collective practice, to a way of thinking”, providing “a certain accessibility for others, so that experience is available for others to have”.⁶ More specifically, continues Foucault, “an experience is something that one has completely alone but can fully have only to the extent that it escapes pure subjectivity and that others can also – I won’t say repeat it exactly, but at least encounter it – and go through it themselves.”⁷ Foucault’s ‘community of action’, however, stretches beyond the author and those readers who undertook ‘a renewed work of thought in their own engagement’ with the subject-matter of the book: it refers also to an ‘undefined group in the present’ for whom the historical experience unmade in the book reverberates strongly, perhaps in their own research, and who then might be temporarily united through a particular way of thinking the problem itself.⁸ As Foucault recounts, his engagement with ‘madness’ brought him together with such representatives of the anti-psychiatry discourse of his time as Laing, Cooper and Basaglia with whom he had no previous connection; a ‘community of action’ in this sense emerges from particular relationships to particular discourses, from the actual practice of what discourse does and what one may be able to do in discourse.

Foucault’s ‘we’ is a virtual and ever-changing ‘we’.

Foucault’s ‘we’ is an effect of the reproblematicization and endless questioning of ‘who we have been constituted to be’ and a practical manifestation of the open-endedness of asking ‘what we might become’, both as individuals and as a collective.⁹ In the spirit of Foucault’s critical ethos, we could perhaps think about a ‘literature review’ (and any other instance of academic work) as an active, practical and political engagement with IR’s scholarly communities and ‘disciplinary life’

⁵Timothy O’Leary, *Foucault and Fiction: The Experience Book* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 207.

⁶Michel Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, James D. Faubion ed. (London: Penguin, 1994), 244.

⁷Ibid. 245.

⁸Cf. Timothy O’Leary, “Rethinking Experience with Foucault”, in *Foucault and Philosophy*, Christopher Falzon and Timothy O’Leary eds. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 179.

⁹John Rajchman, “Ethics after Foucault”, *Social Text* 13/14 (1986): 166.

rather than the mere summary and synthesis of a series of texts produced by these communities for the purpose of marking out one's position in relation to them and with that, to provide the text in the making with a certain identity and recognizability. As such, the practice of 'writing' could then be experienced as one particular mode of being in discourse through which we, as an ever-changing 'we', work against the constitution of such identities.

There have already been numerous calls from within the discipline to reflect on the constitution of disciplinary identities, also in relation to what we could identify as the community of 'Foucaultians' in IR¹⁰ or as 'Foucaultian IR'.¹¹ As Louise Amoore suggests in the 2008 *IPS* forum "Foucault and International Political Sociology", turning the critique of identity back on ourselves and unsettling one's sense of certainty is key to Foucault's style of thinking. As she writes,

to ask what Foucault's thought contributes to disciplines—to international relations, international political sociology or security studies—is perhaps to allow its very essence to slip away from us. To work against the grain is also to work against identification, including scholarly identification with disciplines.¹²

In a similar vein, taking seriously the non-identitarian character of Foucault's 'we', Asli Calkivik argues in the 2010 *IPS* forum "Assessing the Impact of Foucault on International Relations" that Foucault's main contribution is what his thoughts can do *to* (and not *for*) the identity politics of the academic discipline of IR. As Calkivik writes,

rendering us unfamiliar with habitual ways of recognizing ourselves, questioning the hidden assumptions of what we do and what we think we do, making us uncomfortable in the cozy comfort of our convictions and pushing us to face the task of political *thinking* rather than falling back upon political *doctrine* is perhaps what makes Foucault a demanding thinker.¹³

¹⁰See references for 'Foucaultians' for example in Doerthe Rosenow, "Decentering Global Power: The Merits of a Foucauldian Approach to International Relations", *Global Society* 23 (2009): 497.

¹¹See references to 'Foucaultian IR' for example in David Chandler, "Globalising Foucault: Turning Critique into Apologia—A Response to Kiersey and Rosenow", *Global Society* 24 (2010): 135.

¹²Louise Amoore, "Foucault Against the Grain", *International Political Sociology* 2 (2008): 275.

¹³Asli Calkivik, "Why Not to Choose a Secure 'We' in a Security-Obsessed World", *International Political Sociology* 4 (2010): 207-8.

As such, a personal, transformative ethos, the “critical work that thought brings to bear on itself” through which we might be able to ‘think differently’, to appear as ‘other’ to ourselves and with that, “to become someone other than who one is” is certainly not a private matter. Even if, as Foucault writes, “people will say, perhaps, that these games with oneself would better be left backstage; or, at best, that they might properly form part of those preliminary exercises that are forgotten once they have served their purpose”.¹⁴ Such ‘games with oneself’ that aim at “modifying one’s way of being” are inseparable from those discursive conditions in which and against which they arise: both as those ‘conditions of unfreedom’, in Butler’s terms, that make such exercises and experimentations possible, and in one way or another, leave their mark on them, but also as the medium in which, as Rajchman writes, that “very concrete freedom of writing, thinking, and living” emerge and can be cultivated in a Foucaultian critical ethos.¹⁵ While we are being formed in discourse, both as ‘we’ and ‘I’, discourse is also formed through us. Inhabiting the disciplinary discourse differently, that is, assuming perhaps more ownership over our formation will also make discourse and the discipline (at least a bit) different in which others, you and many other people are always, already implicated, too. As Vivienne Jabri’s description suggests, putting such a Foucaultian ethos into work that assumes and embraces “the self, the individual self, as the problematised site of moral agency and creative expression” would remarkably change the outlook and feel of the ‘disciplinary life’ of IR as well.¹⁶ The following lengthy quote powerfully captures the ways in which a certain ethics of the (scholarly) self could transform both the disciplinary community and by implication, also that sovereign order which has conventionally been the focus of IR scholarship. Jabri writes:

If we ask what a Foucaultian ‘critical ontology’ would look like in International Relations, we would begin by seeking an expanded imagination for a discipline whose wont is always to classify and whose defining moment is sovereignty and bounded community. Such an expanded imagination would incorporate the language and modes of expression (literature and the arts are examples) traditionally perceived to be located outside the discipline. Such an expanded imagination would no longer see that which is located in the art gallery or the school yard as

¹⁴Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 8.

¹⁵Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 19; John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 7.

¹⁶Vivienne Jabri, “Restyling the Subject of Responsibility in International Relations,” *Millennium* 27 (1998): 610.

belonging to some other faculty or realm of knowledge that is outside the remit of the discipline. Such an expanded imagination would recognise the intimate juxtaposition of the routine of daily encounters with the most extraordinary occurrences and upheavals. *This is the imagination of the 'stranger' within the discipline, who, though always constrained by the panoptic confines which legislate the inclusions and exclusions of the discipline, dares to know its limits and push these into the wide expanse of human experience.* This is the location where the uncertain and the reflexive replace the certainties of the singular narrative dominant in International Relations, which places citizenship and statehood as the defining moments of subjectivity. There is, in this critical attitude, no singular way of knowing, doing, or being, no search for final structures (or even final solutions) with universal value; in other words, no search for an international constituency at large, one which would conform to our narratives, our ways of doing and being. The subject of this critical attitude is no transcendent entity, one whose project is to universalise, to seek consent on what would constitute moral action. *The central theme of Foucault's argument replaces the certitudes of logocentric reason with at one and the same time the hesitancy, anxiety, and ecstasy that is the acknowledged way of being for a self that walks along the borderlines, that knows the constraining limits which surround her, but one that seeks to use her imagination to recreate and reconstruct, and significantly for International Relations, to push at the limits, the signifying boundaries of state, culture, and discipline.*¹⁷

That 'hesitancy, anxiety, and ecstasy' that comes with the actual performance and practice of a Foucaultian 'critical ontology of ourselves', however, may be fairly difficult to assume and embrace for many 'Foucauldian' IR scholars, let alone the continuous and persevering work towards *inducing* such liminal experiences for our own sake and in the course of our own scientific work. It is hard to be 'the stranger' within the discipline, not to mention the infinitely more difficult and ever-continuing task of making ourselves 'strange' to ourselves and never to settle into any fixed sense of identity, as Foucault's 'game' and critical ethos would require us to do.¹⁸ As Richard Ashley and R.B.J. Walker suggested over twenty years ago, 'dissident scholarship' in IR is 'more often attacked than read', and to refuse to be seduced by those strategies which would draw these scholars "into abstractly theoretical discussions or self-enclosing simulations of idealized realities that function only to redeem some notion of sovereign scholarly being" means going into 'exile' and

¹⁷Ibid. 603-4. My emphasis.

¹⁸Michel Foucault, "The Concern For Truth" (Interview), in *Politics, Philosophy, Culture – Interviews and Other Writings 1977-1984*, Lawrence D. Kritzman ed. (New York: Routledge, 1988), 258.

carrying on to speak from there.¹⁹ As they note, regardless of such disciplinary pulls, however, dissident scholars ‘get on with their work’, speak (up) in ‘the language of exile’ while, quoting Foucault, the task is to carry on working “on our limits, that is, a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty.”²⁰

The pioneer work of Walker, Ashley and many other iconic figures of critical IR has already made the disciplinary community a significantly more accommodating place for ‘dissident voices’ and by the time I entered the field using Foucault’s work for ‘critical’ scholarship, for example, it no longer triggered that much resistance. Although it always felt like belonging to a minority or a sub-culture in relation to the ‘supposed sovereign territories’ of more conventional IR research, and most of the time, a lingering suspicion over ‘post-structuralist’ or ‘post-positivist’ research methods and projects was still somehow tangible, it never quite felt like being in exile. Like-minded people and fellow ‘Foucauldians’ were always within reach and importantly, in the same institution. Perhaps the irony of such mediated and ameliorated ‘strangeness’ in the outside, in the disciplinary community is that it took me a very long time to realize and understand the significance of the other kind of strangeness for ‘critique’, that is, the strangeness, the ‘otherness’ in me. Without such experiences *within*, as Foucault’s work and critical ethos suggest, it is hardly ever possible to ‘think differently’ as we might end up “legitimizing what is already known”, those social structures and established ways of being and doing that we have already internalized, that have been folded into the ‘inside’, into our subjectivities, and as such, we can’t see or recognize them as such.²¹ Hence Foucault’s call upon us to ‘be at the frontiers’, at the limits of our own constitution as subjects, which are the same as those of the social order.²²

My disciplinary journey in ‘Foucaultian IR’, however, started from the opposite end of the spectrum. When I started my postgraduate work in IR, I even perceived my unfamiliarity with the disciplinary conventions of critical IR (something I already tapped into while I was finishing my law degree) and the novice’s ‘strangeness’ arising from that as something to be eliminated and replaced by ‘good scholarly practice’ as quickly as possible. As I mentioned before, my initial

¹⁹Richard K. Ashley and R. B. J. Walker, “Introduction: Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies”, *International Studies Quarterly* 34 (1990): 266, 267.

²⁰Ibid. 268.

²¹Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 8.

²²Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 45.

reading of Foucault's work was motivated by a number of reasons that intended to produce the exact opposite effects of a Foucaultian transformative ethos. I was longing for a sense of certainty and security, perhaps what Calkivik would call a 'cozy comfort' of convictions, both in terms of what I knew and who I thought I was. I was looking for 'accurate' knowledge about the world, something that would help me crack and unmask the logic of the operations of power in our contemporary Western modernity, and a corresponding sense of security for myself in terms of a professional identity, something that I could derive from belonging to a group that would bring both legitimacy and recognition to my research.

I wanted to fit into what I identified as 'Foucaultian IR' back then.

Although I struggled greatly with the discourse and vocabulary of this particular 'subfield', still, I saw a great potential in embracing this discourse and learning its grammar. And I worked hard to try to think the way 'Foucauldians' do, sound similar to those people whose work I used to read and find new tweaks in what could be said about today's world according to the logic of how Foucault is usually put to work to understand contemporary international relations. My 'desire' was to be embedded *in discourse*, in the discourse of 'the institution' and as such, very differently from Foucault's spontaneously emerging and always emergent 'we', my aim was to arrive, finally, in a safe haven of a 'we' that I pictured to have already been existing and whose authority I was willing and happy to take on myself. In many ways, I had the desire to be formed in a certain way and to be turned into something like a 'good scholar' and otherwise an obedient and unproblematic subject, the 'same' as everyone else, or so I thought. Needless to say, this is when I was perhaps the farthest from recognizing the subjectivating pulls of discourse and the stakes of subjectivity formation, especially in relation to my own formation as an academic subject.

My original research proposal positioned me and my research among those critics and critiques of liberalism that sought to uncover and expose the militant face of the liberal democratic peace project, especially with regard to the United States' 'war on terror'. As I am reading back parts of this proposal now, it strikes me that there must have been something very particular about the way I thought about my

project, my audience, academic community and the very practice of critical engagement in general. I set out the main contribution of the thesis as follows:

In my Ph.D. thesis I propose to examine and critically evaluate two seemingly divergent phenomena of contemporary international relations: the ‘war on terror’ conducted by the United States of America and the intensifying foreign policy activity of the European Union within its broadly defined ‘neighbourhood’. I intend to argue that these two patterns of foreign policy behaviour are ontologically connected and represent two modes of operation of an emerging ‘liberal’ Empire.²³

It seems that it was not only my search for a secure identity for myself that revolved around specific ideas of ‘sameness’ and ‘similarity’, but the actual subject-matter of my proposed research and what I was hoping to find in the course of my PhD work seems to have also been conditioned by and structured around the same logic. The next paragraphs are particularly illustrative of how I thought I could establish a sense of certainty in my work, both about the world and myself as ‘knower’. It appears that what I envisioned was something like a seamless fit between a Schmittian and a Foucauldian reading of contemporary politics, or rather, what I had in mind perhaps was an assemblage of concepts and mechanisms that were able to catch the logic of how ‘difference’ is being ‘dealt with’ in an ‘emerging liberal Empire’. This is how I identified the main contributions of my prospective thesis back then:

The figure of external relations specific to this combination of ‘liberal-imperial’ form and content, as reflected in contemporary European and American foreign policy, is captured by the notion of ‘post-diplomacy’, signifying a particular, non-egalitarian approach by the ‘Self’ towards the ‘Other’. The dynamics of this particular, discriminatory form of ‘dealing with difference’ is captured on the one hand, by an ever growing literature on “ultrapolitics” springing from various reassessments of Carl Schmitt, addressing the phenomenon of ‘liberal enmity’²⁴ and, on the other hand, by an increasing volume of scholarly work using Foucauldian biopolitics as an

²³PhD proposal submitted to the Department of International Politics, Aberystwyth University, January 2008.

²⁴See esp. Jef Huysmans, “International Politics of Exception: Competing Visions of International Political Order Between Law and Politics”, *Alternatives* 31 (2006): 135-165., Idem, “International Politics of Insecurity: Normativity, Inwardness and the Exception”, *Security Dialogue* 37 (2006): 11-29., Sergei Prozorov, “Liberal Enmity: The Figure of the Foe in the Political Ontology of Liberalism”, *Millennium* 35 (2006): 75-99., Andreas Behnke, “Terrorising the Political: 9/11 Within the Context of The Globalisation of Violence”, *Millennium* 33 (2004): 279-312., Slavoj Žižek, *The Universal Exception: Selected Writings Volume Two*, Rex Butler and Scott Stephens eds. (London-New York: Continuum, 2006).

analytical tool to enrich our understanding of a distinctive, *liberal* way of war.²⁵

Within this context, the first type of contributions seek to describe a specific quality of politics, which encompasses the (metaphysical) construction of the ‘Other’ and the subsequent incentive to eliminate the ‘otherness’ by either ‘peaceful’ transformation or ‘violent’ annihilation. The second group of works focuses primarily on a specific rationality of power, such as the rationale of *biopolitics*, which is aimed at the protection of a given population against other populations (which are inevitably hostile in this case), and the practices or technologies through which this given rationality operates.²⁶

In my dissertation, on a theoretical level, I will argue that within the regime of ‘liberal’ Empire the absolutism (and anti-foundational character) of the ultrapolitical decision on eliminating difference (in either of the two ways) is driven by a biopolitical logic. It is this logic that is framed in existential, often quasi-Schmittian terms with respect to the survival of a given community. On a more empirical level, I explore the sites that contribute to the production of the ‘ultrapolitical’ rationale for biopolitics by looking more closely at the two patterns of dealing with difference: peaceful transformation in the case of the EU’s foreign policy and violent annihilation in the case of the US war on terror.

As the high concentration of overly technical concepts suggest in these four paragraphs (I have counted over 12 different expressions to name specific aspects of contemporary liberal politics), the kind of critique I sought to pursue at that time was heavily influenced by a rather peculiar (but perhaps also characteristically Western) economy of language and thought, where thought (my own) was busy making itself visible through its mastery of language, of what discourse could potentially say, and with that, seeking to exert a good measure of control over it. While I can no longer clearly follow the different ‘rationales’ of different modalities of power and government that I distinguished in my proposal, what I can still feel while reading back these lines is a strong will to speak and a corresponding fear of not being able to say what the truth really is, of missing out on the truth in-between two technical

²⁵See esp. Julian Reid, *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror: Life Struggles, Liberal Modernity and the Defence of Logistical Societies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), Idem, “Life Struggles – War, Discipline and Biopolitics in the Thought of Michael Foucault”, *Social Text* 24 (2006): 127-152., Michael Dillon, “Governing Terror: The State of Emergency of Biopolitical Emergence”, *International Political Sociology* 1 (2007): 7-28., Michael Dillon and Julian Reid, “Global Liberal Governance: Biopolitics, Security and War”, *Millennium. Journal of International Studies* 30 (2001): 41-66., Vivienne Jabri, “War, Security and the Liberal State”, *Security Dialogue* 37 (2006): 47-64., Andrew W. Neal, “Foucault in Guantánamo: Towards an Archaeology of the Exception”, *Security Dialogue* 37 (2006): 31-46., Vivienne Jabri, “Michel Foucault’s Analytics of War: The Social, the International, and the Racial”, *International Political Sociology* 1 (2007): 67-82.

²⁶Cf. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, eds. Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana (New York: Picador, 2003), 239-41.

terms, which, eventually made me create my own concept: ‘post-diplomacy’. The substantiation and operationalization of this term could easily have been one of the main contributions of this thesis (which would have been then a completely different thesis altogether), but now the way it appears is more like an expression of the simultaneous presence of both *logophilia* and *logophobia* in practice, in my own scholarly subjectivity and experience.²⁷ While I seemed to have found ‘meaning’ in the practice of learning and speaking a particular scientific language, my attempts to participate in the disciplinary discourse always harboured a certain fear of realizing *what if* I had much less control over what I am able to say and what I can say than I had assumed.

And the quest for the ‘truth’ of contemporary world politics continued as I got officially started with my PhD research.

While Schmitt, Hardt and Negri, and the notion of ‘ultrapolitics’ dropped out from my ‘theoretical framework’ after the first few months, the kind of ‘truth’ about world politics and the contemporary liberal state that I was after at that time continued to be inspired by the writings of Michael Dillon, Julian Reid, Vivienne Jabri, and Andrew Neal, whose work I understood to be the core of Foucauldian IR. What I found the most intriguing and attractive in these thinkers’ texts, especially in those books and articles of Dillon, Reid and Jabri that specifically contributed to the theme of the ‘liberal way of war’, were those diagnoses of the present conditions of politics in the West that unveiled and exposed an alternative image of liberal order, putting the usual ciphers of liberal politics, such as ‘liberty’, ‘security’, ‘freedom’ or the ‘individual’, in a very different light.

Still very far from turning Foucault’s critical ethos back on myself in an attempt to make myself ‘other’ to myself, at that time I was after arguments and statements that told me that the world was ‘other’ than what it appeared to be. I was looking for ‘truths’ that were hidden at some non-obvious place and the ways in which they could still be thought. Through Jabri’s, Reid’s, Dillon’s and Neal’s reading of Foucault I came to see the significance of thinking about ‘war’ differently, and through that, to realize that what we might recognize as the ‘normal course of

²⁷See Michel Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader*, Robert Young ed. (London: Routledge, 1981), 66.

affairs' in politics may not be as peaceful as it may appear. As the following excerpt from my literature review of the writings of Jabri, Reid, Dillon and Neal will show, what I was trying to bring out from these accounts back then was an alternative logic of liberal politics and importantly, an alternative logic of thought which would make the 'normal' appear radically 'other.' This alternative, all-encompassing logic of thought, with hindsight, was also the logic of my thinking that integrated these three accounts into one, relatively homogenous picture of liberal politics. I wrote:

Jabri makes the case for “the figure of war as analyser of the present”, arguing that war, “rather than being confined to its own time and space, permeates the normality of the political process” and as such, it deeply imbricates what may appear to be an otherwise peaceful order.²⁸ War, in Jabri’s depiction, is not an isolated occurrence that interrupts peace; it is already present as a ‘matrix of war’ in society in terms of “continuities in social and political life”, including “both discursive and institutional practices, technologies that target bodies and populations, enacted in a complex array of locations” that enable the “actuality of war in its traditional battlefield sense”.²⁹ ‘War’ as a compound of societal relations that shape the everyday life of societies and the paradoxes that arise from these constellations for the liberal state’s self-legitimation is in the focus of Reid’s book, too. As he argues, “what liberal regimes have achieved historically and continue to pursue today politically, is not the transformation of human life from conditions of war to peace, but the reduction of the polemical vitality of human being into what I propose to call ‘logistical life’”.³⁰ Logistical life, as he writes,

is a life lived under the duress of the command to be efficient, to communicate one’s purposes transparently in relation to others, to be positioned where one is required, to use time economically, to be able to move when and where one is told to, and to be able to extol these capacities as the values for which one would willingly, if called upon, kill and die for.³¹

What the ‘war on terror’ illuminates in this regard is not only that, as Jabri argues, the ways in which the liberal democratic self-understanding of rights-based government is undermined by the indiscriminate measures taken in response to the terrorist attacks and that these dynamics are already coded into the structure of the democratic polity, but also that a particular coding of democratic societies, what Reid calls ‘logistical life’ has become a value in itself that needs to be protected, calling for further military intervention. What was once the internal development of ‘pacification techniques’ within society now becomes one of the definers of war inter-socially, where “the capacity of

²⁸Jabri, “War, Security and the Liberal State”, 49, 55.

²⁹Reid, *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror*, 55.

³⁰Ibid. 17.

³¹Ibid. 20.

life to be logistical [...] is now openly celebrated as the demarcation between life deemed worth defending and those forms of life deemed to threaten liberal defences.³² The ‘war on terror’, argues Reid, is an emblematic case of such “conflict over the political constitution of life itself”.³³

The “political constitution of life itself” in these accounts inevitably poses the question of what Dillon and Neal call the ‘politics of life’ in liberal societies, which, for Reid, appears as posing anew “the problem of what life is and may become once released from the shackles that liberal regimes attempt to bind it with in the name of peace.”³⁴ As he argues, the liberal project knows as ‘Terror’ can be seen as a form of resistance, as an example of a ‘life struggle’, in which ‘life’, “in its subjection to governance, can and does resist, subvert, escape and defy the imposition of modes of governance which seek to remove it of those very capacities for resistance, subversion, flight and defiance”.³⁵ Dillon looks into another aspect of such ‘politics of life’, his concern is not the protection of a life made into a specific form and dealing with the consequences once it frees itself from its liberal chains, but rather, the very processes through which liberalism encounters life, making renewed attempts at its control and government. What Dillon and Neal identify as the biopolitical struggle over what is counted to be a ‘living’ thing and as such, what ‘life’ can actually be derives from the radical undecidability of life and its continuous excess over its government.³⁶ ‘Life’, explains Dillon, is a ‘process’ now agreed by science, which poses problems both in terms of how it can be known and how power can be exerted over it.³⁷ Dillon shows how liberalism’s relationship to ‘life’ structures the epistemic conditions of the contemporary Western order both in terms of ‘power’ and ‘knowledge’: while the digital and molecular age displaces the figure of ‘Man’ from the center of knowledge and makes ‘connectivity’, ‘circulation’, and ‘complexity’ the new ciphers of life as being ‘continuously in-formation’, in terms of government such ‘evental character of living things’ appear as a ‘permanent security problem’ for liberal biopolitics.³⁸ As Dillon explains further drawing on Foucault’s notion of ‘biopolitics’, to fulfil its original purpose, that is, to ‘make life live’, the biopolitics of our age “inevitably encounters life inimical to its project as an everyday fact of biopolitical life”. As such, the “peace which biopolitics seeks ‘makes live’ through continuous warring against life that does not fit; especially against life that endangers life’s biopoliticization”.³⁹ In Dillon’s description, ‘security’, ‘life’, ‘peace’ and ‘war’ combine in the following biopolitical complex:

For life continuously exceeds the biopolitical speciation to which biopolitics must reduce it, if biopolitics is to make life live in the ways in which biopolitics understands ‘life’ to be. In short, the problem which biopolitics encounters in pursuit of its project to

³²Ibid. 12.

³³Ibid. 38.

³⁴Ibid. x.

³⁵Ibid. xi.

³⁶Michael Dillon and Andrew W. Neal, *Foucault on Politics, Security and War* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011), 14.

³⁷Michael Dillon, “Governing Terror”, 13.

³⁸Ibid. 16.

³⁹Michael Dillon, “Security, Race and War”, in *Foucault on Politics, Security and War*, 167.

‘make life live’ is life itself. The war for life which biopolitics wages on behalf of its understanding of life, and in relentless pursuit of appropriate power relations to enact that understanding, is translated into biopolitical peace through an obsession with security. Biopolitically it is ‘life’ which has to be secured against life. Peace is written as war biopolitically through discourses of security. To make life live it has to be secured. Securing life is a continuous war against whatever threatens life. Life is thus a permanent security problem for biopolitics.⁴⁰

In the beginnings of my Foucaultian research, the diagnoses of Jabri, Reid, Dillon and Neal provided an alternative image and logic of contemporary liberal politics: the ‘matrix of war’, ‘life struggles’ and ‘biopolitical life’, in my reading at least, made up a different ontology of world politics and importantly, made the everyday appear as ‘other’. What captured my attention in these accounts was the possibility of a different conceptual understanding of the present, that is, a different ‘lens’ or ‘grid of intelligibility’ through which I could make sense of political events and through which I could come up with *interpretations* that illuminated - despite appearances - how things *really* were. And what I can see more clearly now is how the practice of trying to locate a ‘truth’ of such kind also became *a* truth of me as ‘knower’ and the kind of ‘knowledge’ I was trying to produce.

While I was trying to find ‘strangeness’ outside I was also creating familiarity and sameness within.

What I understood to be ‘critique’ at that time worked towards the creation and solidification of disciplinary identity rather than its questioning. Reading these writings back now and reflecting on how I used to read them from where I am at now, from a threshold inspired by a Foucaultian ethos of self-transformation, what seems to have been missing from my relationship to these texts is that element of ‘detachment’ that accompanies the movement of grasping the ‘intelligibility of certain mechanisms’ and what makes possible to chose, to construct a different experience for ourselves, something that is central to the way in which Foucault’s experience books work.⁴¹ In other words, what clearly wasn’t present in my practice of reading at that point was what a Foucaultian sense of ‘critique’ could add to such

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, 244.

‘ontologies’, that is, the possibility of turning them into an actual, lived, transformative experience. Such a ‘critical ontology of ourselves’ is a means to displace and leave behind any definite and fixed sense of ‘ourselves’ or a ‘we’, opening up the question and possibilities of ‘what we might become’, rather than to strengthen and reinforce them in the first place. As Foucault writes,

the critical ontology of ourselves has to be considered not, certainly, as a theory, a doctrine, nor even as a permanent body of knowledge that is accumulating; it has to be conceived as an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.⁴²

My relationship to these texts could perhaps be better described as one of attachment, rather than a critical attitude which allows for reflection also on how I am being constituted as a subject of particular experiences, such as the experience of living as a liberal subject and researching this theme in a specific way. I was drawn into the alternative worlds of the ‘liberal way of war’ with the mindset of wanting to find something specific in them, something that would bring me closer to that ‘real’ truth of liberal politics that must have been well hidden from me in the ‘normal’ practices of liberal regimes and in what could be called ‘mainstream’ academic accounts of world politics. My attention was drawn to *words*: I was assuming that what was said in official rhetoric must have meant something else and to tie meaning down, I sought help from other words and concepts that could serve as a new point of reference, through which I could understand what was going on as ‘politics of life’, ‘life struggles’, or a ‘matrix of war’. What I couldn’t quite see at that point was the pragmatic, everyday truths of these accounts, the truths of thinking about politics in such ways, that is, the truth *of* ‘politics of life’, ‘life struggles’, or a ‘matrix of war’ rather than ‘politics of life’, ‘life struggles’, or a ‘matrix of war’ *as* (the) truth. In my practice of reading there was simply not enough space for a ‘detachment’ of that sort.

When I read these texts now, considering those aspects of these scholars’ research that are not directly connected to ‘liberal war’, the practical, everyday implications of these accounts for the scholarly community and the ‘disciplinary life’ of IR become much clearer. Jabri, Neal and Dillon all seem to write ‘against’

⁴²Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, 50.

discourse, but not only against the discourses of the liberal state through showing its practices in a different light. In many ways, their contributions can also be read as instances of disciplinary auto-critique. One aspect of this is their writing against certain scholarly approaches in IR as well which they read as potentially reifying of some of the practices and rationalities of the liberal state. Both Neal's and Dillon's work can be read as a series of reproblematisations of the 'exceptionalism' debate in IR through different readings of Foucault's notions of 'war' and 'biopolitics' that seek to diffuse that singular logic in which law, sovereignty, and life are brought together in the structure of the 'exception' and the scholarly literature on it. In this sense, Dillon's engagement with how power relates to 'life', how 'life' is problematized as an object of government, and the ways in which it persistently escapes any governmental attempt to pin it down not only provides a different understanding of security practices, but also illuminates the so-called paradoxes of sovereignty from a different angle. While accounts of 'exceptionalism' tend to concentrate on the 'state of emergency' or the 'state of exception' as an instance in which sovereign power rises above the law it enabled, Dillon provides a 'biopolitical' reading of this very structure. As he writes, what has now been identified as a 'state of emergency' operates as a 'norm' rather than an exception that is "born of a contemporary biopolitical analysis of emergent life."⁴³ Dillon's emphasis on the 'undecidability' of life and its continuing excess over modern government's efforts to capture it expresses a similar view to William Connolly's in relation to discourses on 'exceptionalism' inspired by Agamben's philosophy. As Connolly writes,

Biocultural logic exceeds any textbook logic because of the nonlogical character of its materiality. It is more messy, layered, and complex than any logical analysis can capture. The very illogicalness of its materiality ensures that it corresponds entirely to no design, no simple causal pattern, or no simple set of paradoxes.⁴⁴

What Dillon's and Connolly's statements gesture towards is perhaps one possible response to Neal's call for a "more responsible scholarship" in the practice of which "the problem of limits and exceptions *can* be read in ways that *problematise*

⁴³Dillon, "Governing Terror", 16

⁴⁴William E. Connolly, "The Complexity of Sovereignty", in *Sovereign Lives: Power in Global Politics*, Jenny Edkins and Véronique Pin-Fat eds. (London: Routledge, 2004), 29.

practices of exceptionalism but *do not* feed into their philosophical legitimation”.⁴⁵ As Neal argues elsewhere, the ‘exceptionalism’ discourse, its claims and practices increasingly incited by the events of 9/11

not only seem new, but they themselves invoke the new. It is claimed that an exceptional event has brought about exceptional times, and that exceptional times require exceptional measures. On 11 September 2001, ‘everything changed’. With the emergence of this constellation of exceptional new circumstances and exceptional new responses, we seem to be faced with a great break in history, the beginning of something new, a sudden irruption. Except that the politics of the exception seems depressingly familiar and predictable. Did we ever doubt, on that fateful day, that the horrors unfolding before our eyes would not be met with an American reign/rain of fire? The terrifying uncertainty of the exceptional event and its interpretation has proved to be a chimera. The meaning and interpretation of the event are now thoroughly incorporated into a regime of legitimation for exceptional sovereign practices. Perhaps the processes and prerogatives that named and interpreted the event had a hold on it before it even happened, awaiting its capture with well-established discourses of threat, urgency, emergency and exception. The ‘new’ appears to have only reaffirmed the ‘same’: the permanence of the prerogatives of exceptional sovereign power.⁴⁶

By invoking Foucault’s work, both Dillon and Neal seek to challenge such conventionally invoked images and referents of sovereignty that seem to be further reified and perpetuated by a particular strand of scholarship in IR. While Dillon reproblematises the notion of the ‘event’ through refocusing on the ‘evental character’ of life itself, Neal, similarly to Jabri, offers a sophisticated discussion of Foucault’s reading of ‘war’ as a permanent feature underlying the ‘normal’ course of politics that exposes the complexities inherent in the *practice* of sovereignty (and thus, rejecting a formula-like abstract understanding of it).⁴⁷ More importantly though, Dillon and Neal not only provide an alternative understanding of contemporary world politics and the ‘war on terror’ by framing the problem differently, by showing that what has been presented as ‘new’, ‘event’ or ‘exception’ in both political rhetoric and certain academic narratives are deeply rooted in the practices and societal mechanisms of liberal polities.

⁴⁵Andrew Neal, “Goodbye War on Terror? Foucault and Butler on Discourses of Law, War and Exceptionalism”, in *Foucault on Politics, Security and War*, 46.

⁴⁶Neal, “Foucault in Guantanamo”, 36.

⁴⁷Andrew W. Neal, “‘Cutting off the King’s Head’: Foucault’s Society Must Be Defended and the Problem of Sovereignty”, *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 376.

As it now appears as a further aspect of writing ‘against’ discourse, they also remind us about academic work as *practice* and the significance of the practical and subjective dimension for critical interventions of this sort. They reflect on the powers of Foucaultian philosophy for facilitating critical projects, which, as it is suggested, do not lie with the Foucaultian concepts themselves that we may want to put into use for the purpose of presenting a *different* account of contemporary political practices. Rather, it comes down to how we might read Foucault’s work *and* how we relate to ourselves as scholars, that is, to scholarly subjectivity. That ‘difference’ that alternative accounts of world may be able to make, as their comments suggest, has to be constructed within, in ourselves first. This is where Foucault’s real potential can be found: to help us move beyond ourselves, to challenge our ways of thinking by assuming responsibility for how we think and what we think. As such, what is offered is a practical relationship to Foucault’s work that might enable us to put his concepts to use against the subjectivating pulls of discourse, as a form of resistance. Dillon and Neal address (or rather, confront) their readers in their Introduction to *Foucault on Power, Security and War* as members of a community of ‘Foucaultian’ scholars with a number of statements and practical suggestions regarding how to read Foucault and how to ‘work’ with his concepts.

What is of crucial importance here, suggest Dillon and Neal, is not only what Foucault says in discourse but the ways in which he speaks and writes.

As Dillon and Neal write,

Foucault is fallible. Fallibility in a thinker makes you question what you are getting from a thinker. It also makes you ask what you want from a thinker. We think this second question is at least as important, perhaps even more important, than the first. A thinker, a fortiori Michel Foucault, is not there to tell you what to think. He is there to provoke you into thinking. Thinking which is both with and against the thinker. Reading a thinker like Foucault you therefore owe a responsibility to your own thought as well as to that of the thinker. Fallibility therefore allows you to derive something additional from Foucault, something more than being confined to some canonisation of his thought. For one thing, it compels you to think a little more for yourself.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Ibid. My emphasis.

Dillon and Neal speak about and speak to a particular mode of being in discourse, which require a particular attitude from us, readers of their book and readers of Foucault. They turn us inwards and encourage us to think about what we do when we read Foucault and how we read him, pointing towards those expectations which might prevent us from experiencing the impact that Foucault's work can really have on us, when we allow him to 'provoke' us 'into thinking'. For this, active participation is required from us in the practice of reading. As their guidance for critical work suggest, the 'simple act of looking' of the Cartesian mindset and treating the text as an inert, lifeless object, a source of information will not do for engaging in a critical project of a Foucaultian kind, neither in terms of diagnosis of the present, nor in terms of self-making. Foucault's 'fallibility', that he is quick to "abandon lines of analysis so confidently announced at the beginning of his courses" and the resulting somewhat messy "trajectory of thought chasing after a complex object of thought" is not a hindrance but an opening for personal involvement in the process of knowledge production, an opportunity to explore 'thinking' in relation to 'self' (so that we can 'think a little' more for ourselves) and as such, to step back a bit from the mere activity of thinking. As Dillon and Neal emphasize, "Foucault leaves you room to do your own work", and perhaps this is also from where 'responsible scholarship' may unfold: to accept the challenge Foucault may be posing to our own constitution as 'thinkers' and 'knowers', and, thinking both 'with' and 'against' Foucault, to assume responsibility over the kind of work that is then 'ours'. To do scholarly 'work', as Dillon and Neal write citing Foucault, is to produce something "that which is susceptible of introducing a meaningful difference in the field of knowledge", which, at the same time, is inseparable from the ethical dimension of "a certain demand placed on the author and reader", which may then result in "the eventual recompense of a certain pleasure, that is to say of an access to another figure of truth."⁴⁹

As Neal notes elsewhere, Foucault's discourses already work against any potential identification with what Foucault may have to *say*, that is, against treating his concepts and descriptions as 'truth'. The way Foucault writes already severs (or at least, frustrates) the reader's potential fixation on meaning, and as such, it resists and discourages a scholarly subjectivity that would treat his writings as sources of

⁴⁹Ibid. 2.

information and objects of knowledge. As Neal comments regarding the *History of Madness*,

If we look closely at the way Foucault writes about madness, we can see that as soon as he mentions a new discourse it is already disappearing. This constant disappearance is expressed not only in the imagery of the text but also in the movement of the writing itself. Somehow, every description is annulled within a few pages. As soon as a seemingly decisive discourse of madness appears, it is already disappearing.⁵⁰

As Neal stresses, “nothing is sacred in Foucault”, warning against turning any Foucaultian (or other) concept into an ‘object’, since as Foucault keeps reminding us, every concept has a history, which “emerged through discursive relations mobilised around specific historical problematisations”.⁵¹ Foucault’s oeuvre is certainly not a coherent system of thought: as Neal writes, “we realise that one part of Foucault’s oeuvre does not support what we learned in another part”, which, importantly, is central to the Foucaultian project of engaging with the work of ‘thought’ without trying to nail down what thought is and what it can be. Foucault’s writing style “forces us to reassess our concepts, even if we learned those concepts from Foucault in the first place”, which draws our attention away from meaning and makes us more aware of what Foucault’s discourse actually *does* and what Foucault does in discourse.⁵² There seems to be a certain unity of form and content, of what Foucault writes about and how he writes it. What Foucault says is somehow also performed in the course of writing in and against discourse: while, as Neal shows, Foucault’s *Society Must Be Defended* “raises the question of how subjectivities might be constituted through *identification* with [the] very discourses of war”,⁵³ Foucault’s attitude towards discourse and his practice of scholarship can also be seen as a practical manifestation of how he continuously works against any form of identification and how his texts nudge us towards performing something similar on ourselves, not only forcing us to reassess our concepts, but making us also reflect on

⁵⁰Andrew W. Neal, “Rethinking Foucault in International Relations: Promiscuity and Unfaithfulness”, *Global Society* 23 (2009): 542.

⁵¹Ibid. 543, 541. On some of the ways in which ‘Foucault’ has been turned into a discursive object in IR, see e.g. David Chandler, “Forget Foucault, Forget Foucault, Forget Foucault...”, *International Political Sociology* 4 (2010): 205-207.

⁵²Neal, “Rethinking Foucault”, 539.

⁵³See Neal, “Goodbye War on Terror?”, 45.

what kinds of ‘knowers’ we are and how we come to know what we (think we) know.

Foucault stays on the surface of discourse yet at the same time he takes subjectivity very seriously, including his own.⁵⁴ He writes from a place of both detachment and active engagement and this is the experience that a Foucaultian ethos makes available for the reader, too: through accepting the challenge that his writing poses to our ways of reading we can also experience that sense of detachment in our everyday practices that Foucault’s books make possible in relation to the dominant understandings and experiences of madness, sexuality, criminality but also that of science and truth in our societies. Foucault’s experience books, indeed, enable a “transformation of the relationship we have with our knowledge”, that is, “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”.⁵⁵ Yet these transformations are not meant to substitute one ‘truth’ for another, not even for what might appear as substantive truth-claims in Foucault’s writings. The elusiveness of his writing style contributes to this aim, too: what enables detachment from social structures is not meant to create new attachments, not even to ‘critical’ concepts. Such Foucaultian transformations work at the micro-sites of subjectivity, including, for instance, how we relate to those concepts, theories and arguments that we may be working on and working with and whether we are able to take up the Foucaultian challenge of seeing them as discursive constructs *only*, and as such, potential pointers towards a ‘new figure of truth’ that can only be seen and experienced as one’s ‘own’ when we assume that ‘room’ Foucault leaves us to “do [our] own work”.⁵⁶

It is therefore not only about posing the question of what we are ‘getting from a thinker’ and what we may ‘want from a thinker’, but also to ask how we see, constitute and experience ourselves in the very process. This also entails making our academic experience problematic (or at least allowing it to emerge as such): how do we react to the elusiveness of Foucaultian concepts and descriptions? How do we

⁵⁴Cf. Said’s and Deleuze’s descriptions of Foucault as mentioned in Chapter 2 as someone running sideways on the surface of discourse and as a ‘topologist’ who understands subjectivity as the folding of the outside.

⁵⁵Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault”, 244.

⁵⁶Michael Dillon and Andrew W. Neal, “Introduction”, in *Foucault on Politics, Security and War*, 2.

negotiate the kind of knowledge we recognize as ‘knowledge’ and produce as ‘knowers’ in the light of what we actually find in Foucault’s writings?

Yet again, as I also know it from my own experience, it is hard to turn our scientific experience back on ourselves *in this way*.

With hindsight, perhaps it wasn’t only my personal quest for a sense of security, identity and recognition at the beginnings of my disciplinary journey in ‘Foucaultian IR’ that might have prevented me from problematizing my academic experience in a Foucaultian ethos and my own involvement in it as a ‘knower’. Similarly to the mentality of the desiring subject of sovereignty that also expresses a particular relationship to the concept (and practice) of ‘sovereignty’, there seems to be many different ways in which the ‘disciplinary life’ of ‘Foucaultian IR’ also encourages particular modes of relating to Foucaultian concepts. The ways in which some of these subjectivating forces work and the particular patterns of Foucault’s use in IR are certainly not inseparable from IR’s traditional concerns, disciplinary identity and its dynamics of self-definition. As Neal notes, there are “strong disciplinary principles and authorities in play that wish to give primary authority” to certain ‘core’ concepts, claiming, for instance, that “somehow relations of capital or differential international development are the root sources of politics or injustice, or that the international is the fundamental condition of possibility for relations of antagonism or war.”⁵⁷ While a Foucaultian ethos would capitalize on Foucault’s ‘fallibility’ and try to destabilize the pivotal concepts of the field, rendering visible the truth(s) of those disciplinary practices that make ‘capitalism’ or the ‘international’ appear as the ‘truth’ of contemporary world politics, many of Foucault’s concepts and insights have been structured around IR’s disciplinary mechanisms and dominant problematizations. While, as Neal notes, Foucault’s “critical achievement is to help make IR a less disciplined discipline”, in Pasha’s words, Foucault’s ‘awkward presence’ in the discipline seems to have been mitigated through his subjection to increasing disciplinary control.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Neal, “Rethinking Foucault”, 541.

⁵⁸Neal, “Rethinking Foucault”, 543; Mustapha Kamal Pasha, “Disciplining Foucault”, *International Political Sociology* 4 (2010):213.

As Neal remarks, for instance, the notion of ‘governmentality’ is one of those Foucaultian concepts that seems to be particularly susceptible to conceptual systematizations regarding the global dimension of international politics. Indeed, there have been a number of attempts to stretch ‘governmentality’ to the ‘international’, or to try to redefine the ‘international’ through ‘governmentality’, together with many debates around the limits of the ‘applicability’ of the concept for such ends.⁵⁹ What is particularly interesting in these accounts are not only the kind of arguments made but also the ways in which the specific uses of Foucault reveal something important about both the disciplinary gaze and the scholarly attitude in which these arguments and contributions are put forward. As my own experience in ‘governmentality studies’ illuminates (something I recounted in my IPRS presentation and gave an account of in Chapter 2), the ways in which ‘governmentality’ has been ‘applied’ in IR may also be indicative of the intellectual processes through which governable ‘mentalities’ might be crafted discursively (and as such, of some of the stakes of what we could call the politics of academic knowledge).

As I am re-reading some of those influential texts through which my understanding of ‘governmentality’ had been shaped in the first two years of my PhD research, many of such discursive pulls, certain methodological statements and more explicit acts of discursive steering that I had never quite recognized as such before, come to the fore a lot more forcefully. For instance now I can’t help but notice a certain technical, instrumental feel to the way in which Iver B. Neumann and Ole Jacob Sending seek to “*forge* an understanding of the international as governmentality” and “*update*” Morgenthau’s ideal type of the ‘international’.⁶⁰ Here ‘governmentality’ appears as a concept that captures and institutes the new logic and rationality that displaces self-help in an era when the ‘international’ as a political sphere is becoming increasingly defined by liberal norms. What Neumann and Sending propose is “thinking governmentality as a *structure*” of the “thickening of the international realm”, one that is increasingly populated by and institutionalized through liberal norms, such as human rights, market economy, democracy and the

⁵⁹Neal, “Rethinking Foucault”, 541.

⁶⁰Iver B. Neumann and Ole Jacob Sending, “‘The International’ as Governmentality”, *Millennium* 35 (2007): 677, 694, 698, 700. My emphasis.

rule of law which “transforms the modality of governing”.⁶¹ Looking at the ‘international’ through the ‘structure’ of ‘governmentality’ would then require the de-differentiation of states from other political agencies, such as transnational firms, NGOs, supranational organizations or transnational agency networks, marking out that ‘place’ from which these agencies can then be empirically studied.⁶² In this way, ‘governmentality’ becomes an attribute of the ‘international’ as a methodologically justified ‘update’ to what appears to be the previous consensus on its ‘logic’. The particular use of ‘governmentality’ here strengthens (rather than questions) the range of those practices in IR which safeguards (rather than destabilizes) the privileged position of its ‘core’ concepts.

Yet it is not only the ‘forging’ of particular discursive relations between ‘governmentality’ and the ‘international’ that can potentially be dangerous in this stream of thinking. In a different vein, Jonathan Joseph warns against such a broad understanding of ‘governmentality’ by drawing attention to the ‘limits’ of the ‘application’ of the concept. “Foucault’s insights on governmentality are primarily concerned with liberal societies”, writes Joseph, which then poses the question if they can “really be applied to situations where such conditions are absent?”⁶³ While for Neumann and Sending ‘governmentality’ brings us closer to how the ‘international’ really works, Joseph sees the ‘international’ as a much less homogenous realm, which also marks the limits of how ‘governmentality’ can be put to work. As he argues,

The ironic danger of over-applying the concept of governmentality in IR is to reinforce the ideological claim that we live in a liberal international order. Given that governmentality is intimately connected to liberalism (or, in today’s specific form, neoliberalism), IR theories of governmentality tend to take for granted the spread of (neo)liberalism through international institutions. In reality we have suggested that the international order is far from liberal, and far from being liberalized, despite the best efforts of neoliberals to speak or act as if it were. So paradoxically one of the most useful aspects of a governmentality approach should be to point to exactly those situations where it cannot be applied, or where institutions are trying to apply it, thus ignoring the uneven and illiberal character of much of the world and the lack of conditions of operation.⁶⁴

⁶¹Ibid. 694, 698, 700.

⁶²Ibid. 700. My emphasis.

⁶³Jonathan Joseph, “The Limits of Governmentality: Social Theory and the International”, *European Journal of International Relations* 16 (2010): 233.

⁶⁴Ibid. 242.

Jan Selby makes a similar point regarding those accounts that ‘scale up’ Foucaultian notions from the domestic social sphere to the global plane, such as Dillon’s and Reid’s work, where Foucault’s writings no longer appear as tools to analyse the “discrete techniques and practices of liberal governance, but instead, and much more ambitiously, for developing a newly Foucauldian picture of contemporary world order.”⁶⁵ While he asserts that “there is an ontological specificity and irreducibility to the international, which poses distinctive analytical problems and demands distinctive theoretical tools”,⁶⁶ he argues that this particular strand of literature subjects the ‘international’ to a ‘double reading’. As he writes, in this particular approach, international political relations

are read first as liberal and, on the strength of this, these global liberal realities are analysed as the products of disciplinary and bio-political power. Without such an effective ‘double reading’, a characterisation of contemporary world politics as ‘globalised bio-politics’ would be impossible. The result is that Foucault ends up being used less to interrogate liberalism, than to support what are in essence reworked and reworded liberal accounts of international politics.⁶⁷

In these accounts both Joseph and Selby argue against particular, totalizing uses of ‘governmentality’ with reference to their potential in strengthening, rather than questioning the global ambitions of contemporary liberalism. Yet the ‘international’, as they both assert, is an autonomous, irreducible sphere and if Foucault’s work is to be used for its study, then the characteristics of the ‘international’ *should* already guide how ‘governmentality’ is to be used. From this perspective, Selby’s account already harbours a critique of Foucault in the light of the discipline’s concerns: as he writes, Foucauldian tools can be used to theorise the ‘how of power’, as Foucault put it, but they “cannot help us in understanding the ‘when’, the ‘where’ or (most significantly) the ‘why’ of power.”⁶⁸ As such, “while Foucauldian perspectives can be used to illuminate how new techniques of surveillance and organisation are transforming the practices of liberal warfare, they cannot tell us why the US state re-invaded Iraq in 2003, or why the British state participated in that invasion but the

⁶⁵Jan Selby, “Engaging Foucault: Discourse, Liberal Governance and Limits of Foucaultian IR”, *International Relations* 21 (2007): 334.

⁶⁶Ibid. 326.

⁶⁷Ibid. 334.

⁶⁸Ibid. 337.

French state did not.”⁶⁹ Selby thus suggests complementing a Foucaultian take on international politics with a Marxist perspective, one that could provide a better account of the ‘why’ of power.⁷⁰

While Selby explicitly subordinates ‘governmentality’ to a Marxist perspective, and more importantly, to the causal logic implied by the question of ‘why?’, for Joseph ‘governmentality’ should just be submitted to more rigorous disciplinary ‘application’ that reflects the nature of the ‘international’ better. Interestingly though, in his account ‘governmentality’ as *concept*, what can be identified as ‘governmentality’ as *practice* and ‘governmentality’ as *strategy* are hardly distinguishable. Joseph not only speaks about the ‘application’ of a Foucaultian concept to empirical phenomena which could then be studied through it, but rather, he speaks about the ways in which “governmentality may be applied, but it cannot be guaranteed to succeed” in those parts of the world where the absence of conditions of advanced liberal society are missing. The examples of “the current reconstruction projects in Iraq and Afghanistan”, he argues, could be considered as such ‘failures of governmentality’, which governmentality theorists should also ‘explain’, together with the “arrogance of international institutions in trying to apply techniques based on advanced liberal society to completely different social conditions.”⁷¹ He gives the following guidelines to governmentality scholars regarding how ‘governmentality’ should be put into use. Joseph writes:

My advice to the governmentality theorists is then: do not try and make it do too much. Distinguish between governmentality in a generic sense and neoliberal forms. Define clearly how it works. Explain its limits and how it intersects with other processes. In particular, explain how governmentality connects with sovereignty and disciplinary power and how governmentality is to be distinguished from the more general working of biopower. What is it precisely that governmentality brings? Is it the idea of population regulated from a distance through the responsabilization of free conduct? If so, how much of the world can be explained in these terms?⁷²

The disciplinary rigour that Joseph’s ‘advice’ suggests deprives the concept of ‘governmentality’ of Foucault’s critical ethos both in the practice of the individual

⁶⁹Ibid. 337.

⁷⁰Ibid. 340.

⁷¹Joseph, “Limits of Governmentality”, 236-237.

⁷²Jonathan Joseph, “What Can Governmentality Do for IR?”, *International Political Sociology* 4 (2010): 203.

scholar and that of a collective 'we'. Its prescriptive tone subjects 'governmentality' to the requirement of clearly definable characteristics that mark out the limits of its 'applicability' and exact place in the order of other Foucaultian concepts. The 'we' implied and implicated in Joseph's comments is an increasingly disciplined 'we' that gives clear and definite answers to disciplinary questioning and produces knowledge about the world that is both 'precise' and unambiguous and, importantly, can be accounted for and justified as such. This potential 'we' might not think much about how to read Foucault's work and how to think 'with' and also 'against' him; it is ready to accept and follow clarifying guidelines like Joseph's. As such, this 'we' does not leave much space for 'strangeness', 'otherness' or 'fallibility' neither for us, nor for Foucault. In fact, it does its best to eliminate confusion or messiness, especially when there seems to be plenty of it, otherwise there would be no need for Joseph's intervention.

Yet Joseph's advice might also be illustrative of some of the ambiguities it seeks to clear up. While 'governmentality' is suggested to function to 'explain' the 'world' (or at least some parts of it), according to Joseph's account it is already part of the world. It is not only a concept that can help us engage with and question 'reality' as a series of distinct practices but it already appears *as* reality that can only be named and thought according to specific rules that derive from its nature. In this sense it is virtually impossible to tell "What is it precisely that governmentality brings?" while the aim of the question is exactly to make us prepare a clear and definite answer to it. Perhaps what we could still ask then, however, is what Joseph's question does and what it expresses *as* discourse. The tension and contradiction that arises between what the question is asking and the impossibility of giving an answer in its own terms might point us towards the stakes and effects of the question itself, which takes us back to the 'disciplinary life' of IR. Michael Merlingen describes the potential of 'governmentality theory' in 'research on world politics' in the following way: "by investigating political rationalities", he writes,

analysts can bring to light their internal regimes of power. They can show that for reality to be brought under the ordering influence of governance, it first has to be divided and sorted, based on morally or intellectually

validated schemes, into what is imagined to be normal and what is deviant, threatening, risky, underdeveloped, etc.⁷³

Crucially, the sense of ‘we’ arising from Joseph’s suggestions strangely invokes a similar governmental logic, a similar ‘mentality’ to what that Merlingen describes as the very object of study of this Foucaultian subfield. Joseph’s prescriptions regarding the study of ‘governmentality’ (and the world) are evocative of similar efforts to bring some (disciplinary) ‘reality’ under the ‘ordering influence of governance’ and to regulate the uses of the concept of ‘governmentality’ by sorting its different meanings and dividing the appropriate and inappropriate contexts of its application (and assumed existence as ‘reality’). In Joseph’s work there is a danger of embracing and reproducing that governable ‘mentality’ that the very notion of ‘governmentality’ was meant to capture and of normalizing it as a governable ‘we’ in the (ever-emerging) community of ‘governmentality theorists’. Taking Joseph’s suggestions seriously would deprive ‘Foucaultians’ of the potential of Foucault’s etho-poetic ‘strangeness’ both outside, in the community, and inside, in ourselves as ‘critical’ scholars. ‘Governmentality’ conceived in this way cannot bring us any closer to an experience of what Jabri described as the “hesitancy, anxiety, and ecstasy that is the acknowledged way of being for a self that walks along the borderlines” or what Dillon and Neal emphasize as the ‘responsibility’ that we “owe to [our] own thought” against Foucault’s and anyone else’s that could serve as a point of identification.⁷⁴ Selby’s attempts of grounding the merit of ‘governmentality’ in the question of ‘why’ and its potential in explaining actual foreign policy outcomes performs a similar impoverishment of both Foucault’s thought and ourselves as scholars, selves and as an always-emerging ‘we’.

Yet we can still be different – or so ‘we’ may choose to be.

Foucault’s diagnoses never left out of sight the ‘reciprocal genesis’ of the object ‘known’ and ourselves as ‘knowers’, and as Calkivik reminds us,

⁷³Michael Merlingen, “Foucault and World Politics: Promises and Challenges of Extending Governmentality Theory to the European and Beyond”, *Millennium* 35 (2006): 192.

⁷⁴Jabri, “Restyling”, 603-604; Dillon and Neal, “Introduction”, 1.

with his critique of scientific discourse and its regime of truth, Foucault does not provide a perspective that can simply be mixed with existing tools to grasp a disciplinary object such as “the international” and its pre-formulated questions. He poses questions regarding the constitution of the “it”—the disciplinary object—that “we”—subjects, the disciples of a discipline—come to “know” and how “our knowing” is validated and to what ends.⁷⁵

Importantly, there have been a number of different attempts that engage with the notion of ‘governmentality’ in a fashion that is more reflexive of the discursive and disciplinary constitution of both the ‘it’ and the ‘we’ of IR, in IR. We can relate to our concepts, to our disciplinary identity and with that, to ourselves differently. For instance, Wendy Lerner and William Walters’ take on ‘global governmentality’ loosens the disciplinary grip around both ‘governmentality’ and the ‘global’ which has important implications for scholarly subjectivity, too. They understand the notion of ‘global governmentality’ as a “provocation, and a relatively open space for dialogue between a series of disparate research projects” without intending to “signal a commitment to the position that today, as never before, we inhabit a ‘global world’” or wanting to find a ‘common definition’ for the concept.⁷⁶ As they claim, their “approach remains provisional and experimental; we have not sought to invest the idea of global governmentality with too much theoretical content.” Instead, as Lerner and Walters explain, “we have presented it as an injunction to explore the potential of governmentality concepts for thinking about various aspects of international affairs.”⁷⁷ The summary of the ambitions and research orientation of their edited volume powerfully reflects these purposes. As they write,

by gathering together various engagements with this theme we open up the possibility of stronger resonances and new connections. What might governmentality bring to the various practices of international studies? Conversely, what might it learn from them? How might governmentality offer a different way of understanding such phenomena as inter-state violence, global commerce, regionalization, international debt or humanitarian disasters? Does the intersection of governmentality and the global require us to invent new concepts?⁷⁸

⁷⁵Calkivik, “Why not choose a secure “We””, 208.

⁷⁶Wendy Lerner and William Walters, “Introduction: Global Governmentality”, in *Global Governmentality: Governing International Spaces*, eds. Wendy Lerner and William Walters (London: Routledge, 2004), 15, 5.

⁷⁷Ibid. 17.

⁷⁸Ibid. 7.

The focus on ‘resonances’, ‘connections’ and the disciplinary practices of ‘international studies’ open ‘governmentality’ to the possibility of engaging with it *as* academic practice and as a potential site where a ‘critical ontology of ourselves’ can be performed. The tentativeness of the questions of Larner and Walters leave room to ‘do [our] work’ while also encourage us to reflect on the effects of what we do and what we may learn from such inquiries. As they emphasize, “naming is in itself an act of power”, which equally applies to scholarly accounts; the space left open around the concepts they use, including both ‘governmentality’ and the ‘global’ is a means to actively challenge and harness this power. Their reading of ‘globalization’ as ‘governmentality’ is illustrative of a scholarly mentality that not only seeks to transform our understanding of what ‘globalization’ might mean, but, crucially, also our very relationship to the concept itself. As Larner and Walters write,

by placing the emphasis on difference, disjuncture, and unintended consequences, we aspire to make the universal particular. We aspire to *dedramatize* globalization. To set it within series. To make the familiar look strange. To *relativize* our present. The need is to confront globalization and its network of terms - global governance, new regionalism, complexity, networks, flows - with dissonance. To make it stutter. We think this is important since globalization is sublime, awe-inspiring, enchanting, and terrifying; altogether too big.⁷⁹

The ‘we’ of Larner and Walters’ account emerge from a shared attitude towards what ‘governmentality’ might possibly do as an undefined, undertheorized concept and the experience of allowing it to work on us, on our ways of thinking and writing about ‘globalization’. Thinking about ‘governmentality’ in this way may not only make ‘globalization’ lose its dramatic air but ultimately, in the same gesture we may be exposed to its ‘strangeness’, too and perhaps to our own fascination with ‘big’ concepts and a sense of fallibility that might arise from that. ‘Governmentality’ can thus work as a (re)source of ‘strangeness’ rather than a clearly defined tool for producing certainty about the world and a secure ‘we’ as ‘knowers’.

Still, while the disciplinary grip on certain concepts can certainly be loosened in this way and we might detach ourselves from particular meanings and assumptions associated with them, as François Debrix suggests, what is perhaps more difficult to

⁷⁹Wendy Larner and William Walters, “Globalization as Governmentality”, *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 511.

challenge is that broader and assumingly, much stronger disciplinary identity that we derive from working in the field of IR.⁸⁰ That is, more often than not we still subordinate such critical moves and projects to the disciplinary gaze of IR. From this perspective, Larner and Walter's description of how they seek to de-dramatize 'globalization' feels nearly dramatic: here the presence of a certain invisible set of rules and norms is already implied against which they speak and which requires them speak in such an assertive tone. Turning Foucault's critical ethos back on ourselves has no natural or obvious settling point: the point exactly is not to settle into any fixed sense of identity, and our disciplinary identities as IR scholars are no exception to that.

As Debrix suggests, however, it is not only the tendency to canonise particular Foucaultian notions and discipline their use, such as that of 'governmentality' that may gut 'Foucaultian' contributions to IR and us as contributors of Foucault's ethos. Rather, it is also about those more subtle disciplinary moves that may strengthen a certain IR identity even if they may appear to be questioning or interrogating others. In this sense, some of the self-reflective attempts of 'Foucaultian IR' that engage with the use of Foucault's work in IR may fall victim to the same dynamics that may reinforce a certain disciplinary identity, too.

And as such, the question becomes one of what kind of 'freedom' we might ever be able to gain from the disciplinary gaze.

As Debrix comments in the *IPS* forum "Assessing Foucault's Impact on International Relations" the "questions that frame this forum may well be in need of what one can consider to be a 'Foucaultian' treatment".⁸¹ While the questions posed to the contributors of the forum, notably, 'What has Foucault done for International Relations?' and 'What is Foucault's impact on International Relations?', could be read as a gesture of self-reflection of 'Foucaultian' IR, as Debrix notes, the questions are themselves disciplinary "injunctions that call Foucault-influenced scholars (*nous autres* Foucaultians, whoever 'we' may be) to demonstrate, preferably through a

⁸⁰See François Debrix, "We Other IR Foucaultians", *International Political Sociology* 4 (2010): 197-199.

⁸¹Debrix, "We Other IR Foucaultians", 197.

series of irrefutable proofs, what they have contributed to a domain of disciplinary activity (IR) whose very definitions and demarcations seem to require no further explanation.”⁸² As Debrix asserts, while a “recognizable Foucaultian identity is nonsensical”, these “particular questions make sense *only* within the terms of the discourses and disciplinary configurations that mobilize them in the first place.”⁸³ As Pasha notes, ultimately, such attempts “to salvage or malign Foucault’s supposedly awkward presence in IR end up advancing the normalizing compulsions of a discipline that essentially remains an appendage to sovereign power, despite many tall claims about the arrival of a postsovereign world.”⁸⁴

Questioning the use of Foucault in IR without simultaneously questioning disciplinary identities, such as our relationships to what we do when we do IR as well as the practices through which our attachments and loyalties to the discipline are formed in our academic everyday life is still a disciplinary act. “Disciplining Foucault is to ensure that *IR* remains disciplined”⁸⁵, writes Pasha, and with that, as Debrix suggests, that we remain disciplined, too, as a ‘we’ that responds and conforms to IR’s “insistence on having students and scholars confess what they are up to, on having them select and later justify a theoretical identity, position themselves for or against this or that theorist, and show how they contribute to the knowledge of ‘their’ discipline.”⁸⁶ However, as Neal comments, what Foucault’s presence in the discipline allows for is not only the interrogation of disciplinary identities but the unmaking of disciplinary logics themselves. As he notes, “it makes little sense to ask what Foucault can do for IR, when *his critical achievement is to help make IR a less disciplined discipline*”.⁸⁷ To quote Neal in length,

there is some irony in taking this historian who is not a historian and political theorist who is not a political theorist and trying to rethink him for International Relations (IR) or for the study of relations of capital. It is not possible to do so and remain faithful to those disciplines. To engage with the highly promiscuous thinker that is Foucault is to be unfaithful. It is not possible to engage with Foucault while holding onto even the most rudimentary of disciplinary commitments, such as the idea that “the international” is an object of study. For Foucault, such objects do not exist,

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid. 198.

⁸⁴Pasha, “Disciplining Foucault”, 213.

⁸⁵Ibid. 214. My emphasis.

⁸⁶Debrix, “We Other IR Foucaultians”, 199.

⁸⁷Neal, “Rethinking Foucault”, 543. My emphasis.

they are only problems around which “different events and practices [...] are apparently organized”. Engaging with Foucault should also mean being unfaithful to oneself. When we return to Foucault and find him reflecting on his own practice, perhaps at the beginning of a new year of lectures at the Collège de France, he shows no compunction in dismissing his previous work, expressing his dissatisfaction with it, and articulating a new problem that will now animate his work instead. We should do the same, especially if that means being unfaithful to Foucault himself. We should not allow Foucauldian concepts to become disciplinary when Foucault did not think twice about abandoning them.⁸⁸

Importantly, it is not only a question of what we, ‘Foucaultians’ “have done and continue to do *to* IR” in this way, perhaps deciding that “it is not so vital for critical writing and thinking in ‘our’ field to worry about ‘doing something for IR’”, as Debrix suggests, but again, it comes down to what Neal describes as ‘unfaithfulness’ in at least three senses: to the discipline of IR, to Foucault and to ourselves as scholars and persons. Making IR less disciplined requires *us* to be less disciplinary in the first place, and just like Foucault did but *in our own way*, to try to take more ownership over the processes of discursive formation, especially when it comes to our own. ‘Unfaithfulness’ comes with a certain sense of detachment from both concepts and identity, be they Foucaultian or other. And to be ‘unfaithful’ is to adopt a practical attitude that assumes and makes use of that ‘room’ that Foucault leaves us to “do [our] own work”. One of the most important things that Foucault’s critical ethos of self-transformation can teach us relates to this aspect: it is a way of life and ethic of scholarly research that takes possession of this sense of ‘ownness’ in a relation of ‘otherness’ of self to self. The “very concrete freedom of writing, thinking, and living” that Foucault’s ethos tirelessly sought to cultivate is also a certain ‘freedom’ from our (disciplinary) selves.⁸⁹

Yet again, these ‘concrete freedoms’ can only be lived and experienced in everyday academic practices, in the very actuality of *how* we write, speak, read and think. As Amore observes, ‘critique’ for the late Foucault “should not work with the grain—to deduce, to conclude, to judge—but that it should challenge with imaginative leaps” that work to unsettle his audience and “perhaps particularly to unsettle what is thought to be known of his own work”.⁹⁰ For instance, re-imagining the practice of ‘literature review’ writing in a Foucaultian ethos, as a lived

⁸⁸Neal, “Rethinking Foucault”, 542.

⁸⁹Rajchman, *Michel Foucault*, 7.

⁹⁰Amore, “Foucault Against the Grain”, 274.

experience of ‘disciplinary life’ and potentially, as an opening for the formation of alternative scholarly ‘wes’, could thus work as an exercise and experimentation in such imaginative unsettling. While it would certainly take the ‘effects’ of Foucault’s thoughts to “unexpected and surprising places” it could also contribute to the formation of a less disciplinary community and a less disciplinary scholarly self.⁹¹ Reading IR texts from the perspective of the emerging ‘we’ implied and implicated in them, a less disciplinary ‘we’ would perhaps find inspiration in Foucault’s fallibility also to “ask what we might become” and to develop an ‘ethic’ of “‘choosing’ the form of experience through which we constitute ourselves”, also in our academic lives.⁹² A less disciplinary scholarly self would perhaps try to experiment with alternative ways of being in discourse, of writing in and against discourse in a fashion that is more sensitive to the constitutedness of experience, and as such, to identity formation. Instead of marking out who she is and where she stands in the literature in the practice of writing, she would embrace a Foucaultian ethos according to which “being the subject of one’s own experience should never be taken as given.”⁹³ For instance how we appear to ourselves and how we relate to others as ‘authors’ (and as potential material for ‘literature review’) is an important aspect here. As Amore notes, “it mattered greatly to Foucault that the paradox, the undecidability, and aporia of reading remain always a possibility” also in the ways in which his work has been read.⁹⁴ Trying to encourage such open-ended and undefined relationships between writers and readers in our practices of reading and writing could thus be another way of remaking the lived experience of scientific practice as community formation. In Jabri’s terms, ‘we’ could all be ‘strangers’ within the discipline *and* strangers within, as hesitant, anxious, ecstatic selves.

To work against the disciplinary and subjectivating pulls of discourse while staying relevant for the field, that is, to consciously ‘write in and against’ discourse, in this sense, may require more than just self-reflective questioning that might leave those disciplinary mechanisms untouched that contribute to the quiet, unnoticed formation of disciplinary identities and subjectivities in everyday academic practice. The practice of narrative writing in this thesis is an attempt to work towards and cultivate an alternative mode of being in discourse that provides an experience of

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Rajchman, *Michel Foucault*, 166-7.

⁹³Rajchman, “Ethics after Foucault”, 166.

⁹⁴Amore, “Foucault Against the Grain”, 275.

detachment from some of these disciplinary forces and structures by rendering them visible. Yet the ‘philosophical life’ and ethos of the late Foucault not only observes and diagnoses these subjectivating pulls in discourse but also strives to embrace a life that is actively resistant to these pulls by being constantly ‘other’. This aspect takes us back to the relationship of self to self, that is, to our relationships to ourselves and the ways in which we turn ourselves into subjects in discourse. In an attempt to actualize Foucault’s self-transformative ethos in this regard, the next Chapter turns back on the discursive emergence of this narrative ‘I’ in relation to my scholarly formation at the intersection of ‘sovereignty’ discourses and ‘Foucaultian IR’.

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