

## Chapter 6

### **‘Sovereignty’ and Narrative Writing: the Ethos of Sovereign ‘I’s (Conclusion)**

The ‘new beginning’ of this Chapter is a particularly difficult one. To carry on with my work in the late Foucault’s spirit of the care of the self and to give an account of the character of the narrative ‘I’ and the actual form, style and content of this experience book, as I am realizing now, is inseparable from both the purpose of the project and what it has achieved so far. *The way in which I am writing this thesis now* is a joint articulation of what preceded it in the very text of the thesis and at many other textual sites, and of what I have been trying to work towards and perform here, that is, what we could call the *politics* of writing this thesis. Importantly, the latter has continuously been forming and evolving with the former; the very practice of narrative writing has also served as the means to crystallize and actualize what the project does, what it can do and how it could proceed further. As such, narrative writing has been playing a highly important and fairly versatile role in this thesis. It served as the strategy and means of writing myself back into the otherwise detached and objectifying ‘omniscient’ prose of social science, furthering the aims of the project of reconstructing and remaking scientific experience. For this aim it has been providing a medium for my reflections on my academic formation as a ‘knower’ in IR in the form of accounts of the self. It has rendered the person writing, *me*, present in the text; it has allowed for a ‘living space’ for the ‘I’. It opened up a possibility to inhabit the usual academic writing practice differently, it transformed *writing*, and with that, it enabled me to cultivate a different relationship to myself as scholar and person, to academic practice and the discipline, and not least, to the world that accommodates all this, including the reader, *you*. And while it has been exposing and uncovering those unknowns that make me the person, the subject and self that I am now, as I read myself back and re-tell my stories in my writing the narrative ‘I’ keeps producing those unknowns that make me a person, a subject and self in continuous making. As such, narrative writing has been giving rise to and facilitating the formation of new scholarly subjectivities. This ‘I’ is already different from the ‘I’ of Chapter 1 and the series of other ‘I’s between now and then. Despite the appearance

of sameness, this ‘I’ is an expression of a different self, one that has been forming and transforming through a series of reflections, limit-experiences and detachments in the process of writing. Narrative writing has been conveying the emergence of these subtle, hardly noticeable differences that make up the actuality of the authorly self, of my narrative voice as it appears in the text, opening up similar possibilities for others who engage with these expressions. It has been creating an experience book for the both of us, about ourselves.

In any case, whatever the political implications of narrative writing might be for this thesis, ‘writing’ and ‘self’ are inextricably linked there, at multiple registers. An account of the actual characteristics of the narrative ‘I’, of how it *really* animates the actual writing process, how it works on this page, how it transforms me and what difference it makes on other fronts, such as how it can possibly make available a similar experience for you inevitably affects a whole range of other issues, too. It touches upon the stakes of this exercise, of what keeps me going and why *we* should care, what might be there in writing for academic critique *as* political action as well as for our experience of everyday life in the contemporary Western episteme. Yet just like Foucault’s ethos of self-transformation, the presence of a first person perspective in this thesis is *strategic*, and as such, it cannot take just any form. It comes from somewhere, it responds to something and can only move forward from that very site. Although some of the greatest assets of my writing practice have been those unknowns that are being added to me through the work of the narrative ‘I’, it is neither incidental, nor completely spontaneous that *this is the way I am writing now*.

**In many ways, my experimentations with narrative writing inspired by a Foucaultian critical ethos of self-transformation share some of Foucault’s concerns with the ‘self’.**

As Butler notes reading Foucault, “there is no making of oneself (*poiesis*) outside of a mode of subjectivation (*assujettissement*) and, hence, no self-making outside of the norms that orchestrate the possible forms that a subject may take”.<sup>1</sup> Yet in Foucault’s case, comments McGushin, this is not only about the inevitable traces of social norms left on the contours of what we might become as subjects and selves. For

---

<sup>1</sup>Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005), 17.

Foucault the ethos of self-making is *already* a response to the epistemic conditions that he diagnosed in his critiques of modernity.<sup>2</sup> Foucault's continuous efforts to make himself 'other' to himself, to induce limit-experiences that 'wrench' him from himself and eventually, to make himself his 'major work' in the process of writing his books is a choice that arises from the specific characteristics that he attributed to 'our historical present'.<sup>3</sup>

Veyne writes that Foucault's 'playing field' towards the end of his life became "the work of the self on the self", the idea of "styles of existence" that also played an important role in his 'inner life'.<sup>4</sup> As McGushin explains, the 'self' arises as a "new site of resistance to power" for Foucault, one that responds to what he analysed as the contemporary operations of relations of power and knowledge in terms of "exclusions, confinements, discipline, normalization, biopolitics, and the hermeneutics of the self".<sup>5</sup> That is, Foucault's turn to the 'self' was prompted by "the dangers inherent in being who we are" in the present, by those harmful modes of being and ways of doing that have become integral and in many ways, unnoticed in how we relate to ourselves and others.<sup>6</sup> McGushin offers the following summary of what makes Foucault's ethics of care both necessary and crucial for everyday life and its politics:

(1) Our present is defined by a proliferation of discourse about individuals and about the truth of these individuals because these discourses are linked to the functioning of disciplinary power, normalization, and biopolitics. (2) Talk about the self is "meaningless" in the sense that these discourses tend to replace the political and ethical meanings of the question, Who am I? and What is the best way to live? with disciplinary and biopolitical meanings. (3) An ethics of the self is therefore an urgent political task because the concern for the self, the formation of the self, and the truth of the self are all already permeated by relations and techniques of power – that is, the self as such is already political.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup>Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2007), xvii.

<sup>3</sup>Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault", in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1994), 241; Michel Foucault, "An Interview with Michel Foucault by Charles Ruas", in *Death and the Labyrinth: The World of Raymond Roussel* (New York: Continuum, 2006), 186.

<sup>4</sup>Paul Veyne, "The Final Foucault and his Ethics", *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993): 7.

<sup>5</sup>McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis*, xvii.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis*, xvii.

In this context, the “self”, explains Veyne, “taking itself as a work to be accomplished, could sustain an ethics that is no longer supported by either tradition or reason”.<sup>8</sup> The self could be seen an “artist of itself”, enjoying a sense of autonomy and freedom that it derives from its detachment from “the idea that between morality and society [...] there is an analytic or necessary link”.<sup>9</sup> That is, engaging the ‘self’ in this way means turning to the site where we are formed as subjects and taking possession of our formation (of our-selves) by critically engaging with how we came to be constituted as certain selves with certain identities and how we came to ‘know’ ourselves as subjects who are also objects of (scientific) knowledge. In this way, it is suggested, “it is no longer necessary to wait for the revolution to begin to realize ourselves: *the self is the new strategic possibility*”.<sup>10</sup>

Foucault’s ethics is therefore an immanent, ungrounded personal ethos that is also a form of *resistance*: it reintroduces an element of ‘care’ into that impoverished relationship between ‘subject’ and ‘truth’ that emanates from the all-pervasiveness of the Cartesian logic in our modernity that grounds itself in the mere activity of thinking. As Foucault powerfully shows in his late lectures, self-knowledge and the imperative to “know yourself” in ancient Greek practice were grounded in the ‘care of the self’, that is, in an attitude of “attending to oneself, being concerned about oneself”.<sup>11</sup> Foucault remakes his own experience of scholarship as a gesture of care towards himself by turning it into a site of self-formation that problematizes both what it means to ‘know’ and what it means to be a ‘knower’. His scholarly practice as ‘care of the self’, in this sense, expresses and performs a critique of those societal structures that his books, lectures and essays describe as their diagnosis of the present. The strategic character of Foucault’s turn to the ‘self’ lies with the challenge it poses to discourse: through refocusing on his relationship to himself and his becoming a philosopher in the final years he grounds himself in what exceeds discourse, and with that, he cultivates a form of being in discourse that pre-empts its subjectivating effects.

---

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. My emphasis.

<sup>11</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject: Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982* (New York: Picador, 2005), 2, 8.

**Importantly though, the ‘self’ is not an easily identifiable site for resistance to power; in fact, in many ways it is already heavily imbued with it.**

As McGushin notes, contemporary practices of government already offer different forms of truths about the ‘self’, and even more so, “power-knowledge relations *maintain* themselves through leading individuals to become certain kinds of selves: normalized and well-disciplined selves.”<sup>12</sup> As such, the ‘self’, as we might routinely think about ourselves, to a certain extent is also a ‘fabrication’: as McGushin writes, “relations of power and knowledge *subject* individuals to identities and lead them to recognize these identities as who they truly are.”<sup>13</sup> The ‘self’, for Foucault and also in my own experience, had to emerge *first* as an entity that can be experienced as something beyond ‘identity’, as an *excess* to these relations of power and knowledge which then, *in this way*, can be explored as a potential site of resistance through exploring its own ‘truth(s)’, maybe in terms of ‘care’, maybe through remaking the relationship between ‘subject’ and ‘truth’ in other ways.

Similarly, it took a long time to recognize the practice of writing *as* practice (rather than assuming that *this is how things are done*) and as a practice in which I am necessarily involved as a person (as in anything else I do), regardless of whether I allow this (that is, *myself*) to appear in the text or not. However, the grip of everyday (academic) automatisms started to loosen on ‘writing’ and ‘self’ at different times, through different processes and to varying degrees. It has already been a long journey to get to the stage at all where this experience book could be written and from where I could write an experience book as ‘I’, and importantly, as an ‘I’ that I also reflect on and engage with. As the various excerpts from earlier writings, such as a blog entry, an IPRS presentation, a PhD proposal, an ISA paper and an article draft showed, in the course of the past four years of my academic formation there have been numerous deviations from the conventional genre of the ‘omniscient social scientific prose’, deviations that served different purposes, produced different effects and not least, made me realize different things at different times about knowledge, subjectivity and self. When the first person perspective appeared in my writing practice at the limits of my thinking process in the terms of IR’s ‘known’ Foucault, I did not identify it as *the* “narrative ‘I’” of my writing. ‘I’ did not have a name; it was

---

<sup>12</sup>McGushin, *Foucault’s Askesis*, xviii. My emphasis.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

just there in the text as the expression of the return of the absent person whose absence I recognized through the recognition of myself as a particular kind of 'knower'. That 'I' was an expression of that liminal space in which I found myself, where I recognized my personal involvement in the production of knowledge yet I did not know how to take this recognition further, how to use this niche to turn back on my own constitution as a subject. As such, the 'I' didn't spring up from a sudden desire or creative impulse to write differently. It emerged from and through a series of limit-experiences that relate to those ways of thinking and forms of knowing that characterize academic practice and which we internalize and repeatedly perform throughout our everyday practices in academic life. The narrative 'I', *as it appears to me now*, is one particular expression of my ever-forming and transforming relationship to these academic structures and conventions and to myself, and its actual character is a momentary reflection of these relationships.

Yet the appearance of the first person perspective in my academic writing neither triggered an automatic re-focusing on the conventional academic genre as a choice, nor a new engagement with writing as a lived experience that has a force of its own. As Roxanne Lynn Doty's insights suggest, however, my belated engagement with what I do when I write and the actual process of producing texts is perhaps not very surprising given how engrained the routine of what we recognize as 'academic writing' might be in our regular academic practices, where 'writing' is also closely intertwined with what we recognize as 'knowledge' and how we 'know'. She writes:

In graduate school and throughout our careers we learn to adopt a certain style of writing, a certain way of being on the page, a certain *voice*. This is not necessarily a conscious decision. Often, we pick it up by osmosis. It's just the way to write for the journals and university presses. We, in turn, pass this along to our own students. This acquisition process is far from innocent. Graduate students learn fairly quickly that a dry, soulless voice is pretty much a requirement for an 'A' in many of their introductory graduate seminars. We read so much of a particular style of writing that it becomes absorbed into the fabric of our beings. We begin to define the world and humanity in terms such as rational actions and absolute versus relative gains. Other motivations and impulses are ignored or marginalized; left to the poets, the novelists, the essayists.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup>Roxanne Lynn Doty, "Maladies of Our Souls: Identity and Voice in the Writing of Academic International Relations", *Cambridge Review of International Studies* 17 (2004): 380.

Doty's description suggests a particular and mutually reinforcing relationship between writing style and the form of knowledge conveyed through that, that is, between the 'dry, soulless voice' of the detached, objective observer and the ways in which this scientific persona knows the world as its object of study, for instance through the lenses of 'rational actions' or 'absolute versus relative gains'. There seems to be a certain affinity between the Cartesian conditioning of our thinking processes that mark out objects of knowledge, establish their relations, substantiate true statements about them, look for information and meaning in what is said in discourse and a writing style that assumes and repeatedly enacts the separation between scholar and person, between the Cartesian 'knower' and where this particular subjectivity is created and grounded: ourselves. As Doty's passage indicates, in many ways we learn how to think like a detached, objective observer through the reading of texts that had already been written according to this logic of relating to the world and through learning how to reproduce the same logic, the same style when we write and in our relationships with ourselves. Through what Doty describes as the gradual and unnoticed 'acquisition' of a particular writing style in the beginning of our graduate studies we already start to think in the terms and mindset of this scholarly persona long before we would be able to notice it as such. We begin to think as someone who, as Inayatullah put it, is positioned in the 'precarious fiction' of a 'space beyond the world' for studying the world and not here, in that world and in the very process of trying to produce knowledge about it.<sup>15</sup> Through learning how to write academically we also internalize a way of thinking and knowing and with that, we inevitably become immersed in particular routines of relating to the world and to ourselves that constitute the 'truth' of the academic 'self' and constitute us as subjects of the experience of scientific practice.

I became increasingly aware of the interrelationships between 'writing' and 'knowledge' through a rupture in some of these routines that made me reflect on my lived experience of what Foucault called the 'strategic relationship' of knowledge 'in which man is placed' in the process of knowing.<sup>16</sup> My confusion over the results of my Foucaultian analysis of Slaughter's writings made me realize that what I understood as 'knowledge', especially knowledge related to 'theory' was far from

---

<sup>15</sup>Naeem Inayatullah, "Falling and Flying: An Introduction," in *Autobiographic International Relations: I, IR*, ed. Naeem Inayatullah (London: Routledge, 2011), 5.

<sup>16</sup>Michel Foucault, "Truth and Juridical Forms", in *Power: Essential Works Of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume 3*, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1994), 13-14.

being an abstract or isolated entity in my head, something that I could control and through which I could gain control over what I studied. The kind of knowledge I developed in trying to apply a Foucaultian framework to academic narratives on ‘sovereignty’ in an attempt to get closer to how contemporary forms of government work did affect my mode of being in that world, in *this* world. My efforts to enhance the conformity between what my Foucaultian framework laid out and what I found in Slaughter’s discourse produced a sense of ‘sameness’ between ‘theory’, ‘discourse’, and ‘world’, which made me reflect on myself as ‘knower’, giving rise to a narrative ‘I’ as the form and medium of these reflections. Importantly though, there was also *an experience of closure*. Slaughter’s discourse, the way I reconstructed it in terms of three different images which resonated well with the logic of ‘neoliberal governmentality’ left me relatively little space to uncover or discover more about any of these aspects, let alone my own personal involvement in them. Not that there would not have been more to see, read or think about. It was rather that feeling of completion that came with the task, which went beyond the necessary ‘narrative closure’ of the analysis, something that Noël Carroll describes as that “feeling of finality that is generated when all the questions saliently posed by the narrative are answered.”<sup>17</sup> Although I was fully aware of the fact that both the Foucaultian framework and Slaughter’s narrative were constructed around many contingencies (it would have been perfectly possible to concentrate on different aspects in both cases), the exercise stopped at striking an instantaneous balance between the various interconnections and resemblances of these two competing images of world politics where one served the purpose of the interpretation of the other. Most of my efforts were taken up in producing a transient ‘true statement’ of this kind as the end result of my analysis.

It is only now, in the course of writing this thesis and after having re-read Foucault’s writings from the perspective of how he negotiated being and writing in and against discourse that I began to understand more about the ways in which my discourse analysis of Slaughter’s writings confined me to the register of what discourse said and with that, how it narrowed down the scope of my ‘relations’ to the world, myself and others. While the sense of ‘sameness’ arising from the analysis was already apparent and even gave rise to a limit-experience regarding my

---

<sup>17</sup>Noël Carroll, “Narrative Closure”, *Philosophical Studies* 135 (2007): 17.



constitution as a 'knower', to make sense of the experience of the 'closure' required going back to Tesón's discourse and encountering what did not fit the Foucaultian framework in a new light.

**It was a certain logic that appeared as a feature of the practice of writing itself.**

As the editors of the special issue project for which the article draft analysing Slaughter's and Tesón's discourses was originally intended rightly pointed out, the analysis of Tesón's writings was still too much disconnected from the Foucaultian framework that was meant to show Tesón's arguments from a different angle. Now it seems clear to me that one of the reasons why I failed to bring the analysis close enough to the 'governmentality'/'sovereign power' lens was that what I sought to bring out from Tesón's texts, that is, what appeared to me as the most important aspect of these texts already pointed beyond the logic of this framework. What I noticed in Tesón's writings was already an excess to that which the concepts of IR's 'known' Foucault allowed capturing. There was something peculiar about the logic of Tesón's writing style and argumentation, the same logic that popped up in every one of his texts that I analyzed that inevitably touched upon the practical dimension of scholarly work, drawing our attention to what discourse actually does and what we might do in discourse rather than letting our gaze settle on what discourse says or describes. While I was caught up in analysing Slaughter's descriptions and projections of different ideas about a liberal (world) 'order' at the level of description, trying to draw out three distinct images of 'sovereignty' which I could then use as illustrations of the making of 'transactional reality', something that my Foucaultian framework already substantiated, what I found puzzling about Tesón's writings were the ways in which his images of world politics hung together and the unusually strong impact this made on me. There appeared to be a strange tension between the more 'humanistic' re-definition of 'sovereignty' and humanitarian intervention put forward in Tesón's writings and the way in which these texts were written. At that point, however, my analysis sought to relate Tesón's texts to the Foucaultian framework through emphasizing the subjectivating effects of sovereign power, drawing attention to the various subject positions unfolding from Tesón's representations of e.g. the Iraqi insurgence, the Iraqi people or the US as a benevolent 'intervenor'. I concentrated on how Tesón's discourse articulated

different modes of being for possible subjects by reconstructing the moves through which these categories and contents were established as particular forms of academic ‘knowledge’, yet as the analysis did not go much further than bringing out these very moves: this is what seems to have absorbed most of my attention. Reading back these passages from the article draft what appears to be the most important aspect are those few tentative remarks at the end of the analysis through which I tried to make sense of this particular register of Tesón’s writings and my own reader’s experience. What I identified as the practice of ‘writing sovereignly’ turned out to be key for my further engagements with writing as practice. The respective sections of the article draft analysing Tesón’s narrative on ‘sovereignty’ read as follows:

#### 4.2. Tesón’s redefinition of sovereignty: writing *sovereignly*

As it will be illustrated, Tesón’s account as governmental knowledge problematizes the foundation and exercise of sovereign power in a fashion that also exhibits a certain sovereign logic. While Slaughter’s narration constantly oscillated between empirical facts and their normative extrapolation, creating transactional realities for governmental purposes, Tesón’s writings tend to concern ‘things themselves’, that is, the status and position of potential subjects of governmental ordering. As the following analysis will illuminate, Tesón’s narrative moves between definitions, which are justified with regard to a particular moral standpoint, which, as it will be shown, is turned into an instrument for the legitimization of US intervention in Iraq. While the explicit incorporation of morality into legal argumentation represents a continuous appeal to (a regime of) ‘truth’, Tesón’s accounts seek to nail down the nature of ‘things’ by delineating subject positions as well as demarcating the boundaries of the political and legitimate political action through legal doctrines and their elaboration through their application to specific contexts. At the same time, this sovereign logic that resembles the ‘three cycles’ of sovereignty in its operations, also maintains reference to liberal governmental rationality in so far as it targets the protection of the liberal system of government and the liberal image of the individual. As it will be shown, in this light sovereignty becomes essentialized in its instrumentality in serving these higher ends.

In Tesón’s scholarly writings the individual and sovereignty are brought into a particular relationship through the incorporation of liberal theory’s ‘normative individualism’ into an image of a ‘morally legitimate international law’, according to which ‘the primary normative unit is the individual, not the state’.<sup>18</sup> The distinguished normative status of the individual presupposes that ‘respect for states is merely derivative of respect for persons’, and, going even further, that the exercise of power can only be morally legitimate if it is based on just representation, political consent, and respect for the basic rights of individuals, to name but a few of

---

<sup>18</sup>Fernando R. Tesón, *A Philosophy of International Law* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998), 1.

the main features of the liberal democratic structure.<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, the notion of sovereignty is redefined as ‘dependent upon the state’s domestic legitimacy’, where the latter is given a normative liberal content.<sup>20</sup>

The normative implications of such redefined notion of sovereignty are problematized in terms of the humanitarian intervention debate, in which case Tesón makes an argument for a ‘liberal case for humanitarian intervention’. Exclusion from the regime of ‘existential equality’ among states is established with reference to behaviour *as* deriving from particular regime types. As Tesón writes, ‘governments and others in power who seriously violate those rights undermine the one reason that justifies their political power, and this should not be protected by international law.’<sup>21</sup> In this sense, ‘the gross violation of human rights is not only an obvious assault on the dignity of persons, *but a betrayal of the principle of sovereignty itself*’, understood as a means to serve ‘the more fundamental ends’ of human rights.<sup>22</sup> Human rights violations and regime type are explicitly linked when ‘tyranny’ and ‘anarchy’ (cf. rogues and failed states) are identified as political forms that cannot invoke the protection of sovereignty on a moral basis: the former because of the nature of the rule, the latter because of the lack of it. According to the doctrine proposed, ‘*forcible* intervention to protect human rights’ is therefore permissible as ‘the proportionate international use or threat of military force, undertaken in principle by a liberal government or alliance, aimed at ending tyranny or anarchy, welcomed by the victims, and consistent with the doctrine of double effect.’<sup>23</sup>

As the above discussion shows, the doctrine of humanitarian intervention defined in this way instrumentalizes sovereignty for the ‘more fundamental ends’ of human rights and at the same time, different subject positions are delineated for the potential parties involved with reference to this instrumental essence of sovereignty: these are the morality of the intervener, the rationality of victims, the irrationality or immorality of potential contesters, such as the Iraqi resurgence or the allegedly immoral law of the UN, as well as the fanaticism of the 9/11 attackers.<sup>24</sup> The moves through which these subject positions are established and the legitimacy of power(s) and law(s) are reinforced resonate with what medieval theories described as the three cycles of sovereignty; however, the constant point of reference for these discursive acts are the structure and values of liberal government. The sovereign logic in which Tesón’s argumentation as an instance of governmental knowledge relates to life is no longer justified with reference to life itself (or in terms of sovereign power’s right to kill or disallow life), but a specific form of ‘good government’ is invoked, against which subjects are defined and arranged into an antagonistic relationship.

The discursive construction of the following four subject positions – intervener, victims, Iraqi insurgence, UN – expose these connections

---

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. 1, 2.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Fernando R. Tesón, “The Liberal Case for Humanitarian Intervention”, in *Humanitarian Intervention: Ethical, Legal and Political Dilemmas*, eds. Robert O. Keohane and J. L. Holzgrefe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 93.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. 110.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. 94-95.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. 93, 99.

between such sovereign logic and liberal government(ality) in the following way. As unfolding from Tesón's writings, liberal theory's emphasis on individual autonomy appears as a guarantee to ensure the morality of the intervening parties' behaviour, according to which 'the liberal conception of state legitimacy will guide the correct behaviour of the intervener. He must abide by the general duty to promote, create, or restore institutions and practices under which the dignity of persons will be preserved.'<sup>25</sup> The consent of the 'victims' of targeted societies is already assumed through the postulation of Rawlsian rationality, according to which:

rational persons *within a state* will agree, I believe, to allow humanitarian intervention, not knowing what place they will have in that society. These parties know the state to which they belong. And rational *global* parties who *do not* know what state they belong to will likewise agree to a general rule allowing humanitarian intervention in appropriate cases. No rational person will agree to a *blanket sovereignty principle* banning intervention because they may end up trapped as victims of tyranny or anarchy.<sup>26</sup>

What is implied in this passage is that humanitarian intervention, even if it entails risking one's life, is still a better option than having to carry on living as 'victims of tyranny or anarchy'. A similar logic applies to the justification of human costs, in which case, writes Tesón, 'the goal of saving lives and restoring human rights and justice is compelling enough to authorize humanitarian intervention even at the cost of innocent lives.'<sup>27</sup> In a similar vein, Tesón's commentary on the US's 2003 war on Iraq, which he sees 'morally justified as a humanitarian intervention', labels the Iraqi resistance as a 'criminal enterprise', one that is 'fighting an unjust war'.<sup>28</sup> According to Tesón, the Iraqi resistance's 'purpose is to restore the brutal rule of Hussein in Iraq (or something like it) and, more generally, to defeat the forces of democracy and human rights and install totalitarian, premodern political structures.' Political agency and the possibility of legitimate contestation are removed from the narrative by the insinuation that 'these insurgents are, most likely, either the accomplices in Hussein's past atrocities or allies in the terrorist war against the Coalition and the West; therefore, *their* opposition to intervention does not count.'<sup>29</sup> The grounds for possible legal contestation are denied too, when Tesón dismisses the law of the UN system as lacking morality based on the differences in political structures within the Security Council. Regarding the question of international support, writes Tesón, 'while approval by the community of democratic states (whether or not the Security Council also approves) is preferable, sometimes unauthorized intervention by democratic governments is morally justified.' 'The war in Iraq', it is added, 'is one such case.'<sup>30</sup> Morality in this case is contrasted with law by the assertion

---

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. 99.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. 121. My emphasis.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid 117.

<sup>28</sup>Fernando R. Tesón, "Ending Tyranny in Iraq", *Ethics & International Affairs* 19 (2005): 2.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. 16.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. 17.

that ‘authorization by the Security Council is, like voting in the UN General Assembly, a mere *semblance* of process.’<sup>31</sup> Tesón contends that the procedures in the UN organs only demonstrate ‘the *illusion* of democratic legitimacy’, since

lawyers like process, any process. Maintaining the *forms* of law is important to them, so if there is any kind of international process in place that involves voting, for example, then to them only this process can yield legitimate decisions. But the moral currency of any process is surely related to the credentials of those who participate.<sup>32</sup>

References to liberal and authoritarian regime types, as shown above, seem to define the status and behaviour of the hypothetical parties to humanitarian intervention, where the liberal intervener is the only actor capable of political action. However, this line of argumentation reaches a hard case when it comes to the assessment of the 2003 intervention in Iraq. As the following section shows, the practice of definition is deployed as a strategy to resolve the contradiction between the expectations of liberal morality and the facts of the actual situation by continuously adjusting the framework of interpretation. Tesón’s defence of US acts in Iraq, as well as his depiction of the 9/11 attackers as evil explicitly target the protection and reinforcement of the liberal democratic structure and the image of the liberal individual, which re-emerge as ‘things’, as ends in themselves. While the questionable motives of the US are accommodated with the increasing personification of the US government, the 9/11 attackers are dehumanized as evil and framed as the enemy outside of liberal democracy. In these moves, as the following sections will illustrate, the connection between the argumentation’s essentializing sovereign logic and its reference to liberal government has been reversed: the latter is turned into a subject in relation to (non-)life (in terms of behaviour and as the target of an inhuman enemy.).

In accounting for the intervener’s behaviour in Iraq, Tesón introduces the distinction between intention and motive, where only intention is deemed relevant for the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. As Tesón writes, ‘if a government wages a war with the *intention* to rescue victims of tyranny and does in fact liberate those victims, than the intervention is humanitarian (and thus eligible under the doctrine), even if its motive is self-interested or otherwise nonhumanitarian.’<sup>33</sup> At the same time, it is asserted that ‘what the intervener *does* is the best evidence of its intention’, that is, it is the ‘the humanitarian outcome’ that should be taken into consideration in assessing the legitimacy of the intervention. In the light of these definitional adjustments the existence of a second, non-humanitarian rationale for the intervention may explicitly be acknowledged, such as ‘a grand plan that apparently underlies American strategy after the September 11 2001 attacks’, writes Tesón, ‘which can be summarized in one sentence: Defeating the enemies of the United States requires promoting liberal

---

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. 18.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. 18. My emphasis.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. 6.

reforms in the Middle East, and, indeed, the entire world.<sup>34</sup> Ultimately, it is explained, ‘the humanitarian action is this: the intent to remove a vicious dictator, plus removing him, plus not allowing this act of liberation to be *destroyed* by behaviour driven by any nonhumanitarian motive.’<sup>35</sup>

Moving on to the invocation of the figure of the evil, Tesón’s narrative envisions a fight ‘between good and evil’, in which evil is defined as the enemy of liberalism itself. The figure of such enemy resolves the liberty vs. security debate since ‘against those who threaten our lives, our property, and our free institutions’, writes Tesón, ‘a war in self-defense is as much a direct defense of persons as a defense of democratic institutions’.<sup>36</sup> In this context, ‘the morally right thing to do is to defeat the enemies’, argues Tesón, and the path to action is paved by the introduction of two sets of concepts: physical and moral threats, as well as two categories of evil: ‘opportunistic evil’ and that of ‘principled evildoers’.<sup>37</sup> A moral threat is substantiated when in addition to the physical threat, ‘the perpetrators act in the name of illiberal principles or values’, which, however, is already perceived as ‘a profound attack’ against the values of American democracy.<sup>38</sup> Evil is introduced through the need for protection of liberal values: ‘an intent to destroy liberal values is an *evil* intent’, argues Tesón in relation to the attacks of 9/11.<sup>39</sup> Evil, however, displays two distinct rationalities: that of the ‘opportunistic evil’, such as a bank robber, who decides to break the law in pursuit of a rational purpose, and the case of ‘principled evildoers’, illustrated by the figure of the suicide bomber, who ‘act out of a maxim, a principle, albeit an evil one.’ ‘Principled evildoers’, seen as the enemies of democracy, are depicted as irrational, as the negation of the logic of democratic politics: ‘most principled evildoers are fanatics’, asserts Tesón. The fight against principled evildoers, such as the September 11 attackers in the author’s interpretation, ‘is a fight of good against evil’.<sup>40</sup>

This fight, as it unfolds from the argument, is also a ‘fight *for* human rights’, which, in fact, reveals the emptied out content of ‘normative individualism’, leaving behind an abstract idea centred around a notion of individualism that has lost its human referent.<sup>41</sup> The emptying out of the liberal structure and its simultaneous framing as value expose one of the ways in which sovereign power may take on an alternative function within governmental technologies, one that not only intervenes to manage the failures of self-government but also affirms the existence and reality of governmentality. Ultimately, Tesón’s representations can be read as governmental problematizations of sovereign power, where sovereign power appears more as a logic than a particular object of knowledge. Tesón writes about the normative consequences of the redefinition of sovereignty, but even more so, he writes *sovereignly*. This particular style of writing seeks to give content to ‘things’ through a practice of their continuous

---

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. 11.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid. 70-1.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. 71.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. 71.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. 74.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid. 76.

(re)definition, which, on the one hand, performs what Nadesan identifies as the normalizing function of sovereign power as dispersed in societal relations, for instance, specifying standards of normality in terms of academic knowledge. On the other hand, such a practice of writing also carves out discursive space for the more robust exercise of sovereign power on the international plane, as it prefigures particular forms of sovereign action through the discursive operation of the ‘three cycles’ of subjectivation, legitimacy and law.

As I am reading back these passages now the multiple registers at which Tesón’s texts (just like any other text) can be read becomes much clearer. ‘Writing sovereignly’ appears as a notion that captures at least two distinct ways to engage with scholarly contributions from the perspective of ‘writing’: one perceives ‘writing’ in terms of the power effects of representations and the other one, the one that made me reflect on my own practice of writing, considers it as the actual process through which representations are created but also as an activity that also *expresses* something through its particular mode of being, through *how it is done*.

### **The first sense of ‘writing’ is a familiar one in IR.**

For instance, some of the writings of David Campbell and Cynthia Weber powerfully show how the ‘state’, ‘sovereignty’, ‘Foreign Policy’, ‘national identity’ and its ‘threats’ are constantly ‘written’ and ‘rewritten’ through the continuous (re)inscription of different representations, security objectives, national purposes, etc. in foreign policy texts as well as in academic accounts that aim to fix their actual meaning and content.<sup>42</sup> Here ‘writing’ appears as an ancillary (and perhaps necessary) practice related to contemporary statehood, a practice that, in Foucaultian terms, gives rise to different manifestations of the power/knowledge nexus in international politics. As Campbell notes, “the constant articulation of danger through foreign policy” is the “condition of possibility” of the state’s identity and it is therefore through “the writing of threat” that “the very domains of inside/outside, self/other and domestic/foreign – those moral spaces made possible by the ethical borders of identity as much as the territorial boundaries of the state – are

---

<sup>42</sup>See David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and Politics of Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 33; Cynthia Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty: Intervention, the State and Symbolic Exchange* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3.

constituted”.<sup>43</sup> Campbell highlights the significance of ‘writing’ as a matter of ‘scripting’ for instance in relation to post-second World War US foreign policy documents, where, as he writes,

just as the source of danger has never been fixed, neither has the identity which it was said to threaten. The contours of this identity have been the subject of constant (re)writing: not rewriting in the sense of changing the meaning, but rewriting in the sense of inscribing something so that that which is contingent and subject to flux is rendered more permanent.<sup>44</sup>

In a similar vein, Weber’s work emphasizes that both the ‘state’ and ‘sovereignty’ are signs without a referent and as such, she writes,

to speak of the sovereign state at all requires one to engage in the political practice of stabilizing this concept’s meaning. Thought of in this way, sovereignty marks not the location of the foundational entity of international relations theory but a site of political struggle. This struggle is the struggle to fix the meaning of sovereignty in such a way as to constitute a particular state - *to write the state* - with particular boundaries, competencies and legitimacies available to it.<sup>45</sup>

For Weber the question of humanitarian intervention then becomes one of asking “How is the meaning of sovereignty fixed or stabilized historically via practices of international relations theorists and practices of political intervention? In other words, how do practices of theorists and diplomats stabilize the meaning of sovereignty and, by default, write the state?”<sup>46</sup> Here the production and effects of representations and ‘writing’ become synonymous: as Weber writes, “sovereign foundations are produced as signifieds in order to make representational projects possible, in order to allow sovereignty and the state to refer to some original source of truth. This is a fundamental way in which power and knowledge function in a logic of representation”.<sup>47</sup> Campbell makes a similar point regarding the permanent need to produce, that is, to (re)write or script the state’s identity through particular representations of threat. As he notes,

---

<sup>43</sup>Campbell, *Writing Security*, 13, 33.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. vii.

<sup>45</sup>Weber, *Simulating Sovereignty*, 3. My emphasis.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid. 123.



states are never finished as entities; the tension between the demands of identity and the practices that constitute it can never be fully resolved, because the performative nature of identity can never be fully revealed. The paradox inherent to their being renders states in permanent need of reproduction: with no ontological status apart from the many and varied practices that constitute their reality; states are (and have to be) always in a process of becoming. For a state to end its practices of representation would be to expose its lack of prediscursive foundations; stasis would be death.<sup>48</sup>

For both Campbell and Weber ‘writing’ appears as the process through which representations and their power effects give historically specific meaning and content to contemporary statehood and sovereignty, its identity, threats, as well as the accompanying moral spaces and categories, such as the inside/outside or self/other distinctions. It is in this sense that the range and economy of representations at work in Tesón’s texts, such as the various categories of subject positions unfolding from different images of the ‘victim’, the ‘intervenor’ or ‘evil’ and their mode of being defined in relation to rationality, intentions or motivations can be seen as carving out ‘discursive space for the more robust exercise of sovereign power’ and as prefiguring new ‘forms of sovereign action’ in the international plane. Tesón’s representations of war and humanitarian intervention in this sense are illustrative of the ways in which modern experiences of war, and in particular, of ‘liberal war’ are constituted – *written* – in and through academic discourses: these depictions give rise to particular forms of knowledge about the nature, necessities and moral character of contemporary liberal politics, its enemies and allies, feeding into the intellectual dimension of foreign policy making and the legitimization of state power through their explicit support of US foreign policy. By virtue of the strong political opinion they express, Tesón’s writings easily lend themselves to Foucaultian analyses of power/knowledge that interrogate how the ‘reality’ that scholarly analysis refer to is partly written by scholarly discourses themselves and as such, what the implications are of the ‘politics’ of academic knowledge for the actual practices of contemporary government and the exercise of sovereign power. These are the kind of connections that my Foucaultian framework was designed to illuminate in Tesón’s account and what my own involvement in my *savoir* seems to have sabotaged to a certain extent. The analysis brought out the respective subject positions and categories yet instead of re-embedding them into a wider socio-political context, something that the usual

---

<sup>48</sup>Campbell, *Writing Security*, 12.

application of the power/knowledge trope requires, it made a tentative attempt towards engaging with the very logic of these representations and what this logic might *express*.

**‘Writing sovereignly’ here gestured towards the practice of writing and its subjective, lived experience.**

My reader’s encounter with the logic of continuous (re)definition that animated Tesón’s discourse pointed beyond what discourse actually said, exposing a curious disconnect between Tesón’s arguments and what reading his texts felt like, the kind of experience conveyed through his discourse. In his articles and books Tesón argues for the redefinition of ‘sovereignty’ in terms of its instrumentalization for the ‘more fundamental ends’ of human rights. This, in the light of the war on terror, culminates in an explicit endorsement of a ‘fight *for* human rights’ as a ‘fight between good and evil’ that empties out the ‘human’ referent of the former and reasserts the exercise of that image of sovereign power that the redefinition, at least in relation to other states, sought to overwrite in the first place. Contradictory and circular this argumentation may be, but what makes Tesón’s texts particularly hard to read is not only the aggressive character of the claims put forward but also *the way in which* these claims are developed and made effective, and what this demands from the reader.

Tesón’s texts operate through the definition and subsequent redefinition of concepts, subject positions and their relationships vis-à-vis each other. In this process meaning is nailed down as closely as possible, straight lines demarcate clearly definable categories, their hierarchical order is made straightforward and when some of these aspects may no longer fit the foreign policy actions or ambitions of the US, new ones are introduced so that the old categories can be stretched in a way that is appropriate for both the purposes of Tesón’s writing and the actual foreign policy context. The commentary offered on the humanitarian character of the invasion of Iraq in 2003 is a case in point: there Tesón introduces a new distinction between ‘motives’ and ‘intentions’ in order to accommodate the intervenor’s ‘nonhumanitarian’ motives within what was put forward earlier as ‘the liberal case for humanitarian intervention’. While my scholarly persona, a detached observer of the same world presumably, was able to engage with the substantive truth claims laid out in Tesón’s texts and their argumentative logic, as the person behind this scholarly

persona, as the reader of these texts I found it infinitely more difficult to keep going, to stay engaged. In fact, this aspect, the lived experience of engaging with these writings even prevented me from getting too far with their scientific analysis. Reading Tesón's books and articles made me feel angry and strangely perplexed at the same time. As a reader I am being told what to think in these texts, I am left with no room to think for myself, and while I am reduced to passivity I am also being drafted for a particular cause. There is no space to argue, there is nowhere to hide. It is nearly impossible to engage with these arguments without, to a certain extent, also *accepting* this bizarre map of world order that is being drawn and redrawn in discourse, which is now being repeated, enacted and a little further entrenched in someone's thinking (my thinking) *one more time* as I go along reading the text and try to analyse it. Here what I came to experience in my own subjectivity was what Said described as the 'effectiveness' of discourse.<sup>49</sup> Becoming aware of my feelings about working with these texts, which clearly went beyond the effects of what discourse *said*, made me also more conscious of how I was being nudged towards taking up a particular subject position in the process, that of a reader who only participates through being reduced to non-participation. With some irony, we could say that I found myself entering the order of subject categories laid out in Tesón's texts as the subject that has never been given a specific name but whose presence has always been assumed in the writing process. And while my brain was still firing ideas regarding how Tesón's lines of argumentation could be deconstructed and its contradictions exposed, a quiet voice in my mind kept repeating that there was no point in going into the text any further *like this*, there was nothing I can do *here*, from this place.

So I took a step back from the text and left the analysis where it was (and where I was at) at that point, making a few tentative remarks regarding what 'writing sovereignly', a notion that spontaneously came to me when some distance arose between me and the text, could possibly refer to and imply for a more practical and more everyday life-centred engagement with Tesón's texts. As I am writing these passages now it becomes clear that it is *in this subjective sense* that 'writing sovereignly' goes beyond an understanding of 'writing' that only concentrates on the ways in which the power effect of certain representations and narrative images may

---

<sup>49</sup>Edward Said, "An Ethics of Language", *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* 4 (1974): 34-35.

feed into contemporary practices of government. It offers a way of thinking about ‘writing’ that exceeds the conventional remit of power/knowledge analysis by bringing the ‘subject’ in as something lived, as someone living who is affected by what discourse says and does in the immediacy of her encounter with it. It is at this register that Tesón’s writings not only speak about but also *invoke sovereign power and render it present* in that intersubjective space that is created between writer and readers in the course of writing and reading. The lived experience of my reading of these texts is an experience of an encounter between subjectivity (my own) and power, of the formation of subjectivity in discourse in relation to various forms of (sovereign) pulls and (personal) resistance. As such, the tentative reference I made to what Nadesan identified as the normalizing and standard-setting function of sovereign power dispersed in societal relations through the work of ‘biopolitical authorities’ such as ‘psychiatrists, psychologists teachers, social workers’ could perhaps be understood in more concrete terms, too. It could encompass those encounters and micro-sites of subjectivity formation in everyday (academic) life, too, where our understanding of the ‘normal’ is shaped not only in relation to what we know about the world but *how* that knowledge is produced and with that, *how* our subjectivities as ‘knowers’ are constituted in the process.<sup>50</sup>

As it appears now, my reflections on my reader’s experience in relation to Tesón’s work manoeuvred me into what Foucault described as that ‘obscure’ and ‘confused’ ‘middle region’ of ‘order’, where ‘order’ is exposed in its making between the “already ‘encoded’ eye” of the automatisms of everyday life and the register of “scientific theories and interpretations”.<sup>51</sup> It is from this space in-between those thoughts that we no longer think about and those thoughts that have already been solidified as ‘scientific knowledge’ that we can experience both that ‘order exist’ and the effects of our thoughts in our own involvement in this process: that we ‘think’ and that our thoughts turn us into subjects of different kinds. As such, engaging with Tesón’s discourse from the perspective of what it *expresses* rather than what it says is another limit-experience: it requires us to ask ourselves what is provoked in us as readers in encountering the text and to reflect on that perhaps

---

<sup>50</sup>Majia Holmer Nadesan, *Governmentality, Biopower, and Everyday Life* (London: Routledge, 2008), 26.

<sup>51</sup>Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (London: Routledge, 2009), xii.

obscure and confusing compound of thoughts and feelings which, at any rate, problematize both that we ‘assume’ and what we ‘know’.

Accessing this ‘middle region’ where order is (re)made and where we are formed as subjects through this particular, subjective experience of reading I had of Tesón’s work is what prompted me to engage with ‘writing’ as a practice. I began to see writing not only in its operations as a vehicle for discourse but also as something that exerts a force of its own, affecting us, readers and writers in a much more immediate and intimate fashion than the mere content and meaning of words and statements. This ‘middle region’, the site where ‘order’ and subjectivities are in formation, in this sense, is crucial and strategic for writing ‘in’ and ‘against’ discourse in a Foucaultian ethos. We may not only be required to take up a more detached position in relation to what discourse says but also to actively engage with what discourse does in terms of what it expresses. This calls upon us, both as readers and writers, to problematize the very practice of writing as a process that continuously produces the lived experience of reading and writing. As such, it is here that ‘writing’ can be considered as a means and a medium for cultivating a different mode of being in discourse.

In this sense, to reflect on the logic and style of Tesón’s texts (and not only on their content) as well as to look into how sovereign power is rendered present in writing, what places and positions ‘writing sovereignly’ designates for us, readers, is an opening to remake everyday experience through a different understanding of the stakes of writing. Foucault’s practice of writing is illustrative in this regard: the *History of Madness*, for instance, conveys a radically different experience, which not only emanates from the entirely different subject matter but also from the style (and politics) of writing. The book renders ‘madness’ present: ‘madness’ speaks through the subject who writes and in this way, escapes ‘reason’ and that logic of rationality that silenced it in the first place. As such, a “still undivided experience of the division” between ‘madness’ and ‘reason’ is fictioned that helps us detach from both the ‘knowledge’ that constitutes ‘madness’ as a modern experience and our identities as its ‘knowers’.<sup>52</sup> It is therefore in the same register of experience where both the experience book and Tesón’s text affect us as persons and subjects: it is in this ‘middle region’ where one of them induces desubjectivation and self-transformation

---

<sup>52</sup>Michel Foucault, *History of Madness* (London: Routledge, 2010), xxvii.

while the other nudges us towards taking up a passive, governable and controllable subject position. In Foucault's and Deleuze's terms, this is where "actuality" emerges, where things are 'at work', 'in the middle'.<sup>53</sup> This is where we are forming in our encounters with texts, be they of any kind.

**It was this experience that made me reflect on my own involvement in writing as *the person who writes*.**

As I came to realize, 'writing' can be both a 'scripting' device of contemporary forms of government and a site of resistance and ethical transformation that may, in Foucault's words, stray us afield from those parts of ourselves that embed us within the grids of the contemporary epistemic order. While the very same practice of (academic) writing, *the act that we write*, can reinforce and re-enact a sovereign order, it can also make us see, just as the Chinese encyclopaedia did in Foucault's case, that 'order exists' and there we may "discover that these orders are perhaps not the only possible ones or the best ones".<sup>54</sup> It is in the space of such discoveries that we may be able to detach from these very structures; it is here where we may catch, *experience* ourselves as *the* 'actuality' emerging in this move, an 'actuality' that is no longer that much absorbed in particular ways of thinking, knowing, being. It is here, in Rajchman's words, that after reflecting on "who we have been constituted to be" we may "ask what we might become" and take the opportunity to cultivate an "ethics of 'choosing' the form of experience through which we constitute ourselves".<sup>55</sup>

Yet again, the stakes involved in our everyday practices of (academic) writing lead us back to the realm of subjectivity and the self. Writing and subjectivity, self and resistance all seem to come together in this 'middle region', at the register of the lived experience of what discourse expresses and how we are in discourse. This makes me wonder: how can writing in scientific discourse be turned into a site of resistance? How can it feed into the formation of subjective experience in a fashion that it embraces the self as a 'new strategic possibility'? How can I write in a way that facilitates a sense of 'autonomy and freedom' from 'tradition' and 'reason', that is, the promise and purpose of the 'care of the self'? And importantly, how can all

---

<sup>53</sup>Gilles Deleuze, "Breaking Things Open, Breaking Words Open", in *Negotiations (1972-1990)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 86.

<sup>54</sup>Foucault, *The Order of Things*, xxii.

<sup>55</sup>John Rajchman, "Ethics after Foucault", *Social Text* 13/14 (1986): 166-167.

this be done while staying relevant for the discipline, its subject matter and scholarly community?

Jabri writes about the difficulties of negotiating one's own involvement in the process of writing when it comes to writing about war, both in relation to the discipline and the actual condition of 'liberal war'. For Jabri, writing *about* war is already the 'writing *of* war', which has been performed in many different ways in the discipline. As she comments,

There is much variation in the writing of war. Those writers that dominate aspire either to scientific status or to formulaic applications of the just war doctrine. What connects these renditions is the element of instrumentality: where word is unproblematically converted to action, intent to prosecution. Another option is to see war in its historical and sociological context, recognising war and its place in literary representation. Doing so comes closer to conveying the experience of war, its situatedness in the lived experience of the individual self. In seeking to make sense of war, those not confined to disciplinary boundaries, those of us who see the complicities of the discourses of war in its enactment, wish to somehow write of that which these discourses exclude, and bring to the fore questions relating to the production of subjectivity and war's place in this production.<sup>56</sup>

Jabri sees 'critical reflection' as 'political practice' that explicitly engages with 'the subject that writes', especially in relation to its potential of subverting 'discourses of war'.<sup>57</sup> Yet, as she notes, the "subject engaged in critical reflection", too, is the "subject engaged in discourse, the subject constituted in relations of power-knowledge" and as such, the critic, 'the subject that writes' is also a subject embedded in the contemporary matrix of government.<sup>58</sup> The important question then becomes: "When war is used as a technology of global control, how do we articulate a presence that is other to this totalising practice?"<sup>59</sup> That is, how is it possible to be present in the text as the 'subject that writes' without reproducing those governmental and sovereign logics that turn us into subjects of different kinds?

---

<sup>56</sup>Vivienne Jabri, "Critical Thought and Political Agency in Time of War", *International Relations* 19 (2005): 70.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. 70, 71.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. 74.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid.

Jabri suggests engaging with the “addition of the dimension of ‘self’ to power and knowledge”, that is, with “the emergence of the subject as self” as “the practice of self on self”.<sup>60</sup> She writes:

To suggest a relationship between critique and politics is to bring forth the subject of politics, the subject engaged in ‘writing the self’, but this is a subject that recognises her or his constitution in relation to the present and hence to history. Critical thought is then a form of writing of self, a writing of self in time of war.<sup>61</sup>

‘Writing the self’, in this sense, emerges as a ‘strategic possibility’ in opposition to the ‘discourses of war’ and perhaps all other discursive practices that ‘write’ the ‘state’, its ‘identity’ and ‘threats’. ‘Writing the self’, as Jabri’s description suggests, turns the subject inwards and brings into focus her constitution in relation to the political conditions of war she writes about, in the process of writing. As she writes, “writing, for Foucault, ‘offsets the dangers of solitude; it exposes what one has said or thought to a possible gaze’” and as such, as the ‘writing of self’ makes the ‘unspeakable speakable’, it closes off the ‘inside’ from the outside (of war) and at the same time, it opens up connections with others, sharing the “difficulty in bearing things which are taking place”.<sup>62</sup> In this sense, the ‘writing of self’ also *writes* the self by making the ‘inside’ emerge as ‘an uncapturable excess to the outside’.<sup>63</sup>

While what Jabri develops as the notion of the ‘writing the self’, that is, what Jabri writes *about* as ‘writing the self’ may already disrupt our thinking about both critical thought and war, it brings the question acutely to the fore: how can ‘writing the self’ be performed and enacted in the actual process of (academic) writing? How can it work as resistance, for instance, in relation to practices of ‘writing sovereignly’, which necessarily brings into focus not only what discourse says but what writing *expresses*?

**This brings to mind my explorations of narrative writing in IR from about a year ago.**

---

<sup>60</sup>Ibid. 76.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid. 76.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. 77.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid. 76-77.



In the summer of 2011 I put together a long literature review of what I identified as ‘autoethnographic’ and ‘autobiographic’ approaches to IR, mostly based on a 2010 forum in the *Review of International Studies* and Naeem Inayatullah’s edited volume *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR*. At that time though I wasn’t entirely sure why I needed to work myself through these accounts. “Could I write like this?” and perhaps more importantly, “Would I want to write like this?” – I was asking myself, not that, with hindsight, there would be any standardizable norms or rules as to how one may write ‘autoethnographically’ or ‘autobiographically’.

What I was interested in back then, as I can see this now more clearly, were the different representations of the ‘self’ in the practice of narrative writing. What I sought to draw out from these texts were the ways in which the ‘self’ appeared as an object of reflection for these authors either in abstract terms or in their own practice of writing in which they were also writing the self back into their academic texts as ‘I’. I concentrated on the authors’ moves through which I could reconstruct particular ‘images’ of the self; at that point my focus on writing was devoted to the purpose of analysing representations. In my literature review I identified five different notions of selfhood as authorly presence in the writings of Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker, Elizabeth Dauphinée, Roxanne Lynn Doty, Oded Löwenheim and Naeem Inayatullah. As the following summary of my findings illustrates, what I had in mind was something like a spectrum that mapped the authors’ positions in an imaginary ‘science’ vs. ‘person’ debate:

The sections below provide illustrations for five different accounts of authorship, selfhood and the practice of writing in IR scholarship. Starting with Roland Bleiker and Morgan Brigg’s case for autoethnographic IR, what we can witness is the emergence of a certain *scientific self* and an approach that makes use of the self as a methodological tool, as a source of additional knowledge and information that may result in *better* science. Reversing the relation between self and science, the rest of the accounts seem to understand science as a factor that shapes human experience, foregrounding the ‘I’ of the researcher and reflecting back on science from a personal point of view. The personal in these cases stands for itself, only its significance and politics are framed according to the different purposes of these projects. In Roxanne Lynn Doty’s and Elizabeth Dauphinée’s pieces the personal appears as the possibility of human connection with the other, those human beings who are represented and in most cases, objectified as a certain category of for example, victims, refugees, or collateral damage on the pages of IR scholarship. The vistas leading to the other, however, are different in these cases as well. While Dauphinée

speaks about a *perpetrator self*, the active agent of epistemic violence whose responsibility for what the other demands is put in front, Doty struggles to retrieve a voice lost in the disciplinary rituals of IR, recasting herself as a *desiring*, ‘complex writing subject in process’. Other accounts carry on exposing the self with an even stronger focus and intensity on *selfhood*, which to some extent, necessarily backgrounds the other. Oded Löwenheim’s narrative exposes the tension between two selves, an IR scientist and a war victim, emerging as a *split* writing subject. Naeem Inayatullah’s introduction to his edited volume explicitly concentrates on the ‘I, IR’ aspect of the title, looking into how IR scholarship is prompted by personal experience, trauma and motivations arising from certain encounters. The authorly presence in this case exposes a *wounded and needing self*, one that writes out of itself how particular events and life experience motivated a turn to IR, and how IR impacted on their subjectivity in turn. Tracing the transitions from the image of a ‘scientific self’ to that of the ‘wounded and needing self’, the following sections will look into the processes through which the author-self emerges in these contexts.<sup>64</sup>

My analysis of Brigg and Bleiker’s account illustrates the ‘science’ end of the spectrum where the personal is brought into the writing process only to reinforce and solidify (rather than challenge or destabilize) a scientific understanding of both ‘knowledge’ and the accompanying scholarly subjectivity of the ‘knower’. What the following sections also bring out is my relationship to the text back then, as an illustration of the moves through which I sought to uncover an image of the self through its representations at the level of what discourse says.

For Morgan Brigg and Robert Bleiker the question of the ‘self’ in IR emerges as a problem of *scientific knowledge*. As they write, “research is all about a person’s engagement with an issue”, yet IR’s dismissive attitude towards the researcher’s personal involvement raises the question: “is such a strong denial of the central agent in the research process really *appropriate*? Or could it be that the very drive to be ‘scientific’ produces incomplete knowledge and, by extension, *unscientific* results?”<sup>65</sup> The ‘self’ in this account appears as a yet uncharted source of information and as such, it prompts a predominantly

---

<sup>64</sup>Literature review (5<sup>th</sup> September 2011) of Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker, “Autoethnographic International Relations: Exploring the Self as a Source of Knowledge”, *Review of International Studies* 36 (2010): 779-798; Elizabeth Dauphinée, “The Ethics of Autoethnography”, *Review of International Studies* 36 (2010): 799-818; Roxanne Lynn Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls: Identity and Voice in the Writing of Academic International Relations”, *Cambridge Review of International Studies* (2004): 377-392; Oded Löwenheim, “The ‘I’ in IR: an Autoethnographic Account”, *Review of International Studies* 36 (2010): 1023-1045; Naeem Inayatullah, “Falling and Flying: an Introduction”, in: *Autobiographic International Relations: I, IR*, ed. Naeem Inayatullah (London: Routledge, 2011), 1-12.

<sup>65</sup>Morgan Brigg and Roland Bleiker, “Autoethnographic International Relations”, 780. My emphasis.

methodological engagement: Brigg and Bleiker concentrate on the possibilities of the “methodological uses of the self” and the ways in which “the self can become a more legitimate source of knowledge about International Relations”.<sup>66</sup> The self enters the discussion through the function of the *author* “whose role cannot be erased”. The author, emphasize Brigg and Bleiker, is *not*

a mere messenger, framing events at their time and place of occurrence and carrying them to a far-off destination, where they unwrap and shine in their original brightness. The voyage cannot be erased, and neither can the framing, the fading, the restoration work. To erase the author is to erase potentially important insights: it leaves us with less knowledge rather than more.<sup>67</sup>

The author-self is therefore expected to provide access to the *knowledge* of how knowledge is produced: according to the authors, “if the author is integral part of producing and conveying knowledge, then we should, by consequence, embark on more systematic attempts to understand how knowledge is constituted through the self.”<sup>68</sup> Through writing the author back into the text, Briggs and Bleiker write, a “fuller spectrum of knowledge” can be yielded, “including insights that could be developed by more explicitly engaging our selves”.<sup>69</sup>

Reintroducing “the self as a methodological resource” in this way also means placing “the researcher’s experience at the centre of the phenomenon under investigation”, based on the premise that bringing the “author into a more fundamental relation with the empirical world” will provide access to “important insights that would otherwise remain dismissed or devalued”.<sup>70</sup> Yet this does not mean just any experience the researcher might have had; as Briggs and Bleiker emphasize, “not all personal experiences are equally relevant or valuable for political analysis, nor is every attempt to understand and interpret such experience” and as such, not all experience is a legitimate source of knowledge.<sup>71</sup> Experience therefore has to be managed and sorted through methodological principles such as ‘puzzle-driven research’ and what Briggs and Bleiker identify as a three-step guide for retracing and exposing the author’s process of knowledge production. The author, seen “as a shifting node in a larger and constantly moving network of experience” should “cultivate openness and vulnerability to others and to the outside world in general”, utilising their “full range of faculties” including “felt experience”.<sup>72</sup> The data collected in this way should be analysed and presented “in a way that is meaningful to others”.<sup>73</sup>

Meaningfulness in this sense is understood in relation to the scholarly community’s standards and the researcher’s ability to “gain some critical

---

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. 780.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid. 783.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid. 788-9.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid. 790.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid. 794-5.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid. 795.

distance from personal experience to decide which part of this experience is most applicable to the research question.”<sup>74</sup> As Brigg and Bleiker emphasize,

the goal is not necessarily complete personal honesty and transparency. It is not possible or desirable to include all the author’s experiences or choices made during data collection and analysis. Some of the contradictions, mishaps, dead-ends and – most of all – extraneous experience are to be left out.<sup>75</sup>

In Brigg and Bleiker’s account, personal experience can only be meaningful if it can be narrated as a coherent journey, one that reveals “how an author moved through various research processes and interpreted his or her interactions with others, the world, the data collected and the prior literature on the topic.” As such, the promise of autoethnography to “reveal the envelopment of humans with their world” is strongly disciplined by the requirements of scientificity: finding “new ways of understanding and solving the problems and puzzles which animate our research”, unsurprisingly, cannot give account of the personal *qua* personal.<sup>76</sup> The personal can only be seen as legitimate as long as it serves the above purpose, or in other words, only the personal that can be presented as public has scientific legitimacy. The person who errs, contradicts herself, or might even feel things that cannot be expressed according to scientific rationality cannot be brought back into the process of research. Such enterprise might be too dangerous and may easily lead to the charge of *self-indulgence*. As Brigg and Bleiker write:

Introducing the personal leads, of course, to the predictable objection that autoethnography suffers in objectivity, rigor and verifiability. Such criticism has to be taken seriously, for some autoethnographic approaches suggest – rather problematically – that ‘telling one’s story’ in a personally reflective way is enough to produce insightful scholarship or engender political transformation. It is thus not surprising that autoethnography has been charged with self-indulgence.<sup>77</sup>

Self-indulgence therefore appears as the ultimate limit of the uses of the self as a methodological resource since “emphasis on the scholar’s inner feelings”, quoting Sonia Ryang, “risks simply rehearsing Western forms of individualism, neglecting the contingency of the self and its emergence in particular social, historical, and political circumstances.”<sup>78</sup> In Brigg and Bleiker’s account, interestingly, knowing and feeling seem to operate as conflicting categories. The consistence of the self sets the limits to ‘relationality’, of how much influence the dynamic encounters and interactions with others might have on the self as autonomous unit and

---

<sup>74</sup>Ibid. 797.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid. 796.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid. 798.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid. 789.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid. 789.

vice versa, or in other words, where to draw the boundaries of the self and the other, demarcating who is who and what is what. This managed certainty is what makes the ability to *know* possible: a world where subjectivities are (happily) in permanent flux, assuming (the freedom of) a continuous passing into one another and (the ease of) an infinite becoming of something else would not allow for knowledge as science knows it. Too much focus on the inner feeling of the researcher would unsettle the boundaries of the knowable and the status of the knower: certain parts of the self (feelings) have to be filtered or even excluded so that the self can emerge as reflexive ‘knower’, a ‘knower’ who also knows what it means to know. The charge of reification of the author’s personality and the disregard for the historical circumstances in which it develops, in this sense, is another act of policing the personal for the scientific. Telling one’s story, concentrating on feelings, exposing the fragmented and dispersed character of subjectivity (assuming that there might be things even in ourselves that we cannot know) count as unscientific, unless turned into what can be recognized as a methodological tool. The self can only enter the scientific arena if used for the appropriate purposes. Brigg and Bleiker’s author-self thus appears as a knower who is capable of knowing, mastering and giving a scientific account even of their own internal emergence and as such, encounters with other cannot challenge this pre-constituted sense of scientific self, of the scholarly knower that had already emerged and crystallized before the autoethnographic journey began. This journey is the journey of an already formed scholarly subjectivity, a scientific self that is further reified through the researcher’s methodological relation to herself and the need to constantly police this self through the continuous assessment of its appropriateness in the research process.

The results of my analysis of the representations of the authorly self might make Brigg and Bleiker’s account appear a fairly unlikely candidate for thinking the ‘self’ as a site of resistance and a ‘new strategic possibility’ against the subjectivating pulls of social norms and contemporary practices of government. The image of the ‘scientific self’ subordinates the personal to the purposes of scientific inquiry and in that, it reduces the ‘self’ to the confines of objectivity, rationality and transparency. The ‘self’, as a methodological tool can only support the scientific enterprise: it cannot challenge either ‘knowledge’ or the subjectivity of the ‘knower’. Even more importantly, this image of ‘scientific self’ not only reifies the disciplinary logic but also internalizes it: the ‘self’ is expected to perform the methodological standardization on itself by deciding “which part of this experience is most applicable to the research question.”<sup>79</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup>Ibid. 797.

Such disciplining of the ‘self’, needless to say, sounds like the exact opposite of a Foucaultian ethos of self-transformation and the practice of the ‘care of the self’ that tirelessly works against any sense of fixity in subjectivity formation and the interrogation of constituted experience. Yet moving to the register of what Brigg and Bleiker’s account *expresses* might reveal a lot more about how we could possibly explore the ‘self’ as a site of resistance. Re-reading both their article and my former analysis of it can be turned into an actual exercise of a Foucaultian ethos by engaging with what their take on the ‘self’ also expresses and performs in relation to what it says, and in that, what it *does* to the self. Brigg and Bleiker’s image of a ‘scientific self’ is a self-governing self, and what is particularly interesting here is how this relationship of self-government is being established in the self’s relationship to itself. The self enacts the rules of the discipline in its own relationship to itself based on what is relevant *of* the self, of the personal journey *for* the research questions and the disciplinary community. At the same time though, when we go beyond the register of representations what becomes apparent is a certain *fear* or insecurity that motivates these moves. Such crafting of the ‘inside’, of scholarly subjectivity seems to be inseparable from the ways in which the nature of the ‘scientific self’ is defined. As Brigg and Bleiker write, the author

is not a free-floating and fully decentered being sometimes attributed to postmodern approaches, but a being with a level of internal durability and consistence which arises through time as an effect of external relations. In other words, we adopt an approach to selfhood which refuses both the sovereign and autonomous modernist subject and the dispersed and fragmented postmodernist subject.<sup>80</sup>

What becomes apparent is that the self’s relationship to itself, its ‘internal durability and consistence’ is not only shaped by the outside (as a fold), but it is also made *dependent* on the ‘effects of external relations’. Crucially, what is described is not only a recognition of our constitution through the social but also a sense of attachment to such an outside *against* the two competing visions of modernist autonomy and postmodern decentering. What unfolds is a form of subjectification that makes a certain outside integral to self-formation, producing a scholarly subjectivity that grounds itself in the social. The imaginary charge of ‘self-indulgence’ in this sense translates into asking how much of the person is (still)

---

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. 797.

desirable in scientific inquiry, that is, how much of the person will still not jeopardize the self's carefully crafted relationship to itself that has already internalized the logic and authority of the discipline. In other words, such policing of the 'self' guards against exposing the 'precarious fiction' of the detached, objective scientific observer projected into a 'space beyond the world' and the fact that this very separation is instituted at the very same site, in the self's relationship to itself, that is, in how we, scholars, relate to ourselves. In this sense, Brigg and Bleiker's article is an exercise in academic writing that re-enacts this relationship through reinforcing a sense of vigilance in us regarding our mode of being in the disciplinary discourse: we can't be too much for what we have built up as social scientific knowledge; *it really is a precarious edifice*.

Exploring the 'self' as a potential site of resistance in the practice of writing could then start from *here*, asking what writing can actually do *to* and importantly, *for* the self that creates and maintains the fiction of separation between 'scholar' and 'person' and with that, exerts a Cartesian gaze on both the world and self, turning it into a 'knower'.

**We may ask: how could such a relationship of self to self as a practice of self on self be remade and turned into a site of experimentation and care?**

The rest of the contributions that I reviewed as examples of the 'autoethnographic' and 'autobiographic' style of writing all foreground the self, the person in opposition to the disciplinary norms of academic writing and as a source of a more ethical approach to the world studied. I am going to re-read these accounts from the perspective of what possibilities they may open up in the practice of writing, as a practice of self on self, in embracing and cultivating the 'self' as a 'new strategic possibility'. I am curious to see how 'writing' may transform our constitution as (Cartesian) 'knowers' and with that, that particular relationship of self to self that produces the 'scholar' vs. 'person' divide. What I will try to draw out from the accounts of Doty, Dauphinée, Inayatullah and Löwenheim are the ways in which their practices of narrative writing work in the 'middle region', where discourse can be experienced in its effectiveness, and where 'order' and subjectivities are formed, where we become readers and emerge as writers. I will try to engage with what appears to me as the *politics of writing*, that is, the ways in which the practice of

writing may write the self, in an effort to map some of those vistas in which the ‘middle region’ can be inhabited differently, where our being in discourse at the register of what discourse expresses can be turned into a site of resistance.

In this context both Doty and Dauphinée bring the self back into their academic texts as a gesture towards others, those ‘others’, writes Dauphinée, whose lives, fates and attributes have been inscribed into IR discourses as “*war criminal, rape victim, refugee, displaced person*, and so on.”<sup>81</sup> For both authors writing differently relates to the question of *representation* and the possibility of an ethical relationship to those people whose ‘realities’ IR depicts. In this sense, writes Dauphinée, “the erasure of the self is a violence in that it purports to provide the ground for objective knowledge that is *always* and *necessarily* about others”.<sup>82</sup> In Doty’s words,

our voices [...] can position us as part of the humanity we write about or as separate and coolly detached. Rendering our own voices, our own humanity absent from our writing affects the stories we tell and the worlds that are either brought to life and made real or are made virtually non-existent on the page.<sup>83</sup>

Without an authorly presence in her writing, she writes, “I do not think it is possible to connect with the human beings at the centre of what I write about”.<sup>84</sup>

Dauphinée’s and Doty’s texts offer different vistas to move away from the disciplinary powers of the discipline that “can colonize our souls forcing us to write in sanitized, anonymous voices”<sup>85</sup> which, at the same time, also “perpetrates a considered violence against those whose realities it claims to write.”<sup>86</sup> Doty emphasizes the voice of the writer in the text and through that, what is expressed is a different experience of writing that already gave rise to a particular narrative ‘I’, one that participates in that “personal struggle to retrieve a lost voice that motivates this article”.<sup>87</sup> “Voice”, for Doty, is something that grounds ‘writing’ in its lived experience: it is “the sounds, rhythm, texture, energy of our words”, which “is important because it positions us as writers in our stories. Voice is who we *are* on the

---

<sup>81</sup>Dauphinée, “The Ethics of Autoethnography”, 806.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. 817.

<sup>83</sup>Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls”, 382.

<sup>84</sup>Roxanne Lynn Doty, “Autoethnography - Making Human Connections”, *Review of International Studies* 36 (2010): 1048.

<sup>85</sup>Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls”, 377-8.

<sup>86</sup>Dauphinée, “The ethics of autoethnography”, 806.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid. 379-380.



page and who we are in relation to what and whom we write about. Voice gives us, as writers, a presence in our writing.”<sup>88</sup> Importantly, this presence is key to both the “continual interrogation of our own identities” and to the opening of an ethical possibility for “caring for the human beings that are invisible in our academic writings”.<sup>89</sup> As she writes,

I am not suggesting that our own presence is synonymous with individual, autonomous egos. *When ‘I’ write, I am the complex writing subject in process, moving through the always inadequate structures of language, negotiating the social codes and restrictions, entering the long dark tunnel of desire, pulsating with the mysterious energies that move through me, through us, through the other. Only by permitting the full, complex range of what writing is to present itself can relationships with others exist.*<sup>90</sup>

What is particularly important here is what we can experience as a certain unity of form and content in Doty’s passage. The ‘complex writing subject in process’ is not only described but is also assumed as a place from where the author writes, which makes the text come close to expressing something like an alternative *experience of expression itself*. Doty’s writing style makes the activity of writing appear as lived, embodied experience, something that covers the whole range of discourse, language, body, subjectivity, self and other. As such, it draws us, (Cartesian) ‘knowers’ away from the sheer activity of thinking and the production of representations from the fictitious ‘space beyond the world’. It problematizes ‘representation’ through destabilizing the subjectivity of the person who represents: Doty’s text ‘fictions’ a different experience of writing which necessarily induces a different mode of being in discourse. Doty’s writing about ‘writing’ refocuses our attention on the experience of writing as such, which may then help sever our attachments both to the academic genre and the forms of thinking it institutes. Her practice of writing opens up the relationship of self to self to open-ended transformation and with that to the experience of taking the place of the ‘complex writing subject in process’ that lacks any fixed boundaries. Doty’s politics of writing, it appears to me, lies here, at this juncture where the unity of form and content of the writing, as both practice and text, is the strongest. The ‘complex writing subject in process’ is not only a concept, it is also a presence in the text which serves as a point of access for us, readers to reflect

---

<sup>88</sup>Doty, “Maladies of Our Souls”, 382.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid. 390.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid. 390. My emphasis.

on our being in discourse in the ‘middle region’: we are not only reading about but also encountering a ‘complex writing subject in process’.

Dauphinée’s account problematizes the practice of representation in a slightly different way. Her starting point is the encounter with the other that challenges her experience of what it means to be an academic ‘knower’ and to relate to the world through the objectivizing gaze of the detached scholar. As Dauphinée writes in relation to her exchanges with her Bosnian interviewee, Stojan Sokolović,

the more we speak the less I understand, the *less* I can organise the space, the place, and the charge of Stojan Sokolović with my own systematised categories because he must necessarily defy the bounds in which I seek to contain him. He has destroyed my myth of order.<sup>91</sup>

What is exposed in Dauphinée’s account is what she describes as an “awareness visited upon me that *I don’t know what I think I know, or that what I think I know is not so*”, something that deprives the ‘speaking, knowing agent’ of the illusion of a “privileged position of knowledge acquisition” and that the other can be spoken for.<sup>92</sup> The encounter with the other shatters the illusion of ‘representation’ and ‘representability’, too and with that it undoes that particular relationship between self and the world that is conventionally assumed in academic practice. Dauphinée’s way out or rather, way forward is a different practice of writing which, in many ways, is *non-representational*. Instead of representing or speaking for the other, she stages an imaginary dialogue between herself and Stojan Sokolović where she gives an “*impression* of what he said to me; the feeling it left with me that I had failed incontrovertibly.”<sup>93</sup> The voice of Sokolović is an invented voice: “What expert are you?” - he asks, and in putting his charges to the author, this is what he sounds like in Dauphinée’s ‘translation’:

You determined guilt and innocence with ink lines on the pages of books and journals in your subfield of an academic subfield, but none of it helped anything to be more bearable. You delineated between categories of ethnicity and language, you passed your pronouncements and decrees – you divining judges and juries – but you did not teach us anything. You had nothing to teach from your mountain of learning, even from the beginning – from the first stroke of your pen – from the first tap of your manicured

---

<sup>91</sup>Dauphinée, “The Ethics of Autoethnography”, 809.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid. 808.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid. 801.

fingertips across the keyboard of your laptop on your Lufthansa flight out of Zagreb. You pretended to understand what we had done – you organised conferences over it – you developed theories about it – but you never really cared what had happened to us, because it was not you. We were not you. And so, what you wrote about us – what you wrote about who we were – was its own sort of destruction.<sup>94</sup>

As Dauphinée writes, in this passage “I have rendered the substance of what I heard in his words, what it meant for my scholarship, and for my ability to be responsible”.<sup>95</sup> As such, the ‘other’ is rendered present *in his capacity* to interrogate the scholarly subjectivity of the ‘knower’: the other’s voice is invoked as a force that works towards the author’s desubjectification in the process of writing and induces a change in her mode of being in discourse. What is particularly important here are the moves through which ‘writing’ becomes a force of its own in the process of subject formation: staging a dialogue, inventing the voice of the other and giving an impression of it serve as resources to transform the author’s subjectivity. These moves make up the process in which the relationships of self to self and self to other are crafted in the practice of writing: this is where the politics of writing is the most palpable.

Löwenheim and Inayatullah both concentrate on the biographical dimension of authorship, of the actual lives lived behind scholarly work and importantly, the connections between such personal narratives and theoretical articulations. While writing in both cases is the vehicle through which the ‘self’ is exposed and with that, the subjective foundations of ‘knowledge’, Löwenheim’s and Inayatullah’s accounts differ greatly regarding what writing does *to* and *for* the ‘self’ and as such, where their politics lie.

For Inayatullah the 17 chapters of the book *Autobiographical International Relations: I, IR* are writings “from the edge of articulation” where the “authors are working out something central to their being and becoming – their traumas, wounds, needs for which they do and do not have words.”<sup>96</sup> What is produced in these accounts is a “kind of artistic science” where the authors “disclose themselves and their writing bares itself.” “Seamlessly”, writes Inayatullah, “we are shown the mundane and the dramatic, the empirical and the theoretical, the structures and the

---

<sup>94</sup>Ibid. 801

<sup>95</sup>Ibid. 801.

<sup>96</sup>Inayatullah, “Falling and Flying”, 9.

processes that constitute and change humans. In sum, these essays place both the writer and reader within a dynamic flow.”<sup>97</sup> Personal narratives behind theoretical choices provide “a substantive look at life/lives in process” where the distance between scholar and person is effaced and in the same gesture the subjective foundations of ‘knowledge’ are laid bare. Importantly, however, writing does more than just expose and disclose the self: it does something to and for the self, too, by bringing different layers of this self into contact with each other. As Inayatullah writes,

We can hypothesize that no matter how and what we compose, writing emerges from our needs and wounds. The differences in form – from objectified, professionalized, jargon-filled, expert analyses of the type that fills our journals and conferences, to the autobiographical essays in this volume, to still more confessional journaling – are no doubt important. This is because form shapes content. Yet, given my hypothesis, these differing forms all track around a need, a trauma, a wound. Writing orbits what cannot be said, and it struggles to express what we cannot articulate. Two forces shape this struggle: what we aim to produce in the work and what the writing writes back to us.<sup>98</sup>

Writing thus *emerges* from the ‘needs and wounds’ of the person which, in its unfolding, also *writes back* to the self. Writing functions as a process that connects the self to itself in a relationship of confrontation. Inayatullah gives the following description of how the experience of writing made him reflect on his own subjectivity and his own involvement in the production of disciplinary ‘knowledge’:

As I formulated the essay, I felt the need to make myself the target of my words. I wanted to show rather than tell, I wanted to exhibit a process of discovery, rather than steer towards a conclusion. In an elliptical and roundabout fashion, I illustrated how *I* diminished Afghan culture by placing it lower on the developmental scale, how my prejudice came to be challenged, and how this challenge forced a re-assessment, not just of my view of Afghanistan, but of my life altogether. My fervent need to convey something about Afghanistan forced me beyond my professional training towards what I hoped would be a more persuasive form of communication.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup>Ibid. 7.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid. 8.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid. 2.

As Inayatullah notes, “the writing confronted me with the contradictory nature of my being.”<sup>100</sup> “In retrospect”, he writes, “it may not be too much to say that all my professional work emerges from this trauma, this wound, this need to work out where I stand on the issue of greater and lesser beings, on the value of hierarchy and inequality.”<sup>101</sup> In this way ‘writing’ as political practice produces an *impression of the self* that reflects back upon this self, opening up the relationship of self to itself to change. The writing of the story of the self is a process of both working things out and confrontation with an inside turned outwards in this way. Writing brings out the different layers of selfhood and at the same time, through a confrontation between selves a possibility of reconciliation is created: the writing of the story of the self is also the (politics of the) writing of a more self-accommodating self. At the same time though, what might somewhat close off the opening of self-transformation is the assumption of ‘trauma’, ‘wounds’, ‘needs’ as both the source of writing and what writing circles around. What is being risked is their (re)writing into the relationship of self to self in a way that might resist their exploration.

For Löwenheim ‘writing’ not only exposes the self together with its unexplored, suppressed, compartmentalized layers but it also serves as a tool for interpreting himself. His version of autoethnography “conceives of the individual not just as an interpreter of social reality, but as someone who can understand her/himself through thinking about social institutions, practices and phenomena.”<sup>102</sup> As he writes, “I seek to understand how my own subjectivity was constituted by the international: meaning, both by academic IR theory and by international political practices and institutions (for example, war, the state).”<sup>103</sup> The focus of Löwenheim’s article is his relationship to IR theory in the light of his own life experience. Löwenheim’s story is a story of detachment from those disciplinary norms and standards that fulfilled a particular function in the relationship he had to his trauma of war. IR theory, as he recounts, served as a resource for him to “look for a meaning” as a response to the emotional burden of the experience of war: “I want theory to help me master my fear of war”.<sup>104</sup> IR theory, he writes,

---

<sup>100</sup>Ibid. 9.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid. 9.

<sup>102</sup>Löwenheim, “The ‘I’ in IR”, 1025.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid. 1025.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid. 1039.

also helps me pretend that I do not live in Israel, in Jerusalem. By thinking about war conceptually, I become a member of transnational community of scholars, who are in a certain way, ‘above war’. My identity is thus changing through the process and my emotions and traumas are calmed as I find solace in supposed answers to terrible questions.<sup>105</sup>

Yet to become “passionate about becoming dispassionate” has its dangers, too.<sup>106</sup> As he continues:

On the one hand, the detached and impersonal mode of writing in conventional IR enabled me to cross over the abyss called ‘war’. IR theories diminished my sense of awe about the eruption of war, eased my fearful perplexity on why people are ready or willing to kill each other with such ferocity and with such varying technologies and means (think, ‘MIGs’, ‘suicide bombers’), and dulled my sense of pain in the face of the cruelty of war. On the other hand, I find this way of dealing with war as increasingly frustrating. The abyss is still there, no matter how hard I try not to look down.<sup>107</sup>

Löwenheim’s story, in this sense, is a story of detachment from those disciplinary norms and standards that fulfilled a particular function in the relationship he had to his trauma of war. It recounts how ‘writing’ *produces* subjectivity and in his case, how the conventional practice of academic writing entrenched the ‘fictive distance’ also in his subjectivity, distancing himself from that part of himself that he found hard to face. In Deleuze’s terms, Löwenheim writes from a place where the production of ‘subjectivity’ as a fold of the outside can be seen and recognized as such. As he writes, “I realized that the illusion of solace, the omniscient voice, and the detachment provided by theory were constructing my own subjectivity in deeper senses than I imagined or wanted.”<sup>108</sup> While Löwenheim claims to ‘interpret’ himself in the course of writing, what writing as a political process expresses and performs, at the same time, is the unmaking of a particular subjectivity and the gradual taking possession of one’s relation to oneself. While ‘interpret’ conveys a sense of control, it is also expressive of a mode of being in discourse where the author’s relationship to IR theory has already changed and a different relationship to trauma is already in formation. ‘Interpret’ in this sense invokes the ‘outside’ of science again and evokes

---

<sup>105</sup>Ibid. 1039.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid. 1041.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid. 1041.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid. 1042.

a danger of turning oneself into an object of interpretation, which perhaps further illuminates the difficulty involved in the process of detaching oneself from ‘fictive distancing’.

Narrative writing in the accounts of Doty, Dauphinée, Inayatullah and Löwenheim performs different functions and induces various effects. The first person perspective establishes a strong and intimate connection between ‘writing’ and ‘self’, where ‘writing’ also writes the ‘self’ and with that, it modifies the writer’s subjectivity, bringing about a different mode of being in discourse. Doty’s ‘I’ enables the re-making of the experience of writing as a lived, embodied and spiritual experience that is expressive of a much greater spectrum of life than what academic writing allows for. Writing here cultivates a relationship of self to self that is no longer grounded in the Cartesian subject-object logic and the mere activity of thinking. It lays bare ‘representation’ as a function of a relationship of self to self grounded in the fictitious absence of the person which writing then overwrites by effacing the scholar vs. person division. Dauphinée’s ‘I’ is a vehicle for the non-representational writing of the ‘other’ which, at the same time, also transforms the subjectivity of the Cartesian ‘knower’ who relates to the world through the practice of representation. The ‘I’ stages, invents, impersonates; it actively cultivates new bonds, new ways of relating between self and self and self and other. The most important work of Inayatullah’s ‘I’ is exerted in the relationship of the writer’s self to himself, which shatters the fiction of the objective, detached ‘knower’. It brings out different layers of the self and allows their constructive confrontation; writing remakes our experience of being a ‘knower’ through exposing it as one effect of multiple registers of wounds, needs and traumas. Löwenheim’s ‘I’ is a tool to reconfigure the self’s relationship to discourse through taking possession of the self’s relationship to itself. It undoes the insertion of the ‘fictive distance’ in the writer’s subjectivity as it further cultivates detachment from the objectifying effects of IR theory and the subjectifying effects of the ‘omniscient scientific prose’.

As such, the presence of the narrative ‘I’ in the writing process, whether we reflect on it or not, already performs and enables many things. The first person perspective actualizes our relationship to discourse, positioning us vis-à-vis the conventional genre of academic writing and the disciplinary standards of IR as a mode of being in discourse. To write from a first person perspective, however, is also to be exposed to the effects of writing in a very distinct way: in the course of the

process of writing the self's relationship to itself, that is, our relationship to ourselves is actualized, too.

**It is here, at this juncture that narrative writing opens up the possibility of writing the self, of transforming the self's relationship to itself into a site of resistance to power.**

It is here that new subjectivities may emerge from changing the ways in which we relate to ourselves; subjectivities that are no longer grounded in what is offered to us as the 'truth' of the 'self' in society and as such, challenge the operations of such power-knowledge complexes through investing themselves in the 'truth(s)' of the very relations of self to self.

Yet it can all be different, too; narrative writing does not necessarily induce or produce any of these effects and might even jeopardize some of these new openings. Exactly because of the close connections of 'writing' and 'self', the work of the 'I' in the writing process might also reify our relationships to ourselves. And even more so, narrative writing can give rise to new identities, of 'narrative writers' where the presence and work of the 'I' in the text is perhaps no longer questioned. I have tentatively highlighted some of these potential dangers while discussing Brigg and Bleiker's, Inayatullah's and Löwenheim's accounts; dangers that relate, for instance, to subjecting the 'I' to a normative endorsement of a particular kind of scientific inquiry, subsuming it under the uncovering of particular human experiences or using it for a purpose which might undermine some of its transformative effects.

As I am writing about these dangers now, it occurs to me that I have spent relatively little time exploring these possibilities. How can narrative writing go 'wrong', how can it feed back into those social structures and governmental techniques that produce governable, controllable subjectivities? Asking these questions, however, also make me realize more about the purpose and politics of the project, of the actual character of the narrative 'I' and of the style, form and content of the experience book. As it appears to me more clearly now, I have been driven by a fairly specific purpose in working myself through these examples of narrative writing. I was trying to identify the forces of the practice of writing and the politics arising from the ways in which 'writing' relates to 'self' only to be able to



manoeuvre myself to this place *where I can turn back on my own formation* as writer, subject and self. I needed to engage with these accounts in order to be able to reflect on my relationship to myself in the practice of writing, so that I can try to see how I am ‘writing the self’, that is, *myself* in the process of writing an experience book. And what I have thus come to understand as my politics of narrative writing lies with the transformation of subjectivity *in this way*, through transforming the relationship of self to self in the practice of writing.

Throughout this thesis I have been working towards performing (rather than just discussing) a Foucaultian ethos of self-transformation, an ethos of a non-identitarian way of living that keeps changing the self through making it ‘other’ to itself. My practice of narrative writing took the form of the account of self through which I have been looking back on my academic formation in the discipline of IR, uncovering how I came to be constituted as a ‘knower’ of a particular kind, what ways of thinking and writing conditioned my scholarly subjectivity and what it meant to read, research and be as a desiring subject of sovereignty. Yet what have been moving the process forward, as I realize now, are not only the ‘unknowns’ produced through the silent work of the narrative ‘I’, the ‘unknowns’ being added to me as a person as I am trying to tell my stories, drawing thoughts, memories, selves together as ‘I’. The very logic of writing, the actual form in which my narrations have been written now emerges as something I can reflect on and something that now I recognize as a series of moves towards this turning point of self on self, where I can appear as ‘other’ to myself, where another limit-experience can possibly unfold. The flow of unedited, genuine writing and the persistent statement of uncertainties, ambiguities and doubts have been integral parts of this process, for pushing myself yet a bit further. Striving towards certainty and ‘sameness’, as my research on sovereignty and the various re-readings of my discourse analysis of Slaughter showed, only created certainty and sameness, and with that, fixity and closure (and frustration).

It is through this logic of writing that the ‘self’, my relationship to myself, has gradually been turning into a ‘strategic possibility’ and a site of resistance to power. With any added instance of turning back on how I came to be constituted as a subject through the norms of the discipline and the pulls of contemporary government there is an opening to cultivate a different mode of being in discourse and a different relationship to these norms, one that allows for detachment from them. It is in these

liminal spaces that more ownership over our formation as subjects, academic and other, may be assumed.

**It is here that the self can be cared for, too.**

One of the most important undertakings of this thesis has been a serious effort in this regard. What writing an experience book of my academic formation has enabled and performed is an exercise in the care of the self, one that works towards the transformation of the relationship between ‘subject’ and ‘truth’ in my lived experience of scholarly practice, in my relationship to the discipline, to the world I study and to myself. Crucially, it has been an exercise that changed my being in discourse and my relationship to myself; among many other things, it has manoeuvred me to this place from where I can reflect on the process, on *this* process. It is from here that, looking back on the previous chapters, the writing process appears as a *transition* from a liminal space to a reconfigured practice of academic writing that already embraces and internalizes the logic of limit-experiences. As such, it has been a transition that turned a limit-experience into a mode of being in discourse that is also a form of resistance. It has turned a limit experience of my own involvement in the production of ‘knowledge’ into a form of writing against discourse that constantly interrogates the constitution of identity, including my relationship to the very practice of narrative writing, of writing *like this*.

Autobiographically, this thesis as an experience book began to form in the liminal space that Chapter 5 turns back on, that is, in the thought-space of my reflections on the limit-experience I had in relation to the results of my discourse analysis of Slaughter’s writings. The person, *me*, appeared in my ISA paper as ‘I’ by default, as an expression of the recognition of myself as particular kind of ‘knower’ which could not be addressed in the language of science. Where the paper ended was “the point before my analysis could catch the emergence of the actuality of my subjectivity as knower”; I have noticed my presence and involvement as a person in my academic work yet I did not know what to make of this experience.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>109</sup>Erzsébet Strausz, “Two Foucaults, Two Papers: Situating Knowledge as a Form of Self-reflection” (paper presented at the Annual Convention of the International Studies Association, San Diego, 1-4 April, 2012) 8.

Three months later it was in Chapter 1 that I made an attempt to interrogate the academic constitution of my subjectivity as a ‘knower’ in the form of an experience book. The narrative ‘I’ was present in the text with a much clearer purpose this time: it sought to develop a personal angle on my formation and subject position in the discipline and in the same gesture, it sought to undo the ‘fictive distancing’ of the conventional academic genre by writing the person and what Foucault had called the forgotten ‘philosophical life’ back into the text. As such, while I was working towards cultivating a ‘living space’ for this ‘I’ (and a comfort zone for myself in writing in a more personal style), with the first person perspective *you*, too, entered the project of a ‘living text’, a text, which, with hindsight, strove to make the ‘life’ brought back *felt* at as many registers as it possible could. Here the narrative ‘I’ was able to explicitly engage with scholarly subjectivity: it mapped the Cartesian mindset (and its hold on my thinking) and identified my formation as a ‘desiring subject of sovereignty’ in my research. Yet the first person problematization of these two dominant subjective experiences already pointed towards looking into what made this endeavour possible, that is, the impact of the late Foucault’s transformative ethos on me that enabled me to reflect on who I have come to be constituted in academic practice in the first place.

Chapter 2 takes us back to my readings of Foucault and reconstructs the ways in which I came to encounter an ‘other’ Foucault, a ‘Foucault’ that takes the formation of ‘subjectivity’ seriously and literally, including his own, after having first read him through IR’s usual Foucaultian focus on governmentality and sovereign power. This requires loosening the grip of Cartesian thinking on how we relate to the text when we read: the narrative ‘I’ recounts the transition from thinking about the axis of the ‘subject’ as a concept to opening it up to an understanding of ‘subjectivity’ as lived experience, something that also encompasses my own experience and formation as a subject in academic practice. Here I re-visited the late Foucault’s critical ethos for thinking through what it entails in practice to turn the *diagnosis* of the present into *poiesis* and as such, how I could turn this experience book into a similar endeavour of self-making.

What emerged as the way forward is a more thorough engagement with how discourse works and the ways in which it might be possible to cultivate a mode of being in discourse in which we are no longer that vulnerable to its subjectivating pulls. Chapter 3 thus goes back to Foucault’s texts and re-reads some of his most

important contributions on ‘discourse’ and ‘authorship’, mapping his actual practice of writing ‘in’ and ‘against’ discourse (where the experience book appears as one such strategy) that always had some recourse to the personal. Chapter 4 actualizes some of Foucault’s insights on ‘discourse’ by turning them back on my experience of working within what I understood to be the conventions of ‘Foucaultian IR’. Here I tried to map and illustrate some of those disciplinary (and anti-disciplinary) pulls of the subfield that form us as subjects within this community. This exercise has also served both as a process of detachment from such subjectivating effects of discourse and an opening towards an alternative community of Foucault scholars emerging as an undefined, non-identitarian ‘we’, a ‘community of action’ that shares a commitment to critique as the continuous interrogation of identity and constituted experience.

Taking the non-identitarian character of a Foucaultian critical ethos seriously, Chapter 5 engages with the emergence of the narrative voice, *of this narrative ‘I’* in the thesis through giving an account of my formation within Foucaultian IR through multiple layers of reflections. It takes us back to the point from where the thought and project of the experience book emerged, to the limit-experience of recognizing myself as ‘knower’ and my subsequent explorations of the liminal space opened up in this way. After having served as a tool of detachment from the two dominant constituted experiences of my academic formation, from the habit of strong Cartesian thinking and the mode of being of a desiring subject of sovereignty, here the narrative ‘I’ turns back on its own constitution in an attempt to work against the constitution of new fixities and to carry on with the etho-poetic work of self on self. It is at this juncture where Foucault’s transformative ethos no longer works only as an inspiration and a practical asset for the transformation of particular subjectivities but slowly starts to take effect as a mode of being, as a way of life that is grounded in the self’s relationship to itself.

It is this (trans)forming relationship of self to self that Chapter 6, this chapter, takes up and takes further. It engages explicitly with how this relationship is formed and performed, it looks into the actual, practical ways in which the ‘self’ is being crafted as a site of resistance. As such, it excavates the self’s relationship to writing, of how the self is written in the course of the writing of this experience book. It brings awareness to a politics of writing that endorses and supports the etho-poetic work of self on self and the style and logic of writing that works towards inducing

limit-experiences and narrative junctures where I can turn back on my own constitution as ‘knower’, writer, self. It makes me engage with the stakes of writing for not only my own subjective formation but also in relation to my presence in the text, and as such, to *what writing like this expresses*. It is at this register that the experience book remakes different forms of experience – of academic practice, of (scholarly) subjectivity, of being in discourse in IR – for the both of us. It not only tells stories at the register of what discourse says but it also performs, enacts them as events; it renders them *effective* as different actualities of various kinds. In this sense, the actual *writing* of this experience book has been the source of the emergence of multiple transitions, movements, transformations, changes that only now, at this place, can be recognized and could be told as stories, as accounts of the self. And a bit like Foucault’s Chinese encyclopaedia, it is the undefined, non-hierarchical order of these stories together that constitute the ‘middle region’ of the experience book. It is here where my practice of writing can be effective as writing against discourse, against ‘writing sovereignly’ in the form of ‘writing the self’, a practice that is grounded in its own logic of limit-experiences, constantly pushing towards a self-sovereign ‘I’. This is also where *we*, you as reader and me as writer meet, as a potential ‘we’, at the inextricable intersections of:

a)

A story of transition from a particular experience of a liminal space to specific modes of being and doing.

b)

A story of unmaking (academic) identity through the narrative ‘I’s work towards detachment from the subjectivity of the Cartesian ‘knower’ and that of the desiring subject of sovereignty.

c)

A story of cultivating a Foucaultian ethos of self-transformation through the continuous crafting of ‘otherness’ within, in the relationship of self to self.

d)

A story of remaking academic experience by remaking everyday academic practices: by turning the 'omniscient social scientific prose' into a first person perspective, by turning critique into auto-critique, by turning literature review into an opening of community formation, by moving reading and writing away from the mere activity of thinking and re-grounding them in their lived experience, by expanding the account of the self into an account of account giving.

e)

A story of a simultaneous formation of self and community, of narrative 'I's and (non)-disciplinary 'wes'.

f)

A story of the unity of form and content, of life and text, of writing about limit experience and having one at the same time.

g)

A story of the emergence of resistance and its becoming conscious of itself.

h)

A story of the enormous effort that it took to induce a small change in my way of being.

i)

A story about stories breaking down.

j)

A story I have really enjoyed.

k)

A story that you \_\_\_\_\_.

\*\*\*