


"The Politics of Literature in Michel Foucault: Veridiction, Fiction and Desire"

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Recommended Citation

Blanco, Azucena G. "'The Politics of Literature in Michel Foucault: Veridiction, Fiction and Desire.'" *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 20.4 (2018): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3353>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3353)

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CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and CultureISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>
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Volume 20 Issue 4 (December 2018) Article 4**Azucena G. Blanco,****"The Politics of Literature in Michel Foucault: Veridiction, Fiction and Desire"**<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss4/4>>Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 20.4 (2018)**Special Issue **Processes of subjectivation: biopolitics and politics of literature**. Ed. Azucena G. Blanco
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss4/>>

Abstract: This article is based on two hypotheses. The first is that in the later Foucault we would find a reformulation of the status that literature had occupied in his work and the development of a politics of literature (already developed in "Sujetos irregulares: ficción y política en el Sade de Michel Foucault"). The second considers that fiction and desire are inseparably joined, which leads me to analyse the logic of Sade as logic of desire in the lectures that Foucault gave on the author at the University of Buffalo (1970). A reading of both aspects together needs to be undertaken so that we can understand, on the one hand, Foucault's work on the institutional character of literature with which he aimed to pull literature out of its political impasse. Methodologically, this focus enables us to understand how literature occupied a central-marginal place in his work. On the other hand, we need to understand his work on the genealogy of the "subject of desire" and of the alternative forms of subjectivity, and how it is in dialogue with the former aspect. I conclude that his politics of literature is associated with the concept of "bad literature" and with an aesthetics of self as politics of desire/duty. This paper is therefore also a proposal for the interpretation of the role that literature plays in one of the central questions: the definition of the *subject* as *interrelation* in late Foucault.

Azucena G. BLANCO

The Politics of Literature in Michel Foucault: Veridiction, Fiction and Desire

In "Behind the Fable" ["L'arrière-fable"] (1966), Foucault analyzed the differences between fable and fiction. His aim was to underline the fundamental nature of fiction that had remained in a subordinate place in Aristotle's *Poetics* compared to the fable. Foucault recalls the Aristotelian definition of the fable as configuration of the work based on elements placed in a certain order and of fiction as the plot of the relations established, through the discourse itself, between how speaks and what is spoken about. But although fiction for Foucault is an "aspect" of fable, nevertheless, and this is crucial, causal logic is a mode of fiction and not a basic structure of the story, as it had been since Aristotle. Fiction, therefore, affects the modes of articulation of all discourse. And he adds that the modes of fiction are, moreover, historical when he states that the relation between fable and fiction is determined by "the mythical possibilities of culture": its writing or plot depends on the possibilities of the language (*langue*), while its fiction is determined by the possibilities of the act of speaking (*parole*): "In that analogon of discourse that the work constitutes, this relation can only be established within the very act of speaking; what is recounted must indicate, by itself, who is speaking, and at what distance, and according to what perspective, and using what mode of discourse. The work is defined less by the elements of the fable or their ordering than by the modes of fiction, indicated as if obliquely by the very wording [*énoncé*] of the fable. A narrative's fable resides in the mythical possibilities of the culture; its writing resides in the possibilities of the language; its fiction, in the possibilities of the speech act." (*Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology* 137-138).

This makes it possible to consider that the verisimilitude of a narrative, what a society is prepared to accept as credible, depends on a specific historical moment and not on the logical structure of the narrative. But, as well as affecting the modes of historical narration, what a society accepts as fictional, that is to say a *social-fictional pact*, would also affect veridiction, or that which a society accepts as modes of telling the truth. And what allows this overlapping between fiction and veridiction in Foucault's work is the gaze.

In a text from 1963, "Distance, Aspect, Origin", Foucault defines fiction as "the flight of the arrow that hits us between the eyes and offers up *everything that appears*" and as "the verbal nervure of what does not exist, *just as it is*" (103-104). And, years later, in "The Stage of Philosophy" (1978), he declared that his interest was then in the description of the mode in which the West had organized its games of veridiction through the gaze, "the spectacle of the world":

It is indeed the theatre of truth that I would like to describe. How the West has built itself a theatre of the truth, a stage of the truth, a stage for this rationality that has now become one of occidental imperialism's distinctive features, because its economy, the Western economy, may have reached its summit, the essential forms of the Western way of life and the political predominance of the West are undoubtedly coming to a close. But something has remained, something that the West is undoubtedly passing on to the rest of the world, namely a certain form of rationality. It concerns a certain kind of perception of truth and error, a certain theatre of truth and falsehood. ("The Stage of Philosophy" 150)

He also developed this focus in the last years of his research. In the Louvain lectures, "Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling" (1981), he fully confronts the question of how and in what conditions could a mode of veridiction appear in history, following Nietzsche's "Wahrsagen." It is a question of defining the modes of veridiction in their plurality, to explore the forms of obligation by which each one of these modes links to the subject of truth-telling, to specify the regions to which they apply and the domains of objects that are made evident, and lastly the relations, connections and interferences that are established between them. In short, it is a question of a historical politics of the truth or of a political history of veridictions. Therefore, I believe it to be of particular interest to undertake a reading of the genealogy of veridiction and literary fiction, in order to understand the modes in which the subject is emancipated through a political aesthetics of self.

Firstly, however, it must be said that I consider that the gaze acts in this regard not as a privileged sense in epistemological work as Martin Jay considers in *Downcast eyes* nor as mere image-word discontinuity (Jay 2009), but that it would be a technique founded on the event of "making see" as critical exercise. In "Visual Parrhesia?: Foucault and the Truth of the Gaze," Jay revises his 1993 study and states that the gaze in Foucault acquires a deconstructive value of the pure gaze of the speculative subject and, moreover, of the panoptic gaze, which Foucault called "the unimpeded empire of the gaze" (*Downcast Eyes* 384). However, he concludes that one could not speak of a visual parrhesia. On the

contrary, Shapiro states: "In the Panopticon the gaze is mobilized and fixed on each individual; it is a floating or functional gaze that need not appear as the look of anyone in particular. In Manet looks meet no object, no person, even though we see their source. What we see, then, is an eye disconnected from a content of vision" (310). Indeed, we cannot really speak of a visual parrhesia, but we can of the traits that parrhesia, as the verbal technique of telling the truth, shares with a trying to see what, being in the same *present*, has not been seen.

In one of Foucault's last reflections on literature, he describes the modernity of Baudelaire as "an exercise in which the extreme attention placed in the real (the present) is faced with the practice of a freedom that, simultaneously, respects and violates the real" ("What is Enlightenment?" 32-50). Modern literature is not the mere production of a word outside of the order of the discourse but is extended as "real" discourse. The modernity of Baudelaire does not entail accepting it as an everlasting movement but the capability of extracting "the poetical from history" that is defined as "something eternal that is neither beyond nor behind the present instant, but in it itself".

I therefore define the political capacity of literature, the politics of literature in Foucault, as a making visible or revealing modes of speech that, existing, had not been considered. It is the attitude that enables one to grasp what is "poetic" in the present moment; it is a will to heroize the present ("*De l'heroisme de la vie moderne*", Baudelaire). This ironic heroism entails for the modern man an invention of himself that does not "free man in his own self" but compels him/her to the constant task of creating himself. Along these lines, Raymond Bellour stated: "fiction understood in this sense possesses a virtue in comparison with the history which it is, without being so. It does not bring to the fore that which is in the past in order that the effect of it should return to the present. What it brings to the fore is that which is in the process of happening. Thus it is most truth for the time in which it is practised because it incorporates the shift between times in the very way in which it is constructed, and converts this into space (which is both visible and readable)" (153).

Fiction thus establishes a discontinuous line with the theatre of truth, the political function of literature and, as it develops, with the role of classical parrhesia that Foucault had examined in his lectures on *Fearless Speech* and *The Government of Self and Others*, and in his Berkeley lectures, *Discourse and Truth*. In this last series of lectures, Foucault defines parrhesia as a "verbal act." Foucault summarizes the traits of parrhesia in the lecture given on 24th October 1983, collected in *Discourse and Truth*, thus: "parrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty." (*Fearless Speech* 19).

Foucault shows that the word *parrhesia* first appears in the tragedies of Euripides. So the first time that parrhesia occurred in a discourse, it did so in a tragedy. Tragic fiction has a parrhesiastic function within the discourses of a given historical period in two modes: as fiction that heroizes the present and is the event of the first appearance of the term *parrhesia*; and as the reformulation of a discourse in a particular historical moment.

In the tragedies that Foucault analyses, parrhesia appears as a right, a right linked to citizenship (*Discours et verité* 26). Parrhesia appears as a practice with a multiform nature because, through the discourse of a free political subject (member of the demos and therefore with the right to make use of this frank speech), establishing at the same time an ethical relation with the rest of the subjects that make up the community, insofar as their commitment through frankness is that of helping other citizens improve their lives and their own. Therefore, desire and duty coincide in this concept that is both political and ethical. But more decisive is the consideration of the common good in this truth-telling of a free subject, because this practice is a critique and, in this sense, the subject that practices it puts his/her own life at risk. The definition of a free subject cannot, nonetheless, be configured other than in interrelation with others, and whose desire to live is, at the same time, a risk and a desire – returning to the concept of life as struggle between Freud's drive for death and life. It is central to understanding the scope of Foucault's political aesthetics. I will return to this topic at the end of this article. Before then, however, I will analyze the lectures that Foucault gave on Sade in 1970, at the University of Buffalo ("Lectures on Sade"). In these lectures, Foucault focuses his attention on Sade's statement, "I only tell the truth" as an emancipatory logic of discourse.

There was certainly a great deal published on Sade in the 1970s. But if there is a key debate for understanding the scope that this text had in the last phase of Foucault's oeuvre, it is the one Foucault's text held with *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, published in 1944. The relationship between the aesthetics of these authors and Foucault's has already been shown ("The legacy of the Frankfurt aesthetic in the thought of Michel Foucault"). We can find the clues to understanding the Sade text in the chapter that Adorno and Horkheimer devote to "Juliette, or

Enlightenment and Morality" (63-93), in which they analyse how Sade's literature aims to unblock the incapacity of Kantian thinking to undermine the order that had been made repressive, insofar as it is linked, ultimately, to the mode of dominant production (73). According to their perspective, the work of Sade, along with that of Nietzsche, was an intransigent critique of practical reason, which exposes a disturbing truth: "the indissoluble alliance of reason and atrocity" (92). Adorno and Horkheimer conclude that Sade's work elevated the scientific principle to the destructive principle, or what they called the *amor intellectualis diaboli*, the joy of defeating civilization with its own weapons. For the authors, and particularly for the Adorno of *Negative Dialectics* (1970), the anti-Hegelian logic of Sade's writings produces a truth: "the identity of power and reason" (93).

Foucault, for his part, who also begins with the critique and revision of Kant's proposal of Enlightenment, adds to the consequences of this anti-philosophy of the Enlightenment, to the power of the negativity of Sade's logic described by the Frankfurt theorists, the analysis of the performative powers of identity that are also found in this logic. Foucault analyses how the modes of veridiction of Sade's characters not only embody the powers of science but also, in their "truth-telling," put forward modes of emancipation that originate in the subjectivities in what we can call a *performative negativity*. In other words, it would now not only be a thought of enlightened negativity but also of the performativity of the truth-telling of irregular subjects (*hommes infâmes*), crucial in Foucauldian thought of the 1970s and 1980s. This concept of performative negativity, that which evolves out of the non-attributive logic of Sade, supposes an overcoming of the opposition between truth and desire, as will be shown below.

In the second of the "Lectures on Sade", Foucault tackles the subject matter of the character of the libertine as irregular form of being, as "irregular existence." Unlike the first lecture, in which the texts that Foucault examines are predominantly literary, in the second he undertakes a fundamental shift towards Sade's theoretical discourse with *Idées sur le roman*, in his global proposal to analyze the ten volumes of *Justine and Juliette*. Here Foucault states that Sade's procedure for writing does not entail a transgression of rational thought (law of alternation of discourses). On the contrary, for Foucault Sade's discourse proposes an alternative to rational thought but from within the same rational logic, in accordance with the reading already made by Adorno and Horkheimer. However, the works of Sade were not, for Foucault, the negative development of the other of reason. For him, we find a kind of resistance in these irregular characters – characters that represent a logic of thought that is also a model of resistance, just as he describes it in the second lecture.

Adorno and Horkheimer's interpretation, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, had already stressed that the objective of the "Enlightenment" in a broad sense, common to Sade and Nietzsche, was to take away the fear of men, a liberation that, however, "copes with fear by defecting to the agencies that inspire it [...]. What is infernal about wrong laughter is that it compellingly parodies what is best, reconciliation" (112). In contrast, for Foucault, Sade's novels, in which instrumental reason is deconstructed through the reversal of its effects, make visible in this *ironic* reversal the possibility of emancipation of the subject faced with the imposed modes of "normalization." Foucault therefore argues against Adorno and Horkheimer and attributes to Sade's discourse a radically historical emancipatory force that was not contemplated in the rational reversal of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Foucault maintains that the non-existence of God is not a theoretical thesis, confirmed once and for all as a truth that could be deduced from reasoning. The inexistence of God is anything that is carried out at *each moment* as evil of God, as "evil of God *in action*," within the person and the conduct of the libertine. It could be said that Sade's logic carries out a similar function in Foucault's work as the logic of Leibniz in Gilles Deleuze's *The Fold*. Both non-attributive logics formulate a subjectivity at every moment, as historical radical of *Da-sein*.

In its working, Sade's logic is anti-Russellian: if the logic of Russell bases the existence of the subject independently to its relation to the predicate, the logic of Sade is the inverse: the judgement of the inexistence of the attribution is supported upon the subject of the attribution. It is a logic that is equally foreign to Cartesian logic. In effect, Descartes's logic is made using an attributive judgement and reaches an existential judgement. Conversely, Sade begins with an attributive judgement of attribution not to reach an existential judgement but rather one of nonexistence. With Foucault, one can say that Sade's logic is rigorously *monstrous*, since between the "intuitionist" logic of Descartes, that necessarily rests on the idea of the existence of the idea and, therefore, on a possibility, and the formalist logic of Russell, Sade has come to construct a form of logic that is absolutely nonviable in terms of logic and from a judgement of attribution, "he reaches a judgement of the nonexistence of the very thing about which the attribution is made" (Foucault, *Language* 134). Therefore, this logic is a logic of the emancipation of the subject that is supported upon the subject of *desire*. Knowing and desiring coincide in Sade's proposal, overcoming the classical dialectic between the two.

As Judith Butler explains in *Subjects of Desire*,

when philosophers have not dismissed or subdued human desire in their effort to become philosophical, they have tended to discover philosophical truth as the very essence of desire. [...] To desire the world and to know its meaning and structure have seemed conflicting enterprises, for desire has signified an engagement of limited vision, an appropriation for use, while philosophy in its theoretical purity has presented itself as not needing the world it seeks to know. (1)

In Foucault's lecture on Sade, the relation between desire and truth is neither a rational desire nor does it establish a causal relation between the two. It enables the subject to act in relation to the truth of the desire itself, a real "art of living," as he shows in *The History of Sexuality*. For example, in the statement "God does not exist," truth and desire are united in a complex relation: it is because God is evil that libertines exist and the crueler the desires of the libertines, the truer it is that God does not exist. The truth of the non-existence of God and the multiplication of signs are thus connected to each other in a kind of unending process. The libertine annuls the laws of logic and of modern thought through desire. This is the desire of Sade's texts, desire as *liberation-domination*, desire as force that opposes, denies and destroys, in a system of power relations equally introduced in itself, folded upon itself: "God's nonexistence is fulfilled at every moment in Sade an discourse and desire" (136).

Power and desire and the two faces of this tension of forces. As Walter Privitera states in *Problems of Style*, "Foucault distinguishes between the "will to knowledge", which characterizes the dominant form of power since Plato, and "power" or "desire" which can be dated back to time in ancient Greek history when the truth of a discourse coincided with the power of whoever uttered it" (67).

Nevertheless, these non-existent monstrosities that are God, others, crimes, laws, nature, etcetera, are not illusions in the understanding of the eighteenth century. That is to say, they are not illusions that once discovered we will feel free of them. In contrast, Sade makes them chimeras. The chimera is defined by Foucault not as something that does not exist but as something that possesses another type of existence. That is to say, it is the mode in which "performative negativity" acts as a way of overcoming the "desire/truth" dialectic. The chimera moves thus to Sade's logic, in which the barrier of time is removed a repetitive world is established. Sade's logic guarantees that desire will always be true and nothing can ever invalidate it. It can be said that Sade's discourse does not suppose, as might be believed, the object of desire, but that desire and discourse are effectively the same object. Sade's writing introduces desire in the order of veridiction. The chimera sheds light on the same order of action in that which Foucault's definition of fiction made it. They show that the time of fiction is historical but not teleological or progressive. And it is in this order that veridiction also acts.

Foucault observes that these discourses vary according to different factors and depend on the situations. That is, there is no general system, there is no philosophy of Sade. Instead, there is a plurality of systems that are juxtaposed and that do not communicate with one another except through the network of the four fundamental theses (God, the soul, nature, law). Consequently, this discourse will have another function that consists of distinguishing in the very interior of the libertines that "the individuals cannot be reduced to one another," as the systems vary from individual to individual. There is thus no general system, as I have said, but one for each libertine, and this defines their singularity, what Sade calls "the irregularity of individuals". Every individual is irregular and their own irregularity is manifested, is symbolized, in their system, in what we can call their *style* or their *manner*, as defined by Marielle Macé and Giorgio Agamben, respectively.

Because of this, the true interlocutors to whom Sade's discourse is directed cannot be the characters who are the victims of the libertines. The true interlocutor, Foucault says, is the libertine other, is the one who is already emancipated by the work carried out on himself/herself. The discourse is directed from libertine to libertine, it does not aim to seduce. Therefore, the truth of Sade's text fulfils another of the key traits of parrhesia: it confronts persuasive rhetoric. In its repetitive telling it is capable of negating the existence – through the force of its writing – of God, the soul, nature or law. His writing is a "desire-passion" for writing, a writing that is capable of affirming other modes of being in such that the libertine-subject is constituted as self-affirmation (when the libertine affirms herself, God is negated).

In this way, Sade frees the desire within the great Platonic edifice, where desire is adapted to the sovereignty of truth. In fact, more than freeing, for Sade, Foucault says, "desire and truth were neither subordinate to each other nor separable from each other. [...] 'Desire is unlimited only in truth, and truth is active only in desire'," and this does not at all mean that, in the form of now recovered happiness or peace, "desire and truth will merge into an authoritative figure in the form of happiness or a newly rediscovered peace. Rather, desire and truth are endlessly multiplied in the unfolding, the scintillation, the infinite continuation of desire" (146). Ultimately, we can answer that the truth imperative that Sade attributes to his work, "I only tell the truth," coincides with the other "I desire." The truth of writing is

desire as performative force that transgresses the order of discourses, on the one hand, and the opening of subjectivity to new forms of being as irregular forms that had not formed part of political positivity or presence.

Foucault's analysis of Sade in these lectures thus completes the brief attention he gives to him in *The Will to Know*. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault presents Sade both as a transgression and also as a continuation of the Christian confessional practice of "telling all." His work in these "Lectures on Sade" entails, on the one hand, an advance of what was the crucial problem of the Foucauldian history of sexuality during the last years of his research, particularly after 1981 (Daniele Lorenzini 2016), which was to tackle those experiences that might make us and that enable us to say, "yes, it's true, I desire." On the other hand, the literary experience of Sade is analysed here as an example of the *negative* modern experience of aphrodisia, as a set of actions that mark relations with oneself and with others. It may be said that, in the same way that criticism lingers "darkly" in Sade's madness, classical *aphrodisia* – that is, desire as principle of action – is taken up anew in the marquis's writing. In this way Sade gives fiction, in terms of desire, a critical and emancipatory capacity of the subject as creative subject of self.

One should make note here of a correlation not mentioned by Foucault, but which is fundamental: the similarity between Sade's logic of desire, Foucault's ethic of care for oneself, and Spinoza's ethic of desire, because in all of them, freedom is connected with desire. That is to say, there is not a determination through action but a transformation of subjectivity through desire itself. For Spinoza, desire is the essence of man – a desire that compels Spinoza's *conatus* to be dynamic, as the maintenance of being requires a force/strength, "a striving for perseverance." Furthermore, in his definition of freedom at the beginning of the *Ethics*, Spinoza had already related truth with emancipation when he considered that the true idea is so because of its independence. In Spinoza, freedom is not tied to will but to desire. The ethics of will to be is likewise problematized by Spinoza. As opposed to the dominion of the passions by the conscience, Spinoza's philosophy ceases to be a must-be and the soul is necessarily conscious of itself by means of the ideas of the affections of the body and is, therefore, conscious of its effort (*conatus*).

To understand the subject of desire as the emancipated subject of Sade in these 1970 lectures, I am going to compare it to a range of subjectivity models that form part of Foucault's work. First, it is necessary to compare the lectures to those Foucault gave at the University of California, Berkeley, in November 1983, collected in *Discourse and Truth*. In these lectures, Foucault analyses the original concept of parrhesia through the tragedies of Euripides and, particularly in the lecture given on 7th November 1983, the crisis of the concept that occurs at a time when the democratic institutions and regime gave rise to many debates in Athens. For the first time, the parrhesiastes is countered by a figure, the herald. Foucault quotes a fragment from *Orestes* (408 BCE), in which the herald is described as one who utilizes rhetoric, "twisting eulogy and censure both together." The heralds, the messenger declares in *Orestes*, "have learnt to jump to the winning side; their friend is anyone who has power or a government office." The herald is not a slave, but does not speak with freedom, and does not make use of parrhesia because he is "subservient to those in power"; he is a servant.

Foucault also refers to the case of *The Trojan Women* (415 BCE), in which the herald, the same character who appeared in *Orestes*, Talthybius, does not believe Cassandra's predictions because "as a herald, he does not know what is true [...] but merely repeats what his master – Agamemnon – tells him to say" (*Fearless Speech* 57-61). The herald is someone who is incapable of saying or recognizing truth to the extent that he is not a free character and is restricted to repeating what his master has ordered him to say. For this reason, Foucault explains, he believes that Cassandra is mad. The herald is the unemancipated, politically subjected character, with epistemological consequences.

The contrast of the herald with Cassandra is particularly interesting. Remember that Cassandra tells the truth but the keys for understanding her truth-telling have been lost because Cassandra is no longer connected with divinity, as she has resisted submitting to the god Apollo. Cassandra represents truth-telling distanced from the maximum authority, the divine. Consequently, Apollo punishes her to being always misunderstood. Cassandra's truth-telling is no longer heard by her own people because she does not speak as a priestess enlightened by a god. Cassandra's truth no longer forms part of that magnetic chain described by Plato in *Ion* – she has broken the chain. She tells a truth that does not seduce, and thus the other antagonist of the tragedy is Helen, who represents a telling that is wholly opposite, seduction. Cassandra speaks an incomprehensible truth but the act of continuing to say it is, in itself, an act of resistance.

However, Foucault's study of Sade's work, as well as his examinations of other irregular or other infamous subjectivities, enables him to analyze the experience of the negativity of "*mal faire*," in contrast to the aesthetic of the "*cura sui*" typical of the classical era and Christian pastoral. This experience of

infamous subjects, therefore, shows the other expelled from enlightened discourse. Desire and truth are not opposed in Sade's logic, in the same way that they are not in the classical concept of parrhesia as expounded by Foucault. Nevertheless, the status of literature, particularly of what Foucault calls "bad literature," that which compressed the definition of the literary institution, is capable of saying what does not want to be seen or heard and puts its epistemological status at risk. In short, literature, in its historical dimension, is capable of creating spaces of *resistance* through the introduction of *excessive* discursive practices that interrupt the normativity of a particular historical moment (or episteme). And they do so from the very interior of this system.

Literature, therefore, places at its center the current debate for the search for alternative forms of narration in the crisis of the end of History. These narrative forms would belong to History itself and not to an outside: they are, using Giorgio Agamben's expression "in the hand's reach." Cassandra, like Sade's literature, tells a truth that is to keep telling the truth as resistance. Thus the separation between those who can speak and those who cannot does not answer to a metaphysical distinction (as later in Aristotle), it is rather a political distinction, a right of birth (associated with the demos), with epistemological consequences: fiction as epistemological framework that makes it possible to see certain elements that had remained hidden. Negativity in Foucault is always political and virtual.

Therefore, in his attention to the truth pronounced by Cassandra, as also happened with the writing of Sade, Foucault again highlights that veridiction is about an emancipatory telling that casts forth its consequences at specific historical moments. Parrhesia enables Foucault to see what is prior the ethics of the care of self, the radically political origin of the constitution of subjectivity. It is going to the origin of Greek democracy, where Foucault finds the narrative of self as political configuration of the demos. As he stated in 1977, in the lecture at the Collège de France entitled "Security, territory, population," the dimension of that which it must be made can only be manifested in a "field of real forces" that "cannot be created by a speaking subject alone."

Ultimately, as a result, we can draw consequences in two directions. Firstly, revising the place that literature occupies in Foucault's work gives it a political force that enables the development of a *fictional* capacity as alternative narrative and a *critical* capacity as "making see/revealing," in his particular revision of the concept of the gaze in western thought. Secondly, Sade's logic gives Foucault an alternative to the attributive logic that restrict the forms of being and that would be fundamental in the last stage of his philosophical production. And he advances, therefore, the link between truth and desire as performative truth in the subject, that subsequently develops in the concept of parrhesia in the lectures of the 1980s.

It is from this perspective that the consequences that the concept of fiction has in Foucault's work can be understood. Fiction, like desire, would function as a force that is no longer the power of the negative but the revealing of being at every instant as subject of self. Foucault's aesthetics are thus an ethics and a *tekné* of self. Hence, politics and ethics are at the basis of this concept. But more decisive is the consideration of the common good in this truth-telling of a free subject (parrhesia), because this practice is a critique and, in this sense, the subject that practices it puts his/her own life at risk. The definition of a free subject who cannot, as I have said, be configured other than in interrelation with others, and whose desire to live is a risk and a desire at the same time, is one of the core elements to understanding the scope of the political aesthetics of Foucault.

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