

Literature of the Self in Foucault: Parrhesia and Autobiographical Discourse

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Álvaro Luque Amo,

"Literature of the Self in Foucault: Parrhesia and Autobiographical Discourse"

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Abstract: In his article "Literature of the Self in Foucault: Parrhesia and Autobiographical Discourse" Álvaro Luque Amo analyzes the framework of Foucault's study of the technologies of the self. In his study, Michel Foucault analyses the practices of self-writing in the Graeco-Roman period. From this perspective, Foucault approaches the texts of classical authors to interpret what he calls a process of *ethopoiesis*, or construction of the subject: a subject who tells the truth about himself in the text. Foucault introduces concepts and ideas that are essential to understanding the evolution of autobiography and literature of the self. This article studies this Foucauldian perspective with the aim of considering these texts as a precedent of modern literature of the self. First, Pierre Hadot's objections to Foucauldian notions are discussed; secondly, this article analyses the concept of parrhesia as a precedent to a writing of truth. Lastly, all of the above is used in the final section of the article to connect Senecan texts with Montaigne's *Essays*, by way of illustration of the main thesis.

Álvaro LUQUE AMO

Literature of the Self in Foucault: Parrhesia and Autobiographical Discourse

This work is based on some of the theses set forth in "Literature and Self-Biopolitics: Michel Foucault's Contributions to the Theory of Autobiography" (Luque Amo). This article develops Foucault's main theories regarding the concepts derived from what he calls technologies of the self, subsequently relating them as a contribution to the main ideas concerning autobiographical writing. These Foucauldian concepts are thus placed in dialogue with the prevailing theories in the study of the autobiography, mainly those of Philippe Lejeune and Paul de Man, in order to tease out the possibilities of the writing on the care of the self in the classical era as autobiographical narrative, and consequently as a precursor to the models found in such writings within modern literature of Self, as Foucault himself coined it.

The main idea that Foucault develops in relation to the well-known technologies of the self in their written aspect is the notion of parrhesia. For Foucault, parrhesia is a "telling all" that he actually interprets as a much broader concept: for him, parrhesia is "the frankness, freedom, and openness that leads one to say what one has to say, as one wishes to say it, when one wishes to say it, and in the form one thinks is necessary for saying it" (*Hermeneutics* 372). Drawn from the texts of Euripides, who gives it a political meaning, the concept is explained by Foucault from two viewpoints: one ethical and the other technical. From the ethical perspective, the concept of parrhesia is interesting because it could transfer all the ethical considerations in Lejeune's autobiographical pact to the classical period. From the technical perspective, it is even more attractive insofar as Foucault contrasts it with rhetoric as a model of frank speaking, in such a way that it could be considered an example of intention of the autobiographical self.

One of the fundamental elements of the nature of parrhesia was evidently related to the famous Foucauldian technologies of the self. For Foucault, parrhesia was thus the "technical procedure or *tekhnē*, which are necessary, which are indispensable, for conveying true discourse to the person who needs it to constitute himself as a subject of sovereignty over himself and as a subject of veridiction" (*Hermeneutics* 372). Consequently, in classical texts parrhesia allowed the subject to become a sovereign subject, a subject of truth regarding himself. From this idea, Foucault describes two parrhesiastic practices of the classical period: epistles and *hypomnemata*. Foucault develops these two practices of care of the self as technologies of power allowing a process of internalization according to which the subject can be constituted as a subject of power. These practices, of course, also functioned as prior forms of modern literature of the self, as Foucault himself acknowledges in an interview, inasmuch as this internalization process maintains elements related with modern genres such as the autobiography, the diary, or epistolary literature. In this interview, Foucault expresses the ideas that give rise to this article:

It seems to me, that all the so-called literature of the self – private diaries, narratives of the self, and so on – cannot be understood unless it is put into the general and very rich framework of these practices of the self. People have been writing about themselves for two thousand years, but not in the same way. I have the impression – I may be wrong – that there is a certain tendency to present the relationship between writing and the narrative of the self as a phenomenon particular to European modernity. Now, I would not deny it is modern, but it was also one of the first uses of writing (*Ethics. Subjectivity* 277).

When Foucault speaks of literature of self, therefore, he comes quite close to what, in autobiography theory, is understood as autobiographical writing: autobiographies, personal diaries, letters, and a certain type of essay writing (Philippe Lejeune, father of autobiographical studies in France, defines these genres as "genres closely related to autobiography" [5] and already writes of "autobiographical texts" [27] as an encompassing label). Using his study of these practices in the classical period, Foucault finds a clear connection between them and modern autobiographical writing. I take this connection as the starting point for this article, while I conclude by linking Seneca with Montaigne and with the so-called literature of the self.

This article is based on an idea that problematizes the Foucauldian perspective of these practices as self-constituting practices of the subject, an idea taken from Pierre Hadot. Hadot was a well-known philosopher in the French world who was linked to Foucault in his final period, when Foucault acknowledged having sourced many of his theses from Hadot's work on Graeco-Latin spiritual exercises. Hadot's most distinguished work is, in this regard, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, where he develops a perspective of philosophical life in the different spiritual writings of the Graeco-Roman era. The most interesting result of the fruitful relationship between Hadot and Foucault to date are the numerous

objections that the former makes to the latter regarding the interpretation of certain ideas of the technologies of the self. Among the various objections set forth by Hadot, my main interest focuses on the following:

What Foucault calls "practices of the self" do indeed correspond, for the Platonists as well as for the Stoics, to a movement of conversion toward the self. One frees oneself from exteriority, from personal attachment to exterior objects, and from the pleasures they may provide. One observes oneself, to determine whether one has made progress in this exercise. One seeks to be one's own master, to possess oneself, and find one's happiness in freedom and inner independence. I concur on all these points. I do think, however, that this movement of interiorization is inseparably linked to another movement, whereby one rises to a higher psychic level, at which one encounters another kind of exteriorization, another relationship with "the exterior" (*Philosophy* 211).

Hadot thus bases his critique on what he considers Foucault's limited vision of these spiritual practices. In fact, Hadot uses the Stoics, and Seneca in particular, as an illustration of the argument that Stoics do not focus on the self, but rather on the best part of oneself, which Hadot interprets, through Seneca, as divine reason. For Hadot, "Seneca does not find his joy in 'Seneca', but by transcending 'Seneca'; by discovering that there is within him—within all human beings, that is, and within the cosmos itself—a reason which is a part of universal reason" (*Philosophy* 207). Moreover, as an example, Hadot himself cites Foucault's "self writing" in order to analyse the character of *hypomnemata*, concluding that these spiritual practices do not result in the construction of the self, but on the contrary, "like the other spiritual exercises, change the level of the self, and universalize it" (*Philosophy* 211). Furthermore, he produces the following paragraph, which is essential to understanding the nature of this article:

The miracle of this exercise, carried out in solitude, is that it allows its practitioner to accede to the universality of reason within the confines of space and time. For the monk Antony, the therapeutic value of writing consisted precisely in its universalizing power. Writing, says Antony, takes the place of other people's eyes. A person writing feels he is being watched; he is no longer alone, but is a part of the silently present human community. When one formulates one's personal acts in writing, one is taken up by the machinery of reason, logic, and universality. What was confused and subjective becomes thereby objective (*Philosophy* 211).

The concept of writing as technology for the transcendence of the personal self is Hadot's thesis. From the perspective of this essay, however, Hadot's thesis need not be in conflict with the Foucauldian consideration of spiritual exercises as a construction of the self and as *ethopoiesis*, that is, as "agent of the transformation of truth into ethos" (*Ethics. Subjectivity* 209)—the latter being understood as personality. In this sense, the Universalist character of these texts does not prevent the first consideration, but rather is the natural result derived from the potential of the writings. In other words, it is clearly possible to understand these texts as constructors of subjectivity, although this subjectivity, in being formalized through a text, is condemned to the universality that all texts susceptible to being analysed as literature entail (It needs to be clarified that this reflection is made within the Aristotelian framework; literature is universal compared to the concreteness of history. As Aristotle wrote: "for poetry tends to Express the universal, history the particular" [Butcher 35]. Literature is universal because it transcends subjectivity to raise it to objectivity, and this is how Hadot understands it in his explanations). Hence, from the starting point of this dichotomy between Hadot's and Foucault's theses, this essay proposes a broadening of these theses of autobiography (Luque Amo) within the context of Graeco-Latin technologies or practices of the self, with the ultimate aim of relating these practices with modern literature of the self.

Although it is in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* that Foucault develops his most interesting theses concerning autobiography, the root of his interest in practices of the self can be traced to his lectures of 1979-80, published as *Government of the Living*, in which the study of biopolitics is displaced by an analysis of the ways in which the subject relates to what is true and, in particular, how he confronts truthful speech in relation to himself. Foucault, although he has not yet developed what is propounded in these words, is very clear: "The problem is how and for what reasons truth-telling came to authenticate its truth, be asserted as manifestation of truth, precisely to the extent that the person speaking can say: It is me that holds the truth, and it is me that holds the truth because I saw it and because having seen it, I say it" (*Government* 49). The seeds of testimonial speech no doubt lie here. In fact, Foucault continues by offering examples such as the judicial witness or accounts of travel.

In relation to this, evidently, is the radical nature of the autobiographical truth, based solely on the will of the subject. In the following year's lectures, *Subjectivity and Truth*, Foucault newly raises a series

of significant points, posing fundamental questions on this topic: "if the subject is a subject, can he actually have access to the truth?" and "how can there be truth of the subject, even though there can be truth only for a subject?" (*Subjectivity* 10). While it is true that neither of the two lecture series yet focus on the problem of *ethopoiesis* and truthful speech in pre-Christian practices of self—the first lectures focus on the Christian confession and the second develop practices of sexuality—both convey reflections that ultimately culminate in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, which develops the concept of parrhesia, as yet uncited in either of the two previous lecture series. What is interesting regarding Hadot's objections is that Foucault does indeed go on to propose an analysis of the practices of self that stem from that "self", "myself", and "ego", all protagonists of "a lengthy history that does not exactly end up with, but arrives at a decisive point when Descartes can say 'myself'" (*Government* 50).

Foucault transfers this study of the self, and its ability to speak truthfully about itself, to writing, and specifically to literature, which is what interests me here due to the self's relation with autobiography. In *Technologies of the Self*, Foucault makes his starting point clear: "Taking care of oneself became linked to constant writing activity. The self is something to write about, a theme or object (subject) of writing activity. That is not a modern trait born of the Reformation or of romanticism; it is one of the most ancient Western traditions" (27-28). Foucault is pointing to the idea that modern literatures of the self do not emerge out of nowhere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but have a clear origin in the practices of the self within the context of Graeco-Latin spiritual exercises. In fact, his foremost thesis is that it is precisely in the Christian era that the conception of Graeco-Roman philosophy changes.

The key concept to understanding his perspective is ascesis, understood as a spiritual exercise of individual thought, which although from a Christian point of view always implies "certain renunciation of the self and of reality", in Stoicism "means not renunciation but the progressive consideration of self, or mastery over oneself" (*Technologies* 35). In this sense, Foucault is directly linking the constitution of the Cartesian subject with the capacity of the Stoics to say myself; it is in the Christian period when this cut occurs between the *ethopoietic* texts of the Graeco-Roman era and the autobiographical texts of modernity. The paradigmatic example is precisely that cited by Foucault: *Confessions*. Here, although the self starts off with certain relevance—Saint Augustine himself begs God to grant him space to relate the events of his life—and the tone is indeed autobiographical, it gives way to a theological character, as Manuel Garrido shows (Garrido 31). Thus, Augustine of Hippo renounces himself before God, this being the fundamental task of confession. It is precisely here that the words of Pierre Hadot should be analysed, insofar as he maintains that this loss of the self is also a fundamental characteristic of the Stoic and pre-Christian practices of the self. For Hadot, Foucault is overly disregarding of the universalistic dimension of these spiritual exercises. Such a dimension, in contrast to *ethopoiesis* and the narrative of self, would imply the overcoming of the self.

The objections of Hadot are thus confined to two perspectives: first, Hadot emphasises the attitude of the subject with respect to himself, "becoming aware of oneself as a part of nature, and a portion of universal reason" (*Philosophy* 211); second, this universalization is achieved by means of the written formulation of one's personal acts, as, with writing, "what was confused and subjective becomes thereby objective" (*Philosophy* 211). These distinctions regarding Foucault are extremely interesting for developing his ideas on the literature of the self as well as for responding to Hadot, using the concept that sustains these ideas: parrhesia.

To understand the first of Hadot's objections to Foucault, according to which the author of these spiritual exercises has a universalizing and liberating perspective of that self, it is worth taking up the latter's ideas on Christian and Graeco-Roman ascesis. The hypothesis developed by Foucault concerning these spiritual exercises in both contexts is very clear. His method is to contrast the two types of relations between the speaker and the listener of ascesis:

(...) in Christian spirituality it is the guided subject who must be present within the true discourse as the object of his own true discourse. In the discourse of the one who is guided, the subject of enunciation must be the referent of the utterance: this is the definition of confession. In Graeco-Roman philosophy, rather, the person who must be present within the true discourse is the person who guides. And he does not have to be present in the form of the utterance's reference (he does not have to speak about himself), and he is not present as the person who says: "This is what I am." He is present in a coincidence between the subject of enunciation and the subject of his own actions: "This truth I tell you, you see it in me" (*The Hermeneutics* 409).

Foucault's idea can be summarized as follows: while in ascesis in the context of Christian confession, the subject is subordinated to his listener within his discourse—hence the hegemonic case of the Augustinian confessions, addressed to God—in Graeco-Latin ascesis the subject is compelled to be present in his discourse, in that he is the only guarantor of the truth that he is stating. In this difference resides this change of perspective from Christian to Graeco-Latin ascesis. However, as Foucault himself

clarifies, in the case of Graeco-Latin writings on the self, one is not necessarily referring to autobiography—it is not a question of “talking about oneself.”

Guided by the same premises, in “Self Writing,” a text contested by Hadot, Foucault extends his contributions on what are known as technologies of the self. As seen earlier, it is here that Foucault points out the capacity of written exercises to create discourses based on ascesis; writing as self-training, in this regard, has “an ethopoietic function: it is an agent of the transformation of truth into ethos” (*Ethics. Subjectivity* 209). From this starting point, Foucault analyses the two ethopoietic forms par excellence in the Graeco-Roman era and early Christianity: *hypomnemata* and epistolary writing. While it is true that at all times Foucault avoids direct comparisons with autobiographical writing, when analysing these two forms of written ascesis he emphasizes that they are able to account for the self-construction of the subject in the text. Thus, although Foucault does try to differentiate *hypomnemata* from the personal diary, to the extent that they do not constitute a “narrative of oneself,” he later points out that they create an art of disjointed truth as the “selecting of heterogeneous elements” (*Ethics. Subjectivity* 212).

This is yet more evident in the case of correspondence, in which Foucault does find “the first historical developments of the narrative of the self” (*Ethics. Subjectivity* 217). In many epistolary texts of the time, Foucault finds a self that describes its day-to-day experience and is aware of the possibilities of self-representation of these everyday exercises. The author who offers the richest contribution to him in this area may well be Seneca, who points out the following in his Epistle 40: “If the Pictures of our absent friends are pleasing to us, though they only refresh the memory and lighten our longing by a solace that is unreal and unsubstantial, how much more pleasant is a letter, which brings us real traces, real evidences, of an absent friend! For that which is sweetest when we meet face to face is afforded by the impress of a friend's hand upon his letter,—recognition” (*Ad Lucilium I* 263-265).

Here, Seneca indisputably confirms Foucault's hypotheses regarding the *ethopoiesis* of some of these practices. The author is directly describing the “real evidence” left by the writer of the epistle: his “real traces.” And he ends with a defining element: the recognition of personality through writing. In this sense, it is evident that Seneca establishes an identity between the real subject and the discourse subject, and that the epistle can serve as a space for the construction of a self. Thus, Hadot's hypothesis that it would be “incorrect to speak of ‘writing of the self’” since “not only is it not the case that one ‘writes oneself,’ but what is more, is it is not the case that writing constitutes the self” (*Philosophy* 210-211), would contradict Seneca's text. In Seneca, the self is firm, and epistolary writing, as spiritual exercise, enables this construction of the subject, relating this type of writing to autobiographical writing. It would, in fact, be very close to the modern epistolary text, which has been considered as one of the great autobiographical genres. Nevertheless, this does not exclude a certain process of universalization of the self, inherent to all writing, as will now be seen, but it does blur Hadot's critique. Therefore, in relation to this Foucauldian hypothesis based on the change of how ascesis was conceived, a link may be established between the transformation of Stoic asceticism, characterized by its consideration of the self, and Christian asceticism, governed by the renunciation of the self.

In relation to the second objection, it must be assumed that, for Foucault, ascesis in the Graeco-Latin context is intent on constituting the subject as a subject of veridiction (*The Hermeneutics* 347). Through this idea he arrives at the communication established between teacher and disciple in the exercise of asceticism, in order to come up with the notion of parrhesia, which, as stated, is defined as saying everything, as absolute freedom of speech.

From a negative perspective, Foucault defines parrhesia as opposed to adulation and rhetoric—*ethos* and *techne*—and, in the latter case, he presents an idea that is very important for understanding the contrast between himself and Hadot. From the consideration of rhetoric as a technique in which truth does not matter, since its purpose is persuasion beyond whatever discourse it seeks to sustain, Foucault opposes it with parrhesia, which must be “the naked transmission, as it were, of truth itself” (*The Hermeneutics* 382). Correspondingly, parrhesia would not be considered an art, since it would ignore the techniques of discourse regarding its organization or its development as a narrative, although Foucault is the first to qualify this notion. While the distinction between rhetoric and parrhesia does seem clear, Foucault also points out that in a text such as *Peri Parresias*, by Philodemus, parrhesia is defined as an art and, more importantly, it is not exactly opposed to rhetoric. Foucault notes:

Of course, in its structure, in its game, the discourse of parrhesia is completely different from rhetoric. This does not mean that, in the tactic of parrhesia itself, in order to obtain one's intended outcome it may not be necessary from time to time to call upon some elements and procedures belonging to rhetoric. Let's say that parrhesia is fundamentally freed from the rules of rhetoric, that it takes rhetoric up obliquely and only uses it if it needs to (*The Hermeneutics* 385-386).

This clarification can be linked to the second of Hadot's objections in relation to the universalization of the self-constructed subject in the text. In this way, Foucault is assuming a certain capacity of the parrhesiastic text to overcome that naked transmission of truth itself. Thus, insofar as there is a written medium, the filter of the narrative objectifies the subjective nature of the self—an analysis that is clearly located in the vicinity of Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, and all post-structuralist thinkers related to Deconstruction. The potentiality of language to deconstruct that self would, at least partially, dissolve the solidity of this parrhesiastic subject. However, this would not contradict its ability to become a subject of veridiction through the ethical component of parrhesia. In this sense, it could be said that Hadot's hypothesis serves to extend Foucault's thesis in the context of writing of the self, rather than entirely challenging his theories regarding the concept of parrhesia. In fact, Hadot himself refers not so much to the flaws in Foucault's theory as to the insufficient development of this question in his text.

This can clearly be supported through the analysis of specific texts. To develop his theory of parrhesia, Foucault comments on three works: *Perí Parrhḗsías* by Philodemus; *On the Diagnosis and Cure of the Soul's Passion* by Galen; and Seneca's *Moral Epistles* to Lucilius. The most interesting texts for the development of this bare speech, as opposed to the art of rhetoric, are clearly the Senecan epistles. Throughout his written conversation with Lucilius, Seneca theorizes unsystematically about "speaking clearly," making several comments that Foucault draws on for his theory. In Epistle 40, therefore, Seneca states that "speech that deals with the truth should be unadorned and plain" (*Ad Lucilium I* 265); in Epistle 38 he points out the virtues of conversational tone (*Ad Lucilium I* 257); and finally, in Epistle 75, he expounds a whole poetics of his epistolary style: "I prefer that my letters should be just what my conversation would be if you and I were sitting in one another's company or taking walks together (...) for my letters have nothing strained or artificial about them" (*Ad Lucilium II* 137).

While these statements are fundamental for forming the concept of parrhesia as speaking clearly, opposed to all rhetoric, the truth is, paradoxically, that Seneca is proposing another set of rules for writing his epistolary texts: a style like that of simple speech, which is, after all, yet another writing model. And insofar as it is writing, it is also a territory in which the subject "endlessly disappears," as Foucault wrote in his "What is an Author?" (*Language, Counter-Memory* 116). This is precisely where the literary begins, when writing universalizes the protagonist that is narrated on the page. Therefore, although Hadot is correct with regard to how little this issue is developed—above all in the text of "Self Writing"—it is evident that Foucault leaves room in his theory for a possible reconstructive reading of the subject that describes himself in the text; a subject that is already starting to be literary.

Hadot's criticisms of Foucault could, in conclusion, be analysed from the standpoint of his interest in rigorously defining a type of exercise that evidently does not yet have the characteristics of later literature of the self. In this sense, one of his best-known works, *The Inner Citadel*, dismantles the attempts of certain authors to define the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius as an intimate diary. Here, Hadot makes his position clear: "I should state right away that, if we understand by 'diary' notes which one writes for oneself and which accumulate day after day, then we can indeed say, with G. Misch in his *History of Autobiography*, that the Emperor did write a 'diary' (...). If, however, we understand by 'diary' a writing to which one consigns the outpourings of one's heart and spiritual states, then the *Meditations* are not a 'diary', and the fact that Marcus Aurelius wrote his *Meditations* does not allow us, as Renan claimed, to know whether or not the Emperor had an uneasy soul" (27).

As can be seen, Hadot ultimately tries to demystify the autobiographical character of the *Meditations*, and he attempts to do something very similar when shifting the viewpoint of this Foucauldian self in the study of spiritual exercises. However, it would be fairly safe to say that such "outpourings of his spiritual states" are present in Seneca's cited epistles, and they undoubtedly contain an *ethopoiesis* that anticipates modern literature of the self (Foucault maintains the following here: "In Seneca and Marcus Aurelius, occasionally in Pliny as well, the narrative of the self is the account of one's relation to oneself; there one sees two elements stand out clearly, two strategic points that will later become the privileged objects of what could be called the writing of the relation to the self: the interferences of soul and body (impressions rather than actions), and leisure activity (rather than external events)" [*Ethics. Subjectivity* 217]). In this sense, it could be said that the universalization of that self is present in Stoic practices, but always after a self that describes itself in the presence of its speaker and self-constructs itself in the text. This universalization of the self is precisely what leads to the literary, broadening, rather than limiting, the Foucauldian study of these texts. They are not a life narrative in a modern sense (Foucault himself is conscious of this: "I want to underscore the fact that in Stoicism it's not the deciphering of the self, not the means to disclose secrecy, which is important; it's the memory of what you've done and what you've had to do" [*Technologies* 35]), but they prefigure, as will now be seen, the nature of modern writing of the self.

In connection with the above, there is a clear idea in Foucauldian thinking that is not to be ignored: a fundamental premise lies behind the intention to study the evolution in thinking regarding the care for the self from the Graeco-Roman to the Christian era, which is the loss of freedom for the subject describing himself. With this in mind, the difference between the Graeco-Roman and Christian eras is that in the Christian era, according to Foucault, care for the self "became somewhat suspect," while in the earlier era it manifested as "the mode in which individual freedom—or civic liberty, up to a point—was reflected as an ethics" (*Ethics. Subjectivity* 284). This is indeed the connecting feature between the Graeco-Latin period and modernity, and the reason why it is worth studying the direct influences of a classical author such as Seneca, exponent of parrhesia, on Foucault, on Montaigne, the first figure in modern self literature; of the self in absolute freedom.

It has often been stated, and it is almost a convention in the studies of the genre, that although their content need not be analysed from an autobiographical perspective, the *Essays* of Montaigne are both the summit and the beginning of modern literature of the self. As pointed out at the beginning of his work, Montaigne starts from a simple basis, "I myself am the subject of my book" (53). In order to self-construct himself in the text, he uses the disjointed poetics of the essayistic: "Here I want to be seen in my simple, natural, everyday fashion, without striving or artifice: for it is my own self that I am painting" (Montaigne 53). Someone like Borges, in this sense, will ratify this intention, describing Montaigne as the father of literary intimacy (521). Accordingly, in this construction of the literary subject as a solid and conscious self, the reading of Seneca is essential, and his epistles to Lucilius in particular. As Pierre Grimal, one of the most important scholars of Seneca, points out, this text by the classical author and Montaigne's *Essays* are close relatives from the same spiritual family (360). Karl Alfred Blüher is along the same lines when he states that in both texts the presence of a 'Self' is constant (628) and the recognition of an individual wisdom appears. This link between Seneca and Montaigne will also crystallize in connections that interest this work directly. Grimal states: "In both works, the author has the same way of rising from anecdote to meditation, from instant to eternal. (...) To Seneca, any means will do to make his friend grasp a truth, a serious intuition" (Dans les deux ouvrages, l'auteur a la même façon de s'élever de l'anecdote à la méditation, de l'instantané à l'éternel. (...) Tout est bon à Sénèque pour faire saisir à son ami une vérité, une intuition grave) (360). The parallelism with the foregoing is evident: according to Grimal, in both Montaigne and Seneca there is that intention to move from the anecdotal to the eternal, from the subjective to the universal. This brings us to Hadot's theses, while at the same time his objections to Foucault could be contradicted, to the extent that Montaigne's self is both private and universal. In this sense, there is a direct connection between that self in Seneca and the self of Montaigne, and both would clearly be located in the vicinity of the autobiography, as will be seen later.

The trace of Seneca in Montaigne is not reduced solely to the literary elevation of the ordinary, but it is also possible to speak of a legacy of parrhesia. In his *Essays*, Montaigne speaks of his stylistic poetics in writing: "a beautiful body prevents the bones and veins from being counted. The eloquence that turns our attention away from things harms and damages them" (407). There is therefore a direct link with Seneca's bare speech, and he provides further detail: "My natural style is that of comedy, but one whose form is personal to me, a private style unsuited to public business—as is my language in all its aspects, being too compact, ill-disciplined, disjointed and individual; and I know nothing about formal letter-writing where the substance consists in merely stringing courtly words together. I have neither the gift nor the taste for all those long drawn-out offers of affection and service" (Montaigne 293).

As can be seen, the style of parrhesia, removed from rhetoric, is vital in Montaigne to understand the construction of what is sincere, private and intimate in his *Essays*. If Foucault defines parrhesiastic speech as "the naked transmission of truth itself," Montaigne is very close to it when he points out that he hates "to sound like a flatterer; which means that I naturally adopt a dry, blunt, raw kind of language" (268). That is not the only example: in another passage Montaigne harshly criticizes rhetoricians, insofar as they "either make up the whole story or else disguise and pollute some source of truth" (82).

Montaigne's poetics are very clear in this respect: the speech in his *Essays* is the free speech of parrhesia; that "I myself," which is the material of his text, can only be constructed out of truthfulness. Moreover, Montaigne discusses an absence of rules in his style. Here lies the direct comparison between the poetics of his *Essays* and Foucauldian theories: parrhesia is that which flees from the rule, because it is based on the freedom of true discourse. Montaigne states: "I like the kind of speech which is simple and natural, the same on article as on the lip; speech which is rich in matter, sinewy, brief and short; not so much titivated and refined as forceful and brusque—gnomic rather than diffuse, far from affectation, uneven, disjointed and bold—let each bit form a unity—not schoolmasterly, not monkish, not legalistic" (214). This distancing from affected discourse and, above all, from the rule—in this case rhetoric—closely connects Montaigne to Seneca. The influence is so clear that even Montaigne cites the most famous passage in Seneca's Epistle 40: "speech that deals with the truth should be unadorned

and plain" (*Ad Lucilium I* 265). Montaigne thus employs truthful discourse to construct a text that, though not autobiographical insofar as it is not exactly a life story, does construct the figure of a self that narrates itself, its thoughts, its routine, its intimacy, with absolute sincerity. This is, in fact, a perfect way to define the text in the *Essays* as the first text of modern literature where the only rule is the sincerity of the subject describing himself. There is no confessor; there is no receiver who expects the account of a life. There is only the free thought of the first modern essayist. Here, of course, resides Foucault's parrhesia.

The following conclusion can therefore be ventured: modern literature of the self, as Foucault maintained, has a clear origin in certain spiritual exercises of the Graeco-Roman age that is related to *ethopoiesis* and self-construction in the text. If Montaigne himself, as Grimal argues, bases the conception of his *Essays* directly on Seneca, it is evident that there is a triangular relation between these two authors and the emergence of modern literature of the self, a context in which new autobiographical genres develop. Although it would be necessary to analyse this relationship between Montaigne and the autobiography in a more detailed way, the truth is that his crusade to paint himself in his *Essays* has a very similar nature, and even his influence on subsequent autobiographical literature is evident.

The *Confessions* of Rousseau, for example, have been connected with the *Essays*. Apparently, Rousseau had written a preface for the *Confessions* that was left unpublished, the *Neuchatel Preface*, in which he quoted Montaigne in order to accuse him of false sincerity, yet in this same preface he defends several ideas that align him with the positioning of Montaigne (Llinàs 118). There are even repeated elements, like the legacy of Seneca's frank speech: "So I take my sides with style, as with things. I will not endeavour to make it uniform; I will have the style that comes to me, I will change styles according to my mood without qualms, I will say everything as I feel it, as I see it, without searching, without embarrassment, without bothering about the muddle. (...) my uneven and natural style, sometimes fast and sometimes diffuse, sometimes wise and sometimes crazy, sometimes serious and sometimes cheerful, will be part of my story" (Je prends donc mon parti sur le style comme sur les choses. Je ne m'attacherai point à le rendre uniforme; j'aurai toujours celui qui me viendra, j'en changerai selon mon humeur sans scrupule, je dirai chaque chose comme je la sens, comme je la vois, sans recherche, sans gêne, sans m'embarrasser de la bigarrure. (...) mon style inégal et naturel, tantôt rapide et tantôt diffus, tantôt sage et tantôt fou, tantôt grave et tantôt gai fera lui-même partie de mon histoire) (Rousseau).

Consequently, in spite of such an accusation from Rousseau—which, nevertheless, reveals his desire to show his own true self—the influence of Montaigne on the first author of modern autobiography is evident. Montaigne also kept a *Travel Journal* and was aware of the possibilities of autobiographical narrative—in his *Essays* he discusses the virtues of the accounting journal kept by his father. In another passage of his essays he further defines his poetics: "I do not paint the Self. I paint the step: not the passage from one age to another (...), but day by day, minute by minute" (Montaigne 821). That writing of everyday life, which is the writing of everyday life in Seneca's epistles, is, predictably, quite close to autobiography.

Having analysed the texts of Seneca and other authors of the classical period, one cannot but emphatically affirm the need to construct the general framework that Foucault states is necessary in order to understand the origin and formation of the so-called "Literature of the Self." Indeed, there is a pattern of writing that connects Seneca and Marcus Aurelius with Montaigne and, in turn, Montaigne with Rousseau. This pattern has much to do with the notion of parrhesia that Foucault develops in the final part of his work, especially in his lectures at the Collège de France, a notion that acts as one of the unquestionable vehicles of modern autobiography.

Thus, although Hadot is right to qualify the development of the self in these texts, the textual elements of individual development, later to be found in the personal texts of subsequent centuries, are already present in Seneca. In fact, as has been shown, it is precisely this universalization of the self that allows us to speak of literature in these texts of the Graeco-Latin period: the Senecan self, as was the case with Montaigne, develops within the text from the starting point of the private and particular to a public and universal character. Contrary to Hadot's thinking, there is no contradiction between these texts arising from such practices and their consideration as Literature of the self—in fact, all that was lacking to establish this was Foucault's development of this theme. As Grimal pointed out, the self rises from the instantaneous to the eternal, the very place where the literary is to be found.

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