

Küsse, Bisse, Ergo Sum: Penthesilea's Furious Cogito. Reconsidering the Foucault-Derrida debate through the rhetoric of cannibalism

Küsse, bisse, ergo sum: El cogito furioso de Penthesilea. Reconsiderando el debate Foucault-Derrida a través de la retórica del canibalismo

Küsse, bisse, ergo sum: O cogito furioso de Penthesilea. Reconsiderando o debate Foucault-Derrida através da retórica do canibalismo

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Abstract

In his 1989/90 EHESS seminar, *Politiques de l'amitié: Manger l'autre*, Jacques Derrida reads the final scene of Heinrich von Kleist's *Penthesilea* aiming to demonstrate the systematic articulation of the following motifs: cannibalism, animality, the idiomatic quality of all signifying production, and the principal division of the subject or scene of every experience. Building on this, after outlining the main traits of Derrida's conception and a reading of Kleist's drama's finale through Derrida's lens, we will highlight the elements that make it possible to question Michel Foucault's early association of literature with madness, as well as his later opposition between a good and a bad *parrhesia*. Despite their chronological and programmatic distance, this correlation and this opposition seem to be supported by the same gesture: the sublimation —or perhaps confinement— of a particular type of madness.

Keywords: Derrida, Kleist, Foucault, Madness, Idiom, Cannibalism, Rhetoric.

Resumen

En su seminario de 1989/90 en la EHESS, *Politiques de l'amitié: Manger l'autre*, Jacques Derrida analiza la escena final de *Penthesilea* de Heinrich von Kleist con el objetivo de mostrar la articulación sistemática de los siguientes motivos: el canibalismo, la animalidad, la cualidad idiomática de toda producción significativa y la división principal del sujeto o de la escena de toda experiencia. Sobre esta base, tras exponer los rasgos principales de la concepción de Derrida y realizar una lectura del desenlace del drama de Kleist orientada por la lectura de Derrida, esbozaremos los elementos que permiten cuestionar la correlación temprana que Michel Foucault establece entre literatura y locura, así como su oposición posterior entre una buena y una mala *parrhesía*. A pesar de su distancia cronológica y programática, dicha correlación y dicha oposición parecen estar sostenidas por el mismo gesto: la sublimación – si no es un encierro – de un tipo particular de locura.

Palabras clave: Derrida, Kleist, Foucault, locura, idioma, canibalismo, retórica.

Resumo

No seu seminário de 1989/90 na EHESS, *Politiques de l'amitié: Manger l'autre*, Jacques Derrida analisa a cena final de *Penthesilea* de Heinrich von Kleist com o objetivo de mostrar a articulação sistemática dos seguintes motivos: o canibalismo, a animalidade, a qualidade idiomática de toda produção significativa e a divisão principal do sujeito ou da cena de toda experiência. Com base nisso, após expor as principais características da concepção de Derrida e realizar uma leitura do desfecho do drama de Kleist orientada pela leitura de Derrida, esboçaremos os elementos que permitem questionar a correlação precoce estabelecida por Michel Foucault entre literatura e loucura, assim como sua oposição posterior entre uma boa e uma má *parrhesia*. Apesar da distância cronológica e programática, essa correlação e essa oposição parecem estar sustentadas pelo mesmo gesto: a sublimación – se não for um confinamento – de um tipo particular de loucura.

Palavras-chave: Derrida, Kleist, Foucault, loucura, idioma, canibalismo, retórica.

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Der Franzose sagt “l'appétit vient en mangeant”, und dieser Erfahrungssatz bleibt wahr, wenn man ihn parodiert und sagt “l'idée vient en parlant”.

À la longue, je fus convaincu que je voyais face à face la folie du jour. Cette découverte fut un coup de dent à travers ma vie.

According to Jacques Derrida, literary writing—like the mother tongue—is defined by its idiomatic character, and the idiom itself is in turn marked by a certain “madness”¹: absolutely singular, yet nonetheless improper (Derrida, 1998). After clarifying this conception through an unpublished text in which Derrida employs it forcefully, we will return to the debate between Derrida and Michel Foucault. In our view, the motif of the idiom plays here a discreet yet decisive role, one that is moreover capable of challenging the relation Foucault establishes between literature and madness, as well as between philosophy and rhetoric. Our critical hypothesis concerning Foucault is as follows: despite the differences among the successive phases of his work—archaeology, genealogy, critical ontology, and the analysis of practices of subjectivation—the recourse to the Greek model provides the grounding of his method. This grounding entails a double sacrifice: first, a “sacrifice of rhetoric” (Foucault, 2010, p. 352), and second, the sacrifice of a certain madness. We will thus consider why these two sacrifices necessarily imply one another.

In order to deploy this hypothesis we will adopt a Derridian perspective, drawing notably on the theme of the present special issue: the motif of cannibalism, which, as shown by Valeria Campos Salvaterra², mobilizes the grounding assumptions of this perspective. In particular, we will delve into the relation established here among cannibalism, animality, idiom, and “madness”. If this correlation rests on a psychoanalytical interpretation of incorporation and expression³—our further interpretive stance is as follows: Derrida’s insistence on madness in relation to idiom (hence, as we will see, to literary and “poematic” expression) also bears the traces of his notorious dispute with Foucault, and can be mobilized accordingly. Recent work by Derrida specialist Geoffrey Bennington shows how this dispute intervenes in the late Foucauldian definition of a good against a bad parrhesia (Bennington 2016, pp. 14-20), this distinction resting on a classical Socratic-Platonic stance. This seems counterintuitive if compared to his earlier “Nietzschean” vein. In this respect, Bennington points out Foucault’s late statement according to which “Heidegger ha[d] always been for [him] the essential philosopher” (Foucault 2001, p. 1522). Hence our further interpretive wager: Foucault’s late distinction is in fact systematic with the early writings on madness, and this continuity becomes more visible if his reliance on a mythical “Greek” paradigm—Platonic, even, in the late seminars, Heideggerian in the early musings on the artistic expression of madness⁴—is taken into account. Moreover, as we will argue, this continuity bears on the *exclusion*, in both contexts, of one and the same kind of madness: *lyssa*, fury, animal rage. Thus Derrida’s—possibly programmatic—articulation of idiom, animality and madness helps to spot

1 I render here Derrida’s “folie” as “folly” rather than “madness” (as in Derrida, 1998). In what follows I will always render “folie” as “madness”, but the original lemma is worth stressing.

2 As shown by Valeria Campos Salvaterra (2020, 2021, 2023a, 2023b, 2024a, 2024b).

3 In this respect, I would like to refer the reader to De Michele (2021a).

4 For the contemporary relevance of the reception of Foucault’s texts on linguistic and literary performativity, see Lorenzini (2017) and Blanco (2020, 2023).

this exclusion. But there is more to this: if the Foucault-Derrida debate continues to raise interest, the discussion is waged on the plane of the definition of historicity and reason⁵, and grounded on the archive of its early outburst. This also seems the case if one considers its quieter hints (e.g. the motifs of *episteme* and *order* in Derrida's 1968 "La différance," or the *trace* and *subjectivity* in Foucault's 1969 *Archaeology of Knowledge*), Derrida criticizing a linear conception of historicity and Foucault a reproduction of transcendental ideality. Yet, the motif of cannibalism makes it perceptible that a Derridian reading does not incubate "lasting foundations," (Foucault, 1989, p. 6) but rather a radically situated perspective: this is what makes it possible to spot the traditional Foucauldian presuppositions and dualisms, and also, as we will assume drawing again on Bennington, Foucault's "fudginess" in determining the—material, historical, idiomatic, animal: *furiosus*—conditions of possibility of his "enunciative position" (Bennington, 2016, p. 44-45).

Manger: c'est la folie

In the first session of his 1989–1990 seminar *Politiques de l'amitié: Manger l'autre*—unpublished, like the subsequent *Rhétorique du cannibalisme* (1990–1991)—Derrida comments on the final scene of *Penthesilea*, the one-act play conceived by Heinrich von Kleist in 1806. With the exception of this occasion, Derrida did not engage directly with Kleist's work. Following Paul de Man, he later refers to *Über das Marionettentheater*, with regard to the motifs of machinality and the prosthetic organization of the body, as well as to the dismemberment and reassembly of a signifying body, including the verbal (Derrida, 2002, 2011). He does not, however, return to *Penthesilea*. By contrast, Kleist occupies an important place for an author close to Derrida, Hélène Cixous (1976, 1991; Cixous and Clément, 1986), who approached the tragedy through the destabilization of sexual difference in the face-to-face encounter between the Amazon and Achilles. While De Man's and Cixous's perspectives are not absent from Derrida's reading, his commentary on *Penthesilea* develops a distinct motif: cannibalism, the devouring appropriation of the other. His aim is to grasp what it means to "eat the other," and what every *vouloir dire* (every meaning, every will to meaning, or every will to say) owes to an incorporation of alterity—an incorporation that is never without desire or eroticism, never without hunger, and never without a certain sadism.

This motif was not new for Derrida. In the mid-1970s he had pursued it extensively in *Glas*, "Économimesis," and "Fors." Indeed, the complication of the purity of orality—and thus of the production and idealization, through the voice, of any signifier or signified—marks his deconstruction of phonologocentrism and his grammatological project. In the period of the aforementioned seminars, Derrida takes up this problem again, as attested by "Eating Well," *Circonfession*, *Memoirs for Paul de Man*, and the first version of *On Touching*. In these works, he addresses the correlation between the questions of animality and idiom, a correlation that may be condensed into a defining synthesis: the idiom is animal.

⁵ See Rae (2025) and Trujillo (2023), also for essential references.

For Derrida (1995a, p. 119), what is idiomatic is “a propriety that one cannot appropriate”: one’s language, for example, which is radically singular yet impossible to master—just as any semiotics or any corporeality is. But: i) there is no tongue (as linguistic system) without a tongue (as organ); ii) a tongue also serves, necessarily, to savor and to roll morsels, to nourish oneself; iii) in line with a long post-Aristotelian tradition, nutrition is understood as a faculty that defines sublunar animality and as an essential determination of touching; iv) finally, in this same tradition, what is said to define what is proper-to-man—namely, the possession of logos and of the self, reason—is, by contrast, “the purity of auto-affection” (Derrida 1997, p. 98), that is, a contact with oneself unhindered by corporeality and its needs. From these premises one can deduce the following: insofar as idiom cannot exist without a tongue that eats, it is not “proper-to-man.” It may therefore be defined as “animal.”

But also as “mad”. In *Monolingualism of the Other* (initiated in 1992) Derrida maintains that a condition of “ex-appropriation” (i.e. the inappropriability of all property mentioned above) characterizes every relation one has to one’s body, psyche, or tongue. It thus describes experience in general, conceived in terms of “auto-hetero-affection” (impure affection, contact, or seizure of oneself by oneself). “This structure of alienation without alienation, this inalienable alienation, is not only the origin of our responsibility, it also structures the peculiarity [*le propre*] and property of language” (Derrida, 1998, p. 25). Yet this very structure is described as madness (p. 39). The madness of language is one case—albeit a privileged one—of an absolutely general structure: “madness” names here the relation between the singularity of any instance that may present itself and the unlimited generality of the structure of these presentations. Yet, this madness is not only logical: it designates the fabric of a radical historicity. There is—alienation. This literally implies a generalized incapacity properly to intend and to will. *Schizis* is the thematic and performative model Derrida adopts for this alienation. “I am many, I am divisible. And as you know, divisibility is the ultimate resort of deconstruction,” he says, claiming to have learned it from psychoanalysis (Derrida, 2016, p. 166).

This definition of his fundamental positions offers a glimpse of the terms of his disagreement with Foucault. If, following the definitions above, one holds that idiom is both “mad” and “animal,” and that this animality is defined by the necessity of feeding oneself, then this amounts, roughly, to saying that eating is madness—or that madness is eating. We are also not far from calling madness the “cliff-face [*escarpement*] over the abyss [*gouffre*] of the *œuvre’s* absence” (Foucault, 2006a, p. 536), unless it is the silent tongue that guides the work toward its esophagus—for eating requires a mouth, an orifice, a chaos, a chasm, a gulf (*culfus*, κόλπος, *gouffre*)⁶. What does it entail to evoke eating and the mouth in relation to madness, when this correlation is determined, as in Derrida, by the reference to psychoanalysis and the motif of idiomatic expression, or rather, as in Foucault, by a subtle Heideggerian reference and the motif of the artwork?

Seeking to grasp this imperfect parallelism, we turn to what Kleist suggests in this regard, aided by Derrida’s commentary—whose interest is precisely driven by a certain madness of language, a madness also of the lips, the teeth, and the hands. By an erotic delirium, suspended between hunger and desire, but also by a delirium of the idiom, exposed in its irrefutable logic through the *mekhané* of an improvised poem, a prosaic rhyme. A delirium that was, from the outset, biopolitical.

6 See De Michele (2024).

Baiser: le poème

Our reading will aim to identify how, from a Derridian perspective, the motif of cannibalism determines the conception of idiomatic expression, which in turn determines (in Derrida as in Kleist) the form *and* content of an “artwork” (the drama we will analyze), a content that, finally, in turn describes an awakening to consciousness—a *cogito*⁷—determined by a form of madness—more precisely, by an outburst of fury.

Since *Penthesilea's* narrative arc is already known, let us focus on the scene that Derrida comments on. An inversion of the consecrated relation between Penthesilea and Achilles crystallizes in the finale of Kleist's drama. Here, it is she who, having killed him, leans over the other to kiss him: *sie küsst ihn (she kisses him)* (Kleist, 1987, p. 254)⁸. This kiss is more chaste than the one Achilles bestows on the dead in the canonical version of the myth. Penthesilea's transgression is not necrophilia. She does not seek to possess the other in death, but in life. Moreover, Achilles's conversion of warlike aggressivity into erotic aggressivity occurs (traditionally) diachronically: after piercing the Amazon's armor with his spear, killing her, and unveiling her body, he falls in love with her. With Kleist⁹, Achilles still undergoes a (double) reversal: his attitude shifts from warlike to erotic, and his role from active to passive, since he accepts being defeated in battle in order to be possessed as amorous prey. But Penthesilea does not: it is precisely because she does not recognize this ruse of diachrony, and because she is subjected to the immanent contradiction of her own warlike-erotic passion-drive, that, after wounding him with her arrow, she tears and devours the other's—his—body. In his turn, like an Actaeon before his hounds, it is because he remains paralyzed before Penthesilea's incomprehensible ambivalence, that Achilles falls prey to her mad passion. Therefore, the Amazon's transgression consists in wanting Achilles alive, but in an ambivalent, divided, and excessive manner. Mad? This label is far from self-evident, as we will see. Transgressive? Again, it demands nuanced consideration. Obscene might be a better description.

Penthesilea has, thus, killed Achilles. The finale unfolds *after* this action: it serves as an appendix to the narrative arc. The action can only be described by a witness who, turning her back to the place of the massacre, presents herself as a petrifying Gorgon. But if the action is obscene, the finale is monstrous. For here, Penthesilea becomes aware of her deed—and more than that, she claims it. She explicitly justifies it as the most rational and natural course of action. It is too much to say that she indeed justifies it: the justification befalls her, coming to her as if by accident. But this accident, this *mekhané*, does not untangle the knot of the drama. On the contrary, it confirms the tragic generality, the tragic mechanism of reality itself; its madness.

Penthesilea has killed Achilles, and her sisters and subjects attempt to repress what has happened, by rationalizing it: the war is over, and the foundational act of Tanaïs, the first of the Amazons, is repeated in this murder, a form of reparation

⁷ I shall stress that in *Manger l'autre* Derrida does treat Descartes *cogito* in relation to the problem of (namely, Eucharistic) incorporation.

⁸ The French “*baiser*”, to kiss, also literally means “to fuck”. Hence, French translator Julien Gracq renders “*sie küsst ihn*” with “*elle l'embrasse*”, which means to kiss, but also literally corresponds to “embrace”. In Derrida's gloss, the equivocity of “*baiser*” is operative. See the following passage: “Penthesilea says that having killed with a kiss [*baiser*], having bitten to blood and to death while she desired to kiss [*embrasser*], while she desired to desire and that she loved to kiss [*à embrasser*] or loved madly [*à mourir*], that was a mistake, a misunderstanding, a fault of the senses or of sense” (Derrida 1990, p. 16). Translation from this text will be mine. On the kiss, referring to Kleist, see Miller (2005).

⁹ On fury in Kleist, see Dumoulié (2000).

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for the crime that marked the origin of their State; Artemis' wrath is now satisfied. And yet, Tanaïs' act was also a suicidal one; and above all, Penthesilea's brutal aggression transcends the logic of debt and reparation, beyond the framework of any conventional warfare, beyond any statal rationale. This is why Prothoë, the one closest to the queen, would have preferred her not to emerge anymore from the eclipse of understanding (*Verstandes Sonnenfinsterniß*) she was plunged into after committing her action. Nevertheless, Penthesilea comes back to herself. She inquires, and she learns that Achilles is dead. She regrets this—she would have wished to appropriate him as an amorous prey, in accordance with Amazon law—but in the end, she accepts it. By contrast, she cannot accept the insult committed against a body that, in its current state, neither death, life, nor even pity claims (and yet, she will kiss it). She asks who has “killed the dead” in such a manner (*Wer mir den Todten tödtete, frag' ich*) and will learn that she has, in such a manner, killed the living.

This entire process, these explanations, unfolds on the margins of speech. Penthesilea discovers the forms, objects, and traces of the crime, yet “the question itself, like the mouth, must remain sealed on the subject of this subject” (Derrida, 1990, p. 11). “Do not ask!” the High Priestess shouts at her.

From this, she deduces:

What! I? You mean I —him? —

Beneath my dogs— ?

You mean that, with these hands, these little hands—?

And with this mouth, these lips that swell with love—?

Oh made for such a different service than— !

They helped each other, spurred each other on,

Mouth first and hand, and hand and mouth again—? (Kleist, 1998, p. 144)

Was Ich? Ich hätt' ihn —?

Unter meinen Hunden —?

Mit diesen kleinen Händen hätt' ich ihn —?

Und dieser Mund hier, den die Liebe schwellt —?

Ach, zu ganz anderm Dienst gemacht, als ihn —!

Die hätten, lustig stets einander helfend,

Mund jetzt und Hand, und Hand und wieder Mund —?

This deduction proceeds by aposiopesis: through reticence and its forcing. Derrida underlines the non-apophantic and gesticulatory character of this verbality and of the Amazons' reactions. Following one last denial (she would like to alienate herself from truth, and her companions would prefer her to be alienated) Penthesilea finally comprehends what has happened, and why Achilles did not defend from her assault: he had shown at the duel to be defeated and to render himself to her. He was cunning, deceitful, and Penthesilea, in the outburst of her passion, has been fooled by the other's ambivalence. But her own *eros* was also carried by a—differently powerful—ambivalence, by which Achilles has been—fatally—fooled. Penthesilea grasps these ambivalences only after the fact. And she understands having kissed to death, or killed with kisses, the other.

Küsse, Bisse, Ergo Sum: Penthesilea's Furious Cogito...

Did I kiss him to death?

[...]

— So it was a mistake. A kiss, a bite,
The two should rhyme, for one who truly loves,
With all her heart can easily mistake them. (Kleist, 1998, p. 145)

Küßt' ich ihn tot?

[...]

– So war es ein Versehen. Küsse, Bisse,
Das reimt sich, und wer recht von Herzen liebt,
Kann schon das Eine für das Andre greifen.

It was a mistake—*ein Versehen*. She had taken (*gegriffen*), clawed, and bitten one word for another. Addressing Achilles before kissing him to death, she says: “*Ich habe mich bloß versprochen, weil ich der raschen Lippe Herr nicht bin*”— “I merely misspoke, for I am not master of the rushing lip.” What she truly meant, however, was that she loves him. Penthesilea thus seems to work through her grievance, attempting to rationalize it in the wake of her own crime. Yet this is not the climax of her deduction. After one more silence, responding only to the gradual unfolding of her thoughts and to the mechanical necessity of the rhyme (*Küsse, Bisse, das reimt sich*), she takes one final step beyond reason. This marks a true awakening of conscience: a *cogito*.

How many a maid will say, her arms wrapped round
her lover's neck: I love you, oh so much
Thai if I could. I'd eat you up right here
And later, taken by her word, the fool!
She's had enough and now she's sick of him.
You see. my love, that never was my way.
Look: When my arms were wrapped around your neck,
I did what I had spoken, word for word;
I was not quite so mad as it might seem. (Kleist, 1998, pp. 144-145)

Wie Manche, die am Hals des Freundes hängt,
Sagt wohl das Wort: sie lieb' ihn, o so sehr,
Daß sie vor Liebe gleich ihn essen könnte;
Und hinterher, das Wort beprüft, die Närrinn!
Gesättigt sein zum Eckel ist sie schon.
Nun, du Geliebter, so verfuhr ich nicht.
Sieh her: als ich an deinem Halse hing,
Hab' ich's wahrhaftig Wort für Wort getan;
Ich war nicht so verrückt, als es wohl schien. (Kleist, 1987, pp. 253-255)

This final step consists in recognizing the implacable coherence of what the rhyme continues to attest, even after the fact: the ambivalence and excess of the erotic drive of incorporation. “I was not quite so mad” (*verrückt*, deranged), despite appearances. In truth, by devouring him, Penthesilea did nothing other than attest to the extraordinary, excessive, and therefore essential—according to an Aristotelian reasoning—nature of her love for Achilles. She found herself taking the euphemism literally: *I love you so much I could eat you*. And she explained herself through the rhyme, through the sound of the signifier, as to what the essence or the reason of desire is. For her companions, this is the most monstrous. *Die Ungeheuerste! Was sprach sie da? (The most monstrous one! What did she just say?)*. Yet it is precisely out of being sated to the point of disgust, of not desiring enough, of being anorexic (Derrida, 1990, p. 19) in the face of the excess/essence of desire, that they reject her desire. They—*die Närrinnen*—are therefore mad. She, the furious one, is reasonable. More than that: they behave like sophists, playing with words. By contrast, she—the monstrous one—confronts the ambivalent and excessive essence of the truth of words—their sense and their body, indissociable.

Situated as it is at the acme of contradiction, not in order to resolve it but to expose it, Penthesilea’s *cogito* is both hyperbolic and ambivalent. Moreover, it both accounts for an incorporated logic and is itself exposed through that logic—namely, the rhyme. Furthermore, it is accidental: only after the fact, and only following the “incidents” that occur in the touching of the palate, the tongue, the lips, and the teeth, can it produce itself.

According to the Derridean notions outlined above: 1. It can be defined as an animal, or mad, *cogito*—one that is mad precisely insofar as it is animal. Penthesilea is indeed *rasend*: mad, or better, enraged, like one of the bitches of her pack. 2. The formula that exposes and brings forth this *cogito*—that is, the *Küsse, Bisse* rhyme as well as the act of devouring while kissing—is its “poem,” as we will specify.

Rhetoric: of cannibalism

Let us now schematize the elements of Derrida’s commentary that have guided our reading: – Rhetoric is “the *foyer*” (Derrida, 1990, p. 4) of all the questions that concern the eroticized incorporation of the other. The question revolves around an incorporated rhetoric—rhetoric understood as that which pertains to the *rhema*, the word; around a body that eats, spits, tears, and rips; and around a subject that emerges from these acts. This rhetoric remains deceptive; yet it does not merely play with words, nor does it depend on manipulative cleverness.

– This is a rhetoric of cannibalism:

The truth of cannibal love, if it enunciates itself in words, it does so in words that are not a metalanguage of cannibalism but that participate in cannibalism: one eats the words, one chews or savors the words, one turns seven times one’s tongue in one’s mouth¹⁰, one eats with words, one also spits out words for disgust, one also gives them to the other to eat; the verbalized truth of cannibal love or desire has a cannibal structure. (Derrida, 1990: 20)

¹⁰ *On tourne les mots sept fois dans sa bouche*: this idiomatic expression evokes prudence before speaking out.

Cannibalism is therefore a matter of rhetoric, and all rhetoric implies cannibalism. This fundamentally complicates the distinction between what would be *proper-to-man*—to human reason, speech, or *logos*—and what would be animal.

– “Loving-eating-the-other” (*aimer-manger-l'autre*) is the constituting process of an instance that desires and has a body. The organization of this corporeality cannot be sublimated: *Mund jetzt und Hand, und Hand und wieder Mund* (*mouth now and hand, and hand and again mouth*), utters Penthesilea. If the mouth can be the “last referent,” “as if the hands were made but to bring [something] to the mouth” (Derrida, 1990, p. 13), it remains nevertheless a metonymy of ambivalence: it eats, loves, aggresses, ejects—like speech, of which it is the site. As for the hand, this *proper-to-man* is multiple (it is not one) and does not go without claws. This marks its works, its services, its *Dienste*: there is no gift, no prayer, no caress without a sadistic grasp.

– Penthesilea's delirium manifests the logic or the *reason* of a divided, animal, mad *eros*. These attributes coincide: in loving-eating-the-other, “all of these three [words are] subjects, but this multiplicity divides and carries away the subjectivity of the subject, the subject's self-interiority or self-identity” (Derrida, 1990, p. 34). In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida will develop these sketches: the constitution of every living subject is a process of identification through the incorporation of alterity, an interminable mirror stage that implies a logic of mimicry (a somatic rhetoric), of seduction (an erotic ruse of recognition), and of hunting (appropriation, insofar as it is erotic, is always also sadistic)¹¹.

– As for the expression—whether linguistic or not—of the thus-composed subject, Derrida defines it as “poematic” (Derrida, 1990, p. 34, 37, 3), referring to *Che cos'è la poesia?*. The poematic is that which depends on the non-spiritual accident of an inscription, and thus on the singularity of a subject's idiom—into which the subject projects and recognizes itself. This idiom—unproper, singular, divided, material—is therefore non-translatable. Derrida thereby seeks to subtract his notion of the literary and of the poetic, in direct confrontation with Heidegger's, from the ascendancy of an authentic *poiesis* and *Dichtung*: “nothing to be done (*poiein*), neither ‘pure poetry,’ nor pure rhetoric, nor *reine Sprache*, nor ‘setting-forth-of-truth-in-the-work’” (Derrida, 1995b, p. 297).

– “It would be as if philosophical prose, in silencing language [*en faisant taire la langue*], ensured the interdiction of cannibal desire, as if it began with this very interdiction” (Derrida, 1990, p. 34). This prose represses or suppresses the *logos* of a divided, animal, mad *eros*.

Bow and arrows of the narration

The previous analysis and methodological recognition have shown the programmatic character of the articulation of cannibalism, animality, idiomaticity, as well as reason, madness, and literary expression, together with the programmatic stances in view of which Derrida construed it. Before outlining a confrontation with Foucault on this ground, let us skim through the narrative and theoretic context of *Penthesilea's* finale. This will allow us to consider the wider metaphysical character of our “cannibal madness,” which comes to characterize nature or experience in general.

¹¹ See De Michele (2021b).

The drama has a biopolitical significance, belonging to the myth of the Amazons but highlighted by Kleist's sensibility to an actual political economy of violence. This plays out between the hypostasis of a State form and the more or less coded dynamics of war. The State of the Amazons resembles a barbarian State governed by an ideal and egalitarian constitution, but it is not natural: its constitution arises from a trauma, specifically a rape. The Amazons descend from a people whose victors, after killing men, elders and children, seized the women as sexual trophies. One night, in a woven conspiracy, the women stab their invaders in the alcove. They decide to institute a women's State, so that the trauma won't be repeated. Yet, the question of the monopoly of force arises: how to handle a bow? Hence the founding excision of the breasts enacted by Tanaïs. From that moment, the Amazons can defend themselves and, above all, during seasonal campaigns programmed after demographic oscillations, hunt for men for the purpose of procreation. Hence the ambivalence of their war: its goal is to couple with their prey, and liberate them afterward. Hence also its conventional and convened character: in order not to reintroduce the masculine element in their society, the Amazons cannot grow attached to individuals. During battles they cannot choose their prey; they must win and then couple with the first man they encounter. This reconstituted state of nature has no room for preference: one recognizes here the ascendancy of Rousseau's *Second Discourse*.

But, if "good nature" is a code, this institution is what Penthesilea transgresses, and her transgression implies a return to a natural state that is neither idyllic, static, or native. If there is nature, this implies preference: for who but Penthesilea (like her mother had prescribed) could have confronted Achilles? And vice-versa? The exercise of preference—fatal because natural—unleashes Penthesilea's delirium: her erotic-sadistic, devouring, and all the more natural excess. The return to nature is not that to a native soil, but that of traumatism, a shaking of the ground. This seismic condition—the difference of nature from itself—is the engine of history, and of tragedy. The tragic here, Derrida observes, "signifies the incurable in nature, the incurable as nature, the incurable sickness [*maladie*] as original and natural corruption of nature, as the nature of nature..." (1990, p. 37). In other words, the origin here is madness—or nature itself is mad.

The bow and arrows allegorize this structure. The history of the Amazons is inaugurated by Tanaïs' gesture and marked by the clink of the bow as it falls from her hands. It ends with the same sound, just before the final scene. This bow (*Bogen, bion*) is a Heraclitean reminiscence. With the force of the furious ones, before Achilles, Penthesilea draws her bow so far that its extremities (i.e. *bios* or *eros* / *thanatos*) kiss each other. The narration is the unfolding of this complicity of opposites. Yet this figure remains too linear, too dialectical: the Amazons will not condemn this coincidence but rather the excess of fury, the natural delirium unleashed by preference, which its proscription was meant to avoid. For Penthesilea, by contrast, the delirium belongs to her companions, who seek to turn away from nature's madness by means of the linear and coded composition of opposites.

Beyond the bow, the figure of "true" delirium is another: the open gulf of the sheath (*Schafft*) into which the Queen drops the arrow that had wounded Achilles (piercing the hollow of his neck), before letting the bow fall to the ground with a clink, shaken by a shiver, and before sinking into the pit (*Schacht*) of her own breast to stab herself at last with her own sorrow.

Recasting the myth of Artemis and Acteon, the animal motif crosses the whole drama up to the climax. Here Penthesilea—no longer the huntress wounding him with her arrow but, like a bitch, now become bitch—devours Achilles. Kleist describes the progression of this woman's very becoming-animal. We can nevertheless share the French translator Julien Gracq's suggestion that the hound pack functions as a final veil of shame interposed by Kleist before the horror, which is in fact already wholly "human": the fury of the Amazon.

In the finale Penthesilea comes to reconstruct the reason for her delirium, beginning with an accident of her idiom—the *Küsse, Bisse* rhyme. Reason (this reason) is deduced *a posteriori* through the idiomatic and machinic effects of the signifier. It is as if madness were first and foremost a madness of the idiom, and as if this —accidental—madness expressed an implacable necessity¹²: sometimes hyperbolic, but also broadly general, even *normal*. Moreover, a true improvisation carves its way through Penthesilea's fragmentary discourse until it allows one to deduce the meaning of her entire orality. This configuration derives from the conceptions Kleist lays out in *On the Marionette Theatre* and *On the Gradual Construction of Thoughts during Speech*¹³. The first of these texts presents the well-known considerations on the control of the body in dance, posture, and fencing, as being independent from all conscient, concerted or reflexive mastery, notably so when the expression of any grace is involved. The second extends these considerations to the production of discourse: this short treaty on oratory improvisation affirms that, in order to find a thought or to think while speaking gracefully, one must not will it. "For it is not we who know, but at first it is only a certain state of mind [*ein gewisser Zustand*] of ours that knows" (Kleist, 1951, p. 45). This is why the most clearly conceived ideas are often the least distinctly expressed. On the contrary, grace, *kairos*, harmony, depend on the happy accidents produced by the semi-automatic alignment of the chains of faculties, ideas, of their designations, their signifiers, and also of the pauses, hesitations, and "inarticulate sounds". Moreover, some opposition is also needed: "During this process, nothing is more helpful to me than a sudden movement on my sister's part, as if she were about to interrupt me" (p. 43). We have already described a similar scene: *Penthesilea's* finale.

What is called madness?

This condition of grace is a return to nature: to the unconscious, the divine, the childlike, the animal. "I", "We", a subject, is only a piece in this strategy, in this true war to express oneself, such as Kleist describes it. But this nature, even if it were innocent, is not appeased. It is a condition of disadjustment (or out-of-jointness, as Derrida puts it)¹⁴, a conflict among faculties and organs, an incurable sickness.

Can we call it madness? In his *Confessions*, recounting the struggle of his impulses and avowing the crime committed against the beloved "poor Marion", Rousseau spoke of a "*délire*". In his *Dictionnaire*, as recalled by Foucault, though with some chronological awkwardness, Voltaire (1962) answered the question "*Qu'est-ce que la folie?*" defining it as a disease of the brain: a man "thinks with his brain, as he walks

¹² See Kleist (1987): "Ananke, Führerin der Hunde!" (p. 231).

¹³ Both animality and devouring play an anecdotic role in these texts.

¹⁴ See Derrida (1994).

with his feet, without any knowledge of his incomprehensible ability to walk, or of his no less incomprehensible ability to think" (p. 278). *Penthesilea* is not without expressly recalling these positions. From its finale, we can pose two questions that extend well beyond the *age* in which they were conceived; these can interrogate Foucault's own reasoning and discourse on madness, as well as on rhetoric and parrhesia.

In Kleist's drama, as we have seen, reason is recognized only after the fact—through a certain madness of the idiom: through certain effects of the signifiers and through a seductive power whose attraction manifests a generalized necessity. It is true that Kleist opposes this quasi-machinic rhetoric to the affectation of a studied mimicry. And yet, is the former a *pure* rhetoric? What is the purity of a rhetoric? And would a rhetoric, even if it were pure, tell the truth?

What is madness? Might it be idiomatic? Most of all, which madness does Kleist invoke? *Loco, loca, mad, crazy, fou, folle, matto, pazza, fool, dumb, dingue, närrisch, wahnsinnig, wütend, rasend...* Particularly univocal in French, the lexicon of "*folie*" is vast and rhapsodic. In *Penthesilea* alone, it would require a separate analysis. The final lemma shall catch our attention: *die Rasende*. *Penthesilea* is not unreasonable, dumb, weird, fool, stunned, idiotic, perhaps not even mad or crazy. She is furious, rabid: like a homeothermic animal struck by *Lyssavirus* (a family of deadly viruses, except in bats)¹⁵.

Fury and unreason

So far we have identified an original Derridian-Kleistian conception of reason, nature, and expression based on the figure of a particular kind of madness—i.e., fury—and developed through the pre-romantic transposition of a Greek myth. We will now, in the second part of this essay, deploy its—possibly programmatic, as suggested in the beginning—potential vis-à-vis Foucault's argued marginalization of fury, deemed crucial for his taxonomies of madness and parrhesia, which moreover draw upon a post-romantic (Heideggerian) and a classical (Platonic-Socratic) Greek archetype.

Following a Foucauldian chronology, Kleist's work and biography are situated at the precise beginning of the modern age, just beyond the limit of the classical age: while the latter closes with *Andromaque's* final curtain, *Penthesilea's* finale seems to prolong Racine's drama, where Orestes' amorous delirium—Orestes having *still metaphorically* brought Eurydice his heart for her to devour (*Et je lui porte enfin mon coeur à dévorer*)—was censured by his fellow brothers. Moreover, *Penthesilea's* very tangible delirium does not sink into silence, but rises from it, expressing a tragic *cogito* which only acquires a meaning within a modern *episteme*: i.e. in the context of a political economy, of a philology, and of a biology concerned with an "animality" which according to Foucault is new precisely because "it contains a perpetual devouring of life by life" (*il y a, en elle, une dévoration perpétuelle de la vie par elle-même*) (Foucault, 2002, p. 302).

Penthesilea's furor nevertheless introduces a disturbance in the *History of Madness*. Kleist is not mentioned here, but this is not the point: his place is clearly situated alongside Goya and Sade. Foucault's treatment of the Encyclopaedists (Rousseau, Voltaire, Diderot) and the aporetic untimeliness that, at the heart of the classical age,

15 This article was originally conceived during the Covid-19 crisis.

he attributes to their doctrines—to which Kleist was indebted—would indeed merit subtle analysis. We can only postpone a factual and methodological contestation of the chronological thresholds—numerous and strict, yet rigorous and definitional—that organize Foucault's archaeology. But the disturbance in question is at once deeper and more ancient—because it reaches back to the Greek prehistory of madness—and more superficial and current—since, in its actuality, it affects the very Foucauldian writing of its *own* history (as Geoffrey Bennington suggest, as we said above). To confront it, one must seek out the place of Penthesilea's madness in that *History*.

This place, "can be summed up and almost symbolised in a single word": "*fureur*". This word designates the "whole obscure region of menacing rage that did not yet form grounds for a possible condemnation" (Foucault, 2006a, p. 109). It is an "animality of madness" (p. 152) that confinement would exalt as the extremity of unreason and the contact point—at the very age of its repression—with the "tragic focus [*foyer*]" (p. 28) from which reason and its language emerge. Not yet subjected to positivist dissection and leveling, this animality still retains contact with the moral connotation of madness and its scandal. Here, Foucault's characterization of fury seems to portray Penthesilea. Yet a *spiritualist* trait in his account distances her from this figure: if madness is triggered by the conflict of faculties, it is because a silent *discourse*—"delirium"—underpins it. If fury—the symbol (and sometimes, for Foucault, the synonym) of confined madness—is the metonymy of unreason, this is because unreason is its *essence*. But the essence of unreason is that of an *originary* madness. It is an immemorial, non-objective, non-historic—but rather *historial*—ground that, prior to things and words, is the formless ground of the very position of reason: the order of order, or naked order.

Judith Revel (2004, 2016, 2023), whose insight we will retain here, has pointed out the originarist aim, the ahistorical scope, and perhaps even the romantic inflection of the archaeological phase of Foucault's work and notably of his meditation on the coupling of literature and madness. "My intention was not to write the history of that language, but rather draw up the archaeology of that silence. The Greeks had a relation to a thing they called *hubris*" (Foucault, 2006b, pp. 28-29). This crisis, this logical, chronological and rhetorical *leap* bears the whole weight of this problem.

Despite Foucault's insistence on the precedence of speech over language (of *parole* over *langue*) and on the irruption of the singularity of the code, what the self-implication of literary writing exposes is, for him, a "being" of its language (Foucault, 2006c, p. 548). This auto-implication is the *essential* fold that articulates literature and madness. In the preface to the first edition of the *History*, which he later removed, and in the 1964 text "Madness, the absence of an *œuvre*", which he added to the second edition as a postface, these inflections are massive and definitional. In retrospect, one can discern their Heideggerian accents: madness, "the naked [*dénudée*] truth of man" (p. 541), is "the decision from which" the shattered truth of the work "ceases, forever suspended above history from that point onwards", and this work "ultimately engages with [*engage en elle*] the time of the world, mastering it and taking the lead [*le maîtrise et le conduit*]" . The naked order is a nothing to be addressed in "the infinite path" of "a question without an answer" (2006a, pp. 537-538). Let us stress again that such rhetoric—both that referred to and that used in these passages—is precisely what a Derridian conception of the poetic and of rhetoric is devised to counter.

Literature and fury

A decisive trace of these —originarist, and even manifestly Heideggerian— accents is the role played here by the figure of madness among the Greeks: those who “had a relation to a thing they called *hubris*” (Foucault, 2006b, p. 29); who stood “in the distancing of that excess, in the midst of the distance at which they kept it confined” (*dans l'éloignement de cette démesure, au cœur de ce lointain où ils l'entretenaient*) (2006c, p. 543). The Greeks were, one might say, in the *Entfernung* of madness. But which Greeks are we speaking of? And which madness?

Elsewhere, Foucault will group —if not fudge—together Plato's (*Phaedrus*), Homer's, and then Sophocles' (*Ajax*) forms of madnesses under the title of the original “connection [*parenté*] between madness and literature” (Foucault, 2023, p. 27, 56, 61). The signifiers “madness” and “literature”, in their historial articulation, point towards “the immobile structures of the tragic” (Foucault, 2006b, p. 30). Immobile though they may be, these structures undergo epochal reconfigurations.

Foucault thus conceives of the difference between a) the classical age and b) the Greek age as follows: a) The classical age is marked by the decision to establish a discontinuity between reason and madness and to confine the latter, leading to its subsequent oblivion and repression: this is the “manner as far from that of the Greeks as could be imagined” (*la forme la moins grecque qui soit*), says Foucault (2006a, p. 87). b) By contrast, the Greek age accepts a gradual distribution of madness within reason, even despite the properly psychopathological conception of the time: the Greeks were neither Christian rationalists nor positivist psychiatrists.

This schema recurs, beyond the *History of Madness* (1961) in the *History of Sexuality* (up to 1984). One “should not be misled by the analogy” (Foucault, 1986, p. 239; 2011): among the Greeks, sexual morality was not “a means of internalizing, justifying, or formalizing general interdictions imposed on everyone”, but “it was problematized in thought as the relationship, for a free man, between the exercise of his freedom, the forms of his power, and his access to truth” (Foucault, 1990, pp. 252-253). Its aim is not the tyranny of the senses—or of madness, as we will see—but the exercise of *parrhesia*.

Fury et rhetoric

And yet. We saw that, in the *History of Madness*, fury is the symbol of confinement and repression, as well as of madness itself in the classical age. But we also saw that “madness” here condenses, sublimates, essentializes or sublates “fury”. In *this* sense, *hubris* is here a synonym for madness.

Parodying Heidegger, let us ask: what does “madness” call forth among the Greeks? Several things: *anoia*, *mania*, *hybris*, *lyssa*... Above all, several things of which some are constituted through the exclusion, and through the confinement, of others. One madness can sublimate the other, and do so having confined it in order to exclude it, if one were not to succeed in purifying it. This is precisely the relation established by Plato between the *mania* of the *Phaedrus* (245, 265) and of Socrates, on the one hand, and on the other the *lyssa* of Ajax and of the tragic and epic poets who relate impieties about

the divinity, surrounded by their retinue of performative artists, among whom are the flutists. The Platonic condemnation of poetry and rhetoric, as well as of aulistics, is well known. This is also, if not primarily, the condemnation of a certain kind of madness: *lyssa*. This is the same rage that seizes Acteon's hounds, causing them to devour him. That drives Homeric warriors crazy. That drives Euripides' Hercules crazy, through the sound of a flute. That unleashes, as we saw, Penthesilea's cannibal love in *Klest*. If Plato excludes the fluteplayer from the ideal city (*Republic*, 399d), it is because the flute is the instrument and the metonymy of rhetoric's persuasion and perversion (*Menexenus*, 235c; *Republic*, 411a). This perversion is at once somatic, spiritual, and ethico-political. The "despotism" of the senses (notably drunkenness, revelry, and unbridled sexuality) is furious, it is a despotism that enrages, *λυττα* (*Republic*, 329c, 586c). But political tyranny is precisely built on the ground of the furious despotism of immoderate somatic pleasures. This means that tyranny is furious, and fury is tyrannical. Fury is a bad *mania*: it is madness's own disease.

In the *Laws* this scheme is repeated and further elaborated. Here, where Plato recognizes some therapeutic virtues to the sound of the flute, an additional distinction is drawn concerning the concept of *parrhesia*—frank speaking—which also can be good or bad. Bad frankness is that induced by revelry and drunkenness, through which everyone "feels fully in control of themselves and anyone else" (*il se croit devenu capable de se gouverner lui-même et les autres*)¹⁶ (671b)¹⁷. The drunk man is enraged (*lytton*) in his body and his soul (775d)¹⁸. Made malleable by wine, such spirits (their *hybris*, their *mania*) can be tamed by the sober guardians of the city through fear, the law, and the (true) true discourse, and thus diverted from amorous frenzy (*lyssa*). But all taming has its limit. This limit coincides rather exactly with the connotation of "libertinage" in the *History of Madness*. Injustice, *hybris* and idiocy, those forces that destroy the *polis*, come from the impious, whose *parrhesia* produces false opinions about the gods and about the mastery of pleasures. This is the root of tyranny. Now, among the bad *parrhesiasts* are, on the one hand, those who consciously dissimulate their plots, and on the other, those who are mad out of unreason—*anoia*¹⁹. The former shall be confined in prison, and, once dead, their corpses thrown out of the borders of the *polis*, without burial. The latter are to be confined in a *sophonistery*²⁰, and sentenced to death if they fail to recover reason after five years (*Laws*, 906-909).

In *The Use of Pleasure* Foucault touches only briefly on the contours of *lyssa*. But in *The Government of Self and Others* (1982-1983 seminar) he fully explores the configuration outlined above, in relation to *parrhesia*. Notably, he opposes a good *parrhesia*—the philosophical—with a bad one, the political and potentially tyrannical. The former aims at truth; the latter at interest. The former employs the (true) true discourse, the latter employs the sophistication, seduction and sensitive perversion of rhetoric—that which the true *logos* must avoid (Foucault, 2005, p. 368). "*Parrêsia* will thus be the limitation of the master's madness [and power] by the truth-telling of the person who must obey but who, faced with the master's madness, is justified in opposing him with the truth" (Foucault, 2010, p. 161). The madness mentioned in this passage is the tyrant Eteocles' *anoia*, in Euripides' *Phoenicians*.

16 Thus the French 1951 version.

17 For the relation between this *parrhesia* and musical (and notably auletic) transgression, see *Laws* (700).

18 For amorous fury, see *Laws* (839b).

19 See *Hippias Minor*. For *anoia* as an individual and political inebriation, see *Laws* (637a, 689b).

20 Derrida (2012) will mention this institution (pp. 7-8, 42).

Fury of the idiom

Everything happens as if a decision concerning the idiom “*folie*” entailed a double, systematic, and long-term consequence: i) the covering of the idiomatic character of different forms of madness; ii) the exclusion of one kind of madness —*lyssa*— and with it the furious and somatic seduction of the signifier. This exclusion targets a madness almost indiscernible from modern *libertinage*, and which is captured under the double determination of a psychiatric knowledge and an ethical choice. If, despite the nuances and deviations occurring within it, it is possible to observe that such an *order* seems to persist over a long period of time (in the philosophical tradition or in Foucault’s writings), it is not by virtue of a belief in the immobility of “lasting foundations”, as Foucault (1989, p. 6) writes with a polemic stroke to Derrida²¹, but rather because of the repeated reading of one and the same “*archive*”, i.e. of one and the same text and of one and the same law²²—the one which validates such an archive as capable of maintaining its unity and sameness. Said otherwise, it is precisely out of rereading a same textual corpus *while* accrediting the unity and coherence it projects, that Foucault can mobilize and reproduce an originarist paradigm.

It is remarkable that, on this ground, Foucault will reproach Derrida for perpetuating a worn transcendentalism of reading, overlooking textual events and textual materiality. Even more striking, as Geoffrey Bennington (2016) has shown, is that Foucault later implicitly reproaches Derrida for being a sophist, a bad *parrhesiast*, while placing himself on the good side of *parrhesia*. The risk of this positioning is to take Achilles’s role: before Ulysses—or even before Penthesilea.

In “Cogito and the History of Madness” Derrida (2001, pp. 46-49) makes some apparently lateral allusions to the problem of idiom in Foucault’s project. The concern is both diachronic (what is “*hybris*”? what is “*folie*”? what is the law of their relation?) and synchronic: what about “a certain embedding of philosophical language in nonphilosophical language”? The reference made here (p. 390; note 3, p. 38) to Sándor Ferenczi, the psychoanalyst that introduced the notion of *introjection*, would take us immediately back to the Derridian reading of Kleist.

What is forgotten when this problem is covered up? Not some immaterial origin, nor the myth of authorial privilege, as Foucault (1969) esteems, but rather the initiative taken by the signifier, the initiative that is taken (or even takes itself), in its place. What is forgotten is that one seduces with words and devours them, and that through words one is seduced and devoured. What is forgotten, in short, is a certain madness—i.e., the fury—of idiom, its *lyssa*. And its untranslatability.

This fury ruins all transcendental subjectivity, as well as all “historical a-priori” (see Foucault, 1989, pp. 142-148). This does not mean that these conceptual tools fail to work, but rather that they work only under this condition. Any archaeology and genealogy, just like any deconstruction and grammatology, depend on this mad auto-implication. But this madness is not (just) the “lyrical explosion [*éclatement*]” (Foucault, 2006a, p. 518) of “the immediate totality of poetic experience” (p. 521), as opposed to the prosaic concatenation of the analytic discourse. Not the abyss of “nothing”, beyond

21 Which is lost in the English translation: “le problème n’est plus de la tradition et de la *trace*, mais de la *découpe* et de la limite; ce n’est plus celui du fondement qui se perpétue, c’est celui des transformations [...]” (Foucault, 1969, p. 12; my stress).

22 “The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique *events*” (Foucault, 1989, p. 145; my stress).

the beings and the works. Or the rarity of the subject's hollowing out, beyond the neutralized host of objectivity (p. 550). Thus, even though he stigmatizes the weakness of an antinomic mindset, does Foucault, while advocating "the undivided form of a duality reconciled with itself" (p. 521), endorse the series of said dualisms. Behind these, perhaps, he endorses the exclusion—within the highest form of madness, erotic *mania*—of the lowest and tyrannic one: *lyssa*. And in this way, he meets the *Phaedrus*' Plato when, some years later, he holds that "philosophical *parrêsia* [...] leads not to rhetoric, but to an erotics" (Foucault, 2010, p. 374). The virtue of his project, then, would be: temperance.

It is from within this order that Foucault (1989) believes that he can practice "the work itself" (*la pratique*) (p. 10) of "the division" and of "the limits" (p. 6): in other words that he can, even if only momentarily, treat ages and madness as *themes*. This is the very ground of his dispute with Derrida. Here lies the impossibility for Penthesilea's *cogito* of entering and being translated into this order except as a theme. Kleist, if not Penthesilea, or maybe Kleist-Penthesilea, knew it already. Their monologue must be exteriorized to become, or to produce, an event—and it must be exteriorized in and through the "furious" seduction of the most banal of signifiers, through the *lyssa* of the *Küsse, Bisse* rhyme. The event of this *cogito* does not unveil a structure or an order: it rather procures, describes, or improvises them. If everything is caught within an order, a framework, a narrative arc, such framework acquires a meaning only as it comes to frame a traumatic event; but the trauma *itself* is procured by the bad *parrhesia* of a rhetorical quasi-event. Thus is practiced Kleist-Penthesilea's theory: a theory of reading, of writing, of the concatenation of domains, of words, of things, and of the positing of any-thing or -word in history—all conceived as an immanent genealogy or as an idiomatic description of the future as much as of the past. The auto-exposition of this theme, which performs its own impossibility as such (as a theme) is not marked by the sovereign force of an outburst, of an *éclat*, but rather by the obstinate rustling of a leave granted to (true) truth—be this the truth of madness or of literature.

Having characterized, with Derrida and thanks to Kleist, the literary idiom and its "madness" through their materiality, singularity, and animality, we have thus been able to highlight, in Foucault, a certain sublimation of these traits. The evocation of "the Greeks" is a decisive lever of this sublimation: if in the sixties its vehicle was *hybris*—a good and originary conception of madness—twenty years later its vehicle will be *parrhesia*—a good and authentic practice of discourse. In both cases, this amounts to privileging a certain truth of speech (be this silent) over a certain madness of idiom.

Through our reading, we have deployed the motif of cannibalism and its articulation within Derrida's perspective with those of (oral) expression—or idiom—and the constitution of subjectivity—in relation to a certain conception of madness. Our analysis was moved by the following hypothesis: this motif is susceptible to mobilize the wider assumption of such perspective, and moreover, its correlation to idiom and madness is motivated not only by a psychoanalytical framework, but also by the aftereffects of the early confrontation between Derrida and Foucault. Reopening this confrontation from a previously unconsidered angle, our reading led to the following conclusions: in Foucault, we have observed a continuity across different phases of his work and his approaches to madness and to *parrhesia*, granted by an essentialist evocation of a Greek antecedent. In Derrida, by contrast, we have discerned a radically situated conception, whose conditions hinder any recourse to truth or origin.

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This enables us to see that the dispute over the cogito does not ultimately hinge on a different *definition* of reason, madness, or their historicity, but rather on a divergent understanding and practice of the performativity of writing and reading in relation to history, reason, and discourse itself.

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