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Taking place: Parrhesiastic Theater as a model for artistic practice

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II. Strategies of Parrhesia in Visual Arts

Artists and parrhesia: The artist-parrhesiast

> It is in this interplay between human beings and their blindness due to inattention, complacency, weakness, and moral distraction that the parrhesiast performs his role. (Foucault 2011, 16)

In this section I will attempt to build up the identity of the figure of the artist-parrhesiast and explore it. What is this figure's profile? What distinguishes this figure from other artists and other parrhesiasts? Through looking into parrhesiastic practices in *Chapter I: Regarding Parrhesia*, I have come up with seven characteristics of and conditions for parrhesia:

1. *Holding a credible relationship to truth*
2. *Involving more than one person — it takes at least two to parrhesiazesthai*
3. *Functioning as a moral, social, and political obligation*
4. *Serving as criticism*
5. *Taking a risk — speaking one's mind is a dangerous game*
6. *Taking place in a theatrical space**
7. *Having transformative power*

I will focus on a limited number of contemporary artists and how they deal with parrhesia in their work, in an effort to position my argument within a broader context of contemporary art. The list is indicative and by no means exhaustive. It is however suggestive of the wide range of strategies and methods through which parrhesia can come into being — in short, of the parrhesiast-artist's methodology. In the following descriptions of artistic practices, I look at artists from older generations who formulated their positions in the recent past, and whose positions may relate but do not overlap: Cindy Sherman, Bruce Nauman, Grayson Perry, Pierre Huyghe, Claude Cahun,[14] Christoph Schlingensief, and Louise Bourgeois. I am aware that in choosing the seven above-mentioned individual artists I exclude avant-garde movements such as Dada or Surrealism, despite the relevance their strategies may hold for parrhesia. I understand those movements and artists as historical[15] and consequently not enabling me to examine parrhesiastic strategies in the field of contemporary Visual Arts. Instead, I look into "contemporary" artists in the sense of art critic, media theorist and philosopher Boris Groys' description of the contemporary as "constituted by doubt, hesitation, uncertainty, indecision — by the need for prolonged reflection, for a delay" and his definition of contemporary art as "art that is involved in the reconsideration of the modern projects" (Groys 2009a). Still, it can be argued that a 'dadaist undercurrent' has been running through the 20th century in an indirect way, from Dada to Punk, Fluxus, Neo-Dada and the Situationists, Conceptual Art and Performance. Several of Dada's defining traits such as deliberate irrationality, negation of traditional artistic values, humor, satire and irony transverse various artistic practices of the 20th century, albeit not in the extreme negating ways of the original Dada movement.

14 Although Cahun, historically considered a Surrealist artist, is not strictly speaking contemporary, I decided to include her in this list of artists for two reasons, which I explain on page 40 of this dissertation.

15 Dada was an intellectual avant-garde movement which arose as a reaction to the First World War and in opposition to bourgeois culture. Surrealism grew out of Dada and as a movement, it flourished between the First and the Second World Wars. It aimed at revolutionising human experience by placing emphasis on the workings of the subconscious mind.

I chose Sherman, Nauman, Perry, Huyghe, Cahun, Schlingensief, and Bourgeois for three reasons. First, because of the parrhesiastic elements in their practices. I will identify what aspect of parrhesia each artist clarifies for me and then elaborate on it. By focusing on one specific characteristic/condition of parrhesia for each artist, I will consider it as a building block leading to a general, more abstract profile of the artist-parrhesiast. As I will examine one characteristic/condition for each artist, I suggest that they are parrhesiasts only in relation to this specific characteristic or condition. The purpose of this Chapter is not to prove whether the above-mentioned artists fulfil all criteria and conditions for parrhesia, and/or which one of them might be the perfect parrhesiast-artist candidate. I argue that altogether they will indicate a broad spectrum that may offer interesting insights and lead to a more general conclusion regarding the profile of the artist-parrhesiast of the 21st century. Second, I chose them based on my access to their texts, interviews, and other statements. In order for me to better understand how they use parrhesia, I consider their testimonies a primary source of information and interpretations by others as a secondary source. My third reason for this specific list of artists is the subjective, idiosyncratic affinities I feel for their practices, the amount of time I spent with them during my formative years, and the intensely transformational experience I had when exposed to or confronted by their practices. Two questions kept pushing me for answers. The first was Foucault scholar Marrigje Paijmans' central question in her article "How Parrhesia Works through Art": "how an artwork can articulate an inconvenient truth in such a way that it initiates a process of transformation in the imagination of the beholder?" (Paijmans 2019, 43). The second was how artists implicate themselves in this process. Here, I assemble selected excerpts of the chosen artists' existing writings or statements, texts about them by historians and critics, and my own observations in order to clarify why I chose them and what I find interesting for parrhesia through their different approaches.

1. Holding a Credible Relationship to Truth: Cindy Sherman (1954–)

Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still # 2*, 1977

Thats me,[16]

Who is Cindy, what is she? It is almost impossible to fix upon her in this slippery image. As in life, so in art: Sherman makes herself up as she goes along; and her camera catches the truth, that we may all be strangers to ourselves. (Cummings 2019)

16 In 1975, as a college art student, Cindy Sherman intervened in a family photo album she had compiled as a child at the age of ten by hand-writing this inscription under each family photo, including herself. Moorhouse 2019, 14.

The US artist Cindy Sherman came into prominence toward the end of 1970s. So far her career spans over four decades, through which Sherman has persistently used herself as her subject. Or, more accurately, her subject has been her ongoing ability to create and record unlimited versions of herself performed for the photographic camera. As British journalist and writer Simon Hattenstone puts it, Sherman's photos "stuck two fingers at the then received wisdom that the camera never lies — her camera *always* lied. And, through her deceits, she looked for truths about identity, vulnerability and power" (Hattenstone 2011).

Holding a credible relationship to truth in the postmodern world could be described as mission impossible. In the third chapter of his 2001 book *The Frame and the Mirror*, "The Place of Truth," the US philosopher Thomas Brockelman reflects upon Plato's *chora* and its peculiar position, "strangely caught 'between' particular and universal, sense and intellect," and relates it to what he calls the "impossible truth of the postmodern, that as human beings we both are (and must be) and are not *in place*" (Brockelman 2001, 88–89). A short detour to the question of how art and truth should "work" from a Western European perspective: one can observe that in Greek antiquity, the Platonic approach considered the good, the true, and the beautiful as inextricably linked — the beautiful being the face of good and of truth. A few centuries later, for Seneca (c. 4 B.C.E.–65 C.E.) and the Stoics, art was meant to give good examples to people by serving temperance and wisdom: "Temperance knows that the best measure of the appetites is not what you want to take, but what you ought to take" (Seneca 149). There is a limit, according to Seneca: "Truth is complicated and profoundly obscure" (Dobbin 2012, Seneca 115 Demetrius [5]). In modern philosophy, a third perspective had been established: art is beyond good and bad. Philosophers that have contributed to this line of thought include Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche, who asked how much truth the spirit can handle.

For 19th-century French poet, essayist, and art critic Charles Baudelaire, modern artists were responsible for finding ways to express the moral attitude and aesthetic values of modernity: "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent" (Baudelaire 2010, 17). Seen from this third perspective, beauty retains an ambivalence and is no longer linked to good or bad. There can be depth and truth in evil, for example in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal (The Flowers of Evil*, 1857) and in Arthur Rimbaud's *Une Saison en Enfer (A Season in Hell*, 1873).

In his *The Return of the Real*, the American art critic Hal Foster argues that Sherman's work perfectly demonstrates a shift taking place in contemporary art, theory and film. This shift concerns an understanding of the real as trauma, rather than "reality as an effect of representation," which seriously impacted artistic practices in turn, shifting focus from the image-screen to the object-gaze (Foster 2002, 146). In reading Sherman's work through Lacan's seminars on the gaze, on the real, and his diagrams on visuality, Foster suggests that her work articulates this shift in three steps: from "the subject caught in the gaze" (early work, 1975–82) to the subject "invaded by the gaze" (work from 1987–90) to the subject "obliterated by the gaze" (work after 1991), leading to a "double attack on subject and screen" (Foster 2002, 149). From this point, I will now focus on how Sherman's early work *Untitled Film Stills* relates to Foucault's "dramatics of truth-telling,"[17] taking as my point of departure Foster's argument of how the real is manifested in it: "Thus in the distance between the made-up young woman and her mirrored face in *Untitled Film Still # 2* (1977), Sherman captures the gap between imagined and actual body images that yawns in each of us" (Foster 2002, 148).

Interviewed by Simon Hattenstone, Sherman acknowledges that "dressing up was partly "a means of escape," and adds that "it was also partly, 'If you don't like me this way, how about you like me *this* way?'" Hattenstone notices how in proposing endless possibilities of transforming her image "her voice rises with mock joie de vivre" (Hattenstone 2011). Sher-

17 In *Foucault's Askēsis*, Edward F. McGushin introduces the modality of parrhesiastic veridiction, a term Foucault coined, by the term "dramatics of truth-telling" (McGushin 2007, 9). For Foucault's four fundamental modalities of truth-telling (veridiction) in Antiquity, see page 20 of this dissertation.

man's work produces "new" images by recycling existing stereotypes of women found in film and popular culture. Her work comments on these stereotypes in a critical but seductive way. Sherman has been a favorite of certain feminists and post-modernists (such as Laura Mulvey and Rosalyn Deutsche) precisely because her approach is emblematic of the ways in which notions of constructed and "true" identity were perceived and discussed in the 1990s. In her essay "In the company of Images: Untitled Film Stills," Erika Balsom writes that whereas the medium of photography is all about specificity, the here and now, as opposed to painting's "pregnant moment," Sherman reverses this in her *Film Stills* because she creates familiar images that refer to "an image-commons of popular representation" (Balsom 2019, 61). Regarding Sherman's series title and the genre it evokes, French curator, critic, and historian of photography Régis Durand observes that

> a film still is not an image from the film, a photogram, nor is it a snap taken during the shoot; it is the photograph of the reconstitution of a given scene that is re-enacted in front of the photographer for documentary and publicity purposes.
> (Durand 2002, 154–5)

Sherman creates a voyeuristic set-up in which she invites the viewer to project, desire, and imagine through her ongoing production of re-enacted cinematic images capturing moments of ambiguity: anxiety, waiting, anticipation. Because the action is never disclosed, but rather anticipated, these images function as reflective surfaces; they depend on the viewer's imagination and ability to mirror themselves in them to receive meaning and become complete. To this idea I would like to add that the mechanisms and strategies Sherman uses to grasp and hold the attention of the viewer extend to her finding and maintaining her place in the artworld. Sherman's work has fulfilled the expectations of the artworld perfectly: I think her work probably looks how the majority of contemporary art lovers want a feminist critical approach to look.

McGushin considers Foucault's parrhesiastic modality of truth-telling as follows: "A modality of veridiction, at least in the case of parrhesia, requires a time and a place, in other words a dramatic scene where truth can emerge, where subjects can be recognized in the act of truth" (McGushin 2007, 9).Throughout *Untitled Film Stills*, Sherman is personally committed to identifying and positing herself in the middle of a scene staged for the camera, where she repeatedly jumps in and out of character, endlessly enacting possible versions of fictitious personae. With respect to the problem of "true" identity, Sherman proves herself a parrhesiast: through these manipulated self-centered imaging acts, she "appears" and reveals mechanisms involved in the construction of identity of a subject caught in the gaze.

2. It Takes At Least Two to Parrhesiazesthai: Bruce Nauman (1941–)

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> My work comes out of being frustrated about the human condition. And about how people refuse to understand other people. And about how people can be cruel to each other. It's not that I think I can change that, but it's just such a frustrating part of human history.
> (Simon 2018, 52)

Here I will focus on one work, *Clown Torture* (1987), by US artist Bruce Nauman in order to look into how the second condition for parrhesia, *It takes at least two to parrhesiazesthai*, may transform into *It takes three to parrhesiazesthai* when it takes place between artist, artwork, and viewer.

What strategies does Nauman use to intensify the relation between artwork and spectator? *Clown Torture* is a four-channel video installation with sound. It consists of two large video projections and four monitors of different sizes, placed in pairs, one above the other, on plinths. Through these six video and audio channels, narrative sequences in color and sound loops of 60 minutes are presented, "each chronicling an absurd misadventure of a clown": "Clown Taking a Shit," "Clown With a Goldfish," "Clown With Water Bucket," "Pete and Repeat," and "No, No, No, No (Walter)."[18] The Art Institute of Chicago describes these misadventures as follows:

> In "No, No, No, No (Walter)," the clown incessantly screams the word no while jumping, kicking, or lying down; in "Clown with Goldfish," the clown struggles to balance a fish bowl on the ceiling with the handle of a broom; in "Clown with Water Bucket," the clown repeatedly opens a door booby-trapped with a bucket of water that falls on his head; and finally, in "Pete and Repeat," the clown succumbs to the terror of a seemingly inescapable nursery rhyme. (Art Institute of Chicago n.d.)

"Clown Taking a Shit" confronts the viewer in a 60-minute, looped wall projection. With the circular loops endlessly repeating, the viewer may enter the installation at any moment. Sound comes out of the six displays, intensifying the sensorial experience for the viewer. As senior curator at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art Susan Cross observes, *Clown Torture* is one among several Nauman works in which the viewer is both "witness and voyeur" (Cross 2003, 17).

Under a one-and-a-half-minute clip documenting the work posted on YouTube, the reactions of viewers who had experienced it included: "being mesmerized for at least 10 minutes"; "The way I read it back then ... was that I was being tortured by the clowns, but the thing was that it took a while for me to realize how ill-at-ease I was made by the work. That is, it was only when I got so uncomfortable that I was pushed into a degree of self-consciousness that this dawned on me"; and "You can't escape paying attention to a clown."[19] Many of the commenters explicitly mentioned the importance of experiencing the work in real life and having a vivid memory of that experience.

As I haven't had the chance to experience *Clown Torture* live, I enter the piece by watching extracts on YouTube, looking at stills, and reading Nauman's interviews as well as reviews and texts on the work and others' experiences of it. I imagine how the intense emotions (irritation, repulsion, and hate[20]) the artwork evokes must multiply for the viewer upon physically experiencing it. Nauman does catches the attention of the viewer by amplifying the sound and multiplying the image, making the experience almost unbearable and thus sharing his own frustration about the human condition.

Nauman presented three different versions of *Clown Torture* in 1987: *Clown Torture, Clown Torture: I am sorry and No, No, No, No*, and *Clown Torture: Dark and Stormy Night*

18 I found an analytical list with the reels and tapes of which Clown Torture consisted in the following blog: https://blogs.uoregon.edu/brucenauman/the-1980s

19 Excerpts from viewers' reactions on YouTube to Bruce Nauman's video *Clown Torture*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YorcQscxV5Y&gl=BE (accessed July 15, 2019).

20 Renown critic Arthur Danto writes about Nauman's retrospective at Museum of Modern Art: "It was *Clown Torture*, writ large" and "the show may have taught an inadvertent lesson not only about Nauman's art but about human nature: I hated it because it hated me" (Danto 1993, 56).

with Laughter (Nauman 2005, 338). Language plays an important and specific role in the context of *Clown Torture's* invitation. The short story "Pete and Repeat," told in *Clown Torture*, goes like this: *Pete and Repeat were sitting on a fence. Pete fell off; who was left? Repeat. Pete and Repeat were sitting on a fence.* The same strategy is used in the version *Clown Torture: Dark and Stormy Night with Laughter*. Four clowns each hold up one of their own legs while they tell the same story over and over until they fall: "It was a dark and stormy night. Three men were sitting around a campfire. One of the men said, 'Tell us a story, Jack.' And Jack said, 'It was a dark and stormy night. Three men were sitting around a campfire. One of the men said, 'Tell us a story, Jack.' And Jack said, 'It was a dark and stormy night..." (Nauman 2005, 337). In both cases the story is repeated in a loop, ensuring there will be circularity. The words are used as performative utterances, adding an extra layer to the overall narrative. Nauman has repeatedly mentioned that for him "the point where language starts to break down as a useful tool for communication" is where it gets interesting, making someone aware of the tension between language's functionality and its sounds and the words' poetic parts (Nauman 2005, 354). In Clown Torture the stories function as a trap, seducing the spectator, triggering their curiosity to understand what the clowns say, keeping them in the loop, under the spell.

Speaking of his early works, Nauman has described a mathematician of the 19th century "whose approach was to step outside the problem rather than struggling inside the problem." "Standing outside and looking at how something gets done or doesn't get done is really fascinating and curious... If I can manage to get outside of a problem a little bit and watch myself having a hard time, then I can see what I am going to do" (quoted in Simon 2018, 42). Nauman plays with the edges of our perception of what is human and how we experience being human. But to do so he places distinct borders between the roles of spectator and artist. For Nauman the autonomous artist assumes moral responsibility. In doing so he controls and directs the spectator, who becomes an instructed performer or at least participant in an experience scripted by the artist. To be fair, I should acknowledge that prior to offering this experience to others Nauman did submit to it himself, testing the limits between him and the media he was using, producing alienation and suffering for himself first.

Clown Torture establishes a link between the artist and the viewer so that the former can communicate to and potentially transform the ethos of the latter. It is a parrhesiastic artwork because it initiates this process of transformation in the imagination of the beholder through a disturbing audiovisual attack on the senses, which forces the viewer to feel and consider what kind of reactions this "uncontainable fuel of utterances" (Nauman 2005, 35) provokes to him/her. Linguistic miscommunication and sensory overload are employed by the clowns, who, as Nauman points out "are abstract in some sense," and "it's hard to make any contact with an idea or an abstraction" (Simon 2018, 54–5) in order to articulate an inconvenient truth, namely the difficulty of sharing the frustration about the human condition.

3. Parrhesia is a Moral, Social, and Political Obligation: Grayson Perry (1960–), Between Appropriation and Spectacular Travesty

> I am in the communication business and I want to communicate to as wide an audience as possible. (Perry 2017, Foreword)

From left to right: "Theater Scene" illustration after a vase in the museum of Verona in Champfleury's *Histoire de la Caricature Antique*; Grayson Perry's *Cuddly Toys caught in barbed wire* (2001) depicting among others Perry as Claire, his alter-ego; photo of Perry dressed as Claire looking at one of his vases.

Grayson Perry creates colorful, shiny, glazed objects upon whose surfaces intricate and dense narratives are held together by harsh comments that expose his own weaknesses, vices, and insecurities — all laid there, bare, naked, in common view. Perry makes the link between these objects and a depiction of an ancient Greek vase in Champfleury's book on ancient caricature, the comic tradition of such vases and the character appearing on that vase, under the title "Theater Scene."

Perry's images are rich and powerful, but a large part of his work can only provide access to meaning by addressing the viewer through language. In the early 1980s, he started to produce images and text on glazed plates that represented his experience in terms of "explicit scenes of sexual perversion — sadomasochism, bondage, transvestism" (Boot 2002, 69). According to art critic Andrew Wilson, Perry chose pottery because at that time "studio ceramics was in thrall to a formal idea of a subject matter being defined by a truth both to materials and process." Vases are hollow objects. The surface of a vase encircles a hollow space. *G.P.* invests in this hollowness, covering it with his undressed self. He uses the vases as his film strip, finding pottery an effective alternative to film because of "the ways artifice could be deployed to make the innocent or honest pot have a purpose and mean something" (Wilson 2002, 85). But his stories are not only personal internal monologues; they also address ethical questions about the position of the artist within the art market as well as gender and social class.

What is there in a vase that turns it into a parrhesiastic prop for *G.P.*? How does the vase work so well to communicate his ideas? I would suggest that the secret lies in the form, which invites the viewer to take turns around it in order to come to terms with its reality. It is about viewers taking time to explore the narrative, but also about *G.P.* taking our time in order to tell us the story, his story. The vase, then, can be understood as a trap, a weapon in disguise; on the one hand, it generously and affectionately offers time to the viewer to discover what Perry has to say (as much time is invested in the making of the object) and on the other hand, it seductively and cleverly steals the viewer's time to force them to listen to him. It is no coincidence that the title of his 2002 exhibition at London's Barbican was rather polemical: *Guerilla Tactics*.

Perry provokes and addresses moral, social, and as a consequence political issues, holding a mirror of political incorrectness to his audience. Rancière argues that "Politics revolves around what is seen and what can be said about it, around who has the possibility to see and the talent to speak, around the properties of spaces and the possibilities of time" (Rancière 2009b, 13) . It is in this revolving act, through and around the hypnotizing, choreographic element-trap of the ceramic vases, that the experience of the objects lies and the transformation of imagination takes place, for Perry's viewers.

Perry also performs a complex choreography, both undressing himself in the filmic/vase strip and dressing up as Claire, his alter-ego. He has been a transvestite all his life, and

has said that Claire affords him a certain level of anonymity: "curiously, though, Claire has become my way of controlling my increasing celebrity" (Alexander 2014).

In an imaginary parrhesiastic theater parade, Perry encircles and flirts with the group of the *Fool* character. He moves strangely, connecting the groups, being a man with a need for women's clothes, and someone who doesn't mind revealing the contradictions and doubts that go hand in hand with an artist's life and lifestyle. Speaking up about something can be seen as equivalent to coming to terms with it. In some ways, Perry reactivates the old tradition of the *Fool*, the jester, developing rituals in order to speak up. By undressing himself as man and redressing as Claire, in women's clothes, he puts on a "mask" in order to take the courage to speak. Having dressed up, he then guides us through the vases. Perry lets go of control, almost as if caricaturizing himself to get attention and gain more control over his audience. He could fit into the group of those exposing themselves through the strategy of disguise. As he has said, "A lot of my work has always had a guerrilla tactic, a stealth tactic. I want to make something that lives with the eye as a beautiful piece of art, but on closer inspection, a polemic or an ideology will come out of it" (Tate, n.d. a). In his case his costume is a very conscious instrument and a strategy that passes through psychoanalytical tools and returns to art.

4. Serving as a Critic is a Condition for Parrhesia: Pierre Huyghe (1962–) and the Strategies he uses in Puppet Play

Pierre Huyghe, *This is not a time for dreaming*. 2004. Live puppet play and super 16 mm film, 24 minutes. Film still. © Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York/Paris © Pierre Huyghe

Huyghe's own experience provides the starting point for *This is not a time for dreaming* (2004). The film documents a puppet show that tells the parallel stories of the modernist architect Le Corbusier's commission to design the Carpenter Center for Visual Arts at Harvard University, and Huyghe's own commission to create an artwork to celebrate the building's 40th anniversary. Shifting back and forth in time, the narrative weaves together historical and contemporary events with fantastical elements, in an allegorical representation of the struggles and compromises inherent in the creative process. (Brinson, n.d.)

French artist Pierre Huyghe has often explored narrative models that critically address the production of spectacle and the role of the maker in it. In Nicolas Bourriaud's words: "He organizes his work as a critique of the narrative models offered us by society." Huyghe's work often operates between fiction and reality, leading to "gaps in the spectacle" (Bourriaud 2002, 50–52).

The 3 minute, 11 second film *Blanche-Neige Lucie* (1997; accessible online at https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x7inm6) serves as an example of how critique takes place through Huyghe's re-organization of the structural elements with which a spectacle is built. In the film, singer Lucie Dolène, the French voice of Disney's Snow White, sings "Un jour mon Prince viendra" in front of a camera, while the background of a soundstage moves behind her. English-language subtitles throughout provide a first-person account of her encounters with Snow White: when she first saw the original film and sang the song as a child in 1938; when she met Walt Disney in the US; when she was chosen to dub Snow White for the 1962 version of the film; and when she sued Disney for reissuing the film and using her voice without asking permission or paying her. In *Blanche-Neige Lucie*, meaning is produced for the viewer through the juxtaposition of text (subtitles), Dolène's presence, and her singing voice staged in a studio set. Huyghe selects and orchestrates the film's audiovisual and textual elements in order to precisely situate his critique of spectacle within the vicious circle of the spectacle's production and consumption. Dolène and other individuals in Huyghe's work "reappropriate their story and their work, and reality takes revenge on fiction" (Bourriaud 2002, 51). Dolène's reclaiming of her voice takes place at the interstices of this circulation of meaning, between the deconstruction and reconstruction of the story's structural elements.

I decided to focus on Huyghe's 2004 film *This is not a time for dreaming* because it marks the first time that he directly implicated himself (embodied as a puppet) in his work. In a publicly accessible video (https://vimeo.com/5705760), curator Linda Norden speaks about Huyghe and her involvement with the film. Invited to realize a project at Harvard University in 2000, Huyghe focused on Harvard's Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts — the only building realized by French architect Le Corbusier in North America, finished after his death in 1964. Norden says Huyghe had an interest in the "idea of the practice of art" within an institutional context. Over a three-year period his thinking crystallized, and he decided to make a film using marionettes due to "the symbolism, the idea of the artist as puppet." Huyghe's puppet opera — using puppets in film, reality, and sculpture — re-enacts the story of the Carpenter Center building, showing Le Corbusier's but also the artist's own struggle to realize a project. Norden values the reenactment of a breakdown of a series of relationships, struck by the power of the resulting critique, "an allegorical fable" that "explores the fate of creative commissions within the institution of a university."

In a dreamy landscape, among animated red birds and growing plants, the puppets of Le Corbusier and Huyghe appear along with sounds, music, and movement. A human narrator also shows up, and introduces a play "of sorts, a sequence of actions precisely constructed." We then see a close-up of hands holding the wooden mechanisms with which puppets are manipulated, and hear the sentence: "An artist in relation to Harvard in relation to what might happen in that place." The characters of the opera are introduced: Le Corbusier, Mr. Serf, Mr. Sekkler, Mr. Pierre (Huyghe), Ms. Linda (Norden), Mr. Scott, Mr. or Mrs. Bird, and Mr. Harvard. The characters then enter the scene; shots of them alternate with exterior shots of the building. In a relatively abstract manner, the narrator summarizes Huyghe's position and his reasons for making this work, before announcing that the reflection on these issues will take place "using a model rooted in the past: a set of relations with no dialogue." After that, there is no more speech; we enter the realm of imagination, symbolism, and allegory via moving image and music. Le Corbusier dances with the rhythm of the song. We see the puppeteer and his assistant moving the puppets with strings — an allegory of the power of the system to move the creative abilities of individuals. Mr. Harvard, a dark shape (visually reminiscent of an abstracted Darth Vader from *Star Wars*) manipulates Le Corbusier's building through invisible forces. Huyghe's puppet-face is shown in close-up, strings all around him, trapped in the scene. A puppeteer (not included in the frame) moves a big Huyghe puppet performing the role of puppeteer, manipulating in turn a miniature Le Corbusier and a miniature Huyghe puppet. Huyghe dares to directly implicate himself and reflect upon his role as the artist in

this game. This is done in a very intelligent way, addressing both the senses and the intellect. During the confrontation between the artist and the curator, for example, no words are exchanged, but the dramatic music intensifies to indicate the tension building up. The critique applies not only to the roles of the artist, the critic, and so on, but also to the general construction of the institution, in this case the university. *This is not a time for dreaming* is an amazing example of how institutional critique can be a truly parrhesiastic practice, whereby the artist uses dramatic power and feeling to affect the spectator. Huyghe assumes responsibility and speaks up about the power games and tensions between the artist and the institution during the process of the work's creation. Unlike an outside commentator, he implicates himself in this process by exposing his own personal experience and frustrations in relation to the project in question.

5. Speaking One's Mind is a Dangerous Game: Claude Cahun (1894–1954)

Heliogravure by Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore, preceding Chapter IX of *Aveux non avenus.*

The naked idea (called truth) has not been able to dazzle for us. We must strip bare its organs, manipulate its skeleton — and admit to our disappointment. But give it back its make-up, and truth regains its power. Dreams and delicious suspicions remain for us — and all is permitted — of the inexhaustible combinations of lies. Glorify the imagination of the costume maker. Announce the perpetual Carnival. (Claude Cahun, "Bedroom Carnival" (1926), quoted in Shaw 2017, 286)

Although French writer, photographer, and performance artist Claude Cahun is historically situated within the early-20th-century avant-garde, I decided to include her here for two reasons. First, in passionately "embodying her own revolt," Cahun can be considered a living example of Foucault's definition of parrhesia as a stance, manifested both in her art and life. Cahun put artistic strategies such as detournement, irony, and exaggeration to use in actively resisting the Nazi occupation of the island of Jersey, with real repercussions: she was arrested, stood trial for distributing propaganda to undermine the morale of the German forces, jailed, and sentenced to death (the sentence was never carried out). Second, Cahun was enthusiastically "rediscovered" in the late 1980s, when the issues of gender and sexuality raised in and through her artistic body of work and the strategies she used to address them became topical within contemporary artistic practices and debates about identity. For the purposes of this dissertation, I briefly examine how her strategies relate to courageous expression and risk within an art context.

In December 1933 the literary magazine *Commune*[21] invited several writers to respond to the question: "For whom do you write?" Claude Cahun responded by proposing that "for" be replaced with "against": *against whom do you write*? She was examining the question critically, addressing the importance of an author standing in opposition to the reader but also, even more than that, in opposition to her own self:

> It is against those who know how to read that one must write, because in my estimation progress is never obtained except by opposition. So that readers can draw benefit from what the writer has thought against their own histories, against their own selves. This is to say that I write, that I wish to write, above all, against myself. (quoted in Shaw 2017, 287)

Her suggestion provoked a very angry response from Louis Aragon, co-editor of the journal and former Surrealist. Aragon replied to Cahun using the plural "we," suggesting that he saw himself as speaking in behalf of the Association of Revolutionary Artists and Writers' (male) community. This apparently hostile "we" deployed against one person's opinion underscores Cahun's very particular individual positioning in the beginning of the 20th century in western Europe: woman-born, Jewish, lesbian, highly educated, and equipped with darkly humorous tactics like hyperbole and irony. Art history professor Jennifer L. Shaw describes Cahun as simultaneously occupying an inside and outside position: due to being seen as highly intellectual and a Surrealist artist in her own right, she was partly accepted within male circles. As she did not fit the Surrealists' female role model (muse, mistress, wife), she was at the same time an outsider.[22]

Speaking one's mind is a dangerous game. It requires the courage to differentiate oneself from others, to stand in opposition and often in confrontation with other opinions, and even, as in Cahun's case, to accept living in a state of permanent ambivalence and contradiction: holding several opinions, arguments, and counter-arguments within oneself, maintaining a self that consists of several selves. Through her denial of logocentrism, the "orientation of philosophy toward an order of meaning — thought, truth, reason, logic, the Word — conceived as existing in itself, as foundation" (Culler 1982, 92) and her transgression of heteronormative discourse, Cahun persistently resisted categorization, constantly calling into question the roles of artist, author, and audience, and faced the consequences. Her art and life, her person and her politics, totally merged.

The notions of adventure and masquerade were central in Cahun, who worked with theater, writing, assemblage, and photography. Her attitude combined outsiderness and insiderness, a curiosity about what might be behind the mask(s), and the courage to face whatever is found there. Cahun's interest in "strategies of disidentification" (Shaw 2017, 76) is expressed in her 1926 text "Bedroom Carnival", where she says:

> Masks are made of different kinds of materials: carboard, velvet, flesh, the Word. The carnal mask and the verbal mask are worn in all seasons. I soon learned to prefer these two non-commercial strategies above all others. (quoted in Shaw 2017, 286)

21 *Commune* was the journal of the Association of Revolutionary Artists and Writers (AEAR), the French section of the International Union of Revolutionary Writers, established in the Soviet Union in 1930. AEAR was founded in 1932. Cahun joined the association the same year.

22 Dilemmas regarding the place of the intellectual in the polemical climate of the 1930s due to the rise of fascism formed the background to Cahun's reaction. Cahun did not agree with those in the AEAR who wanted to take a Stalinist position in art and politics. She opted for the "poetry of indirect action" instead, as the only emancipatory way for the reader to find their way through a text on their own. For an in-depth analysis, see Shaw 2017, 162–9 and 287–9 (for the English translations of Cahun's letter and Aragon's response).

Cahun's stance, work, and life now appear as precursory for ideas regarding social construction of identity explored in the 1990s by many artists and thinkers in the US, among them photographers Nan Goldin and Cindy Sherman and philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler. In her groundbreaking work *Gender Trouble* (1989), Butler argues that gender is a construction, a product of culture: we socially learn to perform gender. In summarizing Cahun's strategies, the key phrase might be "stubborn ambivalence": she insisted on blurring the line between "revolting the self and performing a self" (Shaw 2017, 87), both invoking and refuting, being legible and illegible (against interpretation); embracing iconoclasm and undermining the notion of self through theatricalizing and dramatization, looking for the exception which "proves the rule — and disproves it too" (Cahun 2007, 152).

The same strategies appear in Cahun's 1930 publication *Aveux non avenus*. The title affirms and immediately negates: confessions cancelled. In the introduction to the book's English translation, Jennifer Mundy writes:

> Cahun's many-levelled attack on notions of truth and authenticity, and on the veracity of appearances, mean that ultimately the text is not confessional; it is rather a collage of fragments that mirrored Cahun's parodic view of the self as a rather poorly assembled patchwork of thoughts. (Cahun 2007, XVII)

In *Aveux non avenus*, Cahun's ambivalent and complicated relationship with the authority of logos expands from literary montage to photomontage, complicating the production of meaning. Her heliogravures in *Aveux non avenus* are formed of photographic fragments showing herself in various costumes and theatrically staged postures. They precede the compilation of textual fragments and refuse to provide fixed meaning: each remains loosely and indirectly linked to the text of each chapter, allowing for a double distancing and contributing to a critical function. This open-ended, enigmatic (keeping poetry's secret), and disruptive approach reflects the relation Cahun sought to develop with her readers. As her biographer François Leperlier puts it in the afterword to *Aveux non avenus*:

> This "self-centred" book, which trumpets its narcissism, its egoism, its extreme individualism, also longs to engage with others: but those others have to undertake a full part in the process, play the game of "for and against," of "punch-ball and boxer" as Cahun puts it, on their own account (Cahun 2007, 207).

6. A Theatrical Space as a Condition for Parrhesia: Christoph Schlingensief (1960–2010), Ausländer Raus!

> In the summer of 2000, German provocateur Christoph Schlingensief set up a refugee camp in front of the Viennese Opera House. He interned twelve actual refugee applicants in a large shipping container and streamed their life over the web for the week. As in any "reality TV" show, the audience was allowed to vote their least favorite player out of the compound — and, in this case, out of the country. (Tactical Media Files, n.d.)

In 1989 a discussion on "theatricality" took place in Jeff Cornellis' Flemish philosophical TV talk show *CONTAINER*.[23] The panel consisted of Bart Verschaffel (moderator), Lieven de Cauter, Klaas Tindemans, and Paul Vandenbroeck. For Vandenbroeck, the broad meaning of theatricality was "the staging of daily life, a shaping of the interaction between people" that can be traced back to the 16th-century European saying "life is a stage [schouwtoneel]," with Senecan influences. If life is a stage on which everyone plays a role and has a part, then, Vandenbroeck adds, this also means that "the way in which people interact in daily life is already a kind of screen. One builds a screen between oneself and the others" (Verschaffel et al 1989). Tindemans makes a distinction: experiencing an event in real life by being there is different from looking at it on television — once recorded, filmed, an event becomes dramatic, it becomes a spectacle.

"Bitte liebt Österreich", Wiener Festwochen, 2000
© Paul Poet

Christoph Schlingensief's *Foreigners Out! Schlingensief's Container* (2000) is simultaneously an art project, a reality show, a website, a documentary film, an action, and a chronicle. It pinpoints how the media influence a subject's capacity to relate to other subjects. Between the project's various aspects, formats, and transmissions, Schlingensief plays with the media of the time in which *Container* was produced, which he then reconsiders as a critical tool and redistributes. He creates a "Big Brother"-type reality show not via the television but in the city and on the internet. He opens up a space between formats, between the theatrical and the cinematic.

Starting from definitions of the theatrical as "the solemn, that which is worthy to be seen," in 1989 Verschaffel argues that the carrier of theatricality is not the theater piece, but the (theater) hall, which in the West is constructed in a certain way: "one spot has been decided as the ideal point from which to look, and immediately that which you look at is directed towards one static powerful, absolute, gaze (the gaze of the king)" (Verschaffel et al 1989). For Vandenbroeck, the narrow meaning of the theatrical in Europe stems from the European tradition of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries and has to do with power, which is essentially invisible. It cannot be seen, but it can be felt. This kind of theatricality, Verschaffel says, is disappearing now. "The theatrical can now be a synonym for exaggeration." He also remarks that theatricality has spread into other media which have bigger technical skills and resources, leading to the spectacularizing of the city.

Together with dramaturge Matthias Lilienthal, Schlingensief stages a situation in order to create an actual experience, an event in real public space. The event attracted hundreds of Austrians to the square, and 800,000 logged on to the website, designed by Paul Poet, cre-

23 The program was transmitted through a container covered with cowhides.

ator and curator for Austrian-German internet TV site www.webfreetv.com, to cast their ballots. Poet also documented "the action from its inception to its logical conclusion" (Tactical Media Files, n.d.), preserving it and opening it up to translation by future generations, and further disseminating it in the form of a 90-minute documentary film titled *Schlingensief's Container. Chronik einer Kunstaktion*.

The camera moves into the city. Cars pass, people walk by. Close up: the film uses image, sound, and data — statistics, TV news, posters from a campaign by far-right national populist party FPÖ (Freedom Party of Austria) — from 1986 onwards to arrive at facts about Austria's current political situation and the rise of the right wing. Video shots of police, people, security staff approaching a bus alternate with graphics: TRANSPORT IN THE CONTAINER. Schlingensief's choice of spaces emphasizes his subject matter: containers, divisions, inside and outside, borders. Internet information on the project alternates with shots of people (the participants of the show) entering the bus. The bus moves along. Schlingensief appears in front of the microphone. Webfreetv.com. He presents the project to the people gathered in the city square. *Big Brother*. Those (participants) you don't like will leave the country. The bus arrives. A band plays. The square is full of people. Their reactions are filmed. Security staff pass by. The participants, covering their faces with newspapers get out of the bus and walk to the container. The band stops playing. Applause. Schlingensief continues delivering his speech, about the project, transparency, and openness. Uncovering the title of the project, *Ausländer Raus!*, people applaud. Press conference; for him it is important that the placard (*Ausländer Raus!*) is standing there, "unremovable like an election banner" (see video at 9m 17sec, on Tactical Media Files, n.d.). He observes that once the words were there, sympathizers applauded.

In 1989's *CONTAINER*, Tindemans makes an important differentiation between "all those media who can show reality more precisely — it is debatable what that means — or give the impression that they can do so," and theater as a show, which "isn't really about mimesis or imitation: the actual presence of a body… The fascination, the direct contact of eyes with a body."

In his *Container* (2000), as a guest in a TV program, Schlingensief says that provocation is a medium to wake people up if they are deaf. Live, online, on TV, he provokes: anger, dislike against his aggressive way of presenting the Austrian people. A man says to him that *he* has to leave the country. People are shouting. He provokes fighting between people in the square, fighting in the TV studio. Austrian people start fighting between themselves. A woman tells him: Are you gaga? Go away. People get more and more hysterical. One guy is very angry because Schlingensief is insulting the Austrian people. He wants to kill Schlingensief. Tension rises. This resonates with Rancière's articulation of the stage being "simultaneously a locus of public activity and the exhibition-space for 'fantasies', [which] disturbs the clear partition of identities, activities and spaces" (Rancière 2009b, 13).

Over a period of six days, a series of actions related to public speaking are continually repeated by Schlingensief. In the philosophical *CONTAINER*, discussion goes on about the relationship of the dramatic with the real. If the dramatic literally means that which has to do with drama and drama means action, or a way of acting, then — Vandenbroeck says — we are facing a shift in the meaning of "dramatic," which is now "split and also means the bad, the cruel, and the catastrophic," constricting its original meaning. Verschaffel considers the place of this "new kind of dramatics" as "the dramatic model of the catastrophe" offering the excitement of shock. "Its place is not in the theater but in the news (the real)." Lieven De Cauter remarks that "the real dramatic seems to be stronger than dramatic theater" (Verschaffel et al 1989). Whereas Brecht's epic theater proposed critical distance, Schlingensief offers viewers the chance to choose their own measure of distance and their own dramatic engagement. Is it "dramatic" in the sense of acting or "dramatic" as in spectacle that they will select? A return to the absolute gaze of the old theatrical now translates to: access to all media.

7. Parrhesia's Transformative Power: Louise Bourgeois (1911–2010)

Louise Bourgeois with *The Blind Leading the Blind* (1947–49) in 1975.

The way I fail to relate to people is what I am and what I do. It is what motivates. (Louise Bourgeois in Meyer-Thoss 1992, 138)

Louise Bourgeois transformed her self-proclaimed inability to relate to people in "real life" to an ongoing reparatory dialectic process in her artworks: sculptures, drawings, prints, and performances. Bourgeois' parrhesiastic process could be described as follows: she acknowledged her inability and her trauma as her subject matter, and by confronting it she turned her real-life weaknesses around and transformed them into her artistic powers. Having understood early on that revealing one's weakness to public exposure is a sign of strength, Bourgeois worked with this reversal, while steadily drawing a clear line dividing art from life: "As an artist I am a powerful person. In real life, I feel like the mouse behind the radiator" (Bourgeois 1998, 227).

Bourgeois entered into a confrontational dialogue with her emotional demons. Her raw material in this process consisted of raw emotions: aggression, anger, anxiety, rage, fear, tenderness, stoic calm, suffering, and despair.[24] She used knives and scissors to cut and chip away, needles to stitch and repair. These were her weapons in transforming emotion into solid matter and clear form. The more resistant the material, the better for Bourgeois. German writer and lecturer Christiane Meyer-Thoss describes Bourgeois as someone "constantly revising her work." Through "repetitions, stackings, different methods of lining things up … old works are assimilated, eaten up, by new ones … in a process of continual change and experimentation with a diversity of materials (Meyer-Thoss 1992, 66).

*He Disappeared into Complete Silence (*1947), *The Listening One* (1947), *Observer, One and Others* (1955), *The Blind Leading The Blind* (1947–49), *The Confrontation* "A Banquet/A Fashion Show of Body Parts" (1978), *Articulated Lair* (1986): Just a few of a parade of works produced over forty years. Her titles testify to her perseverance in building up bemas for helpless standing figures that fail to communicate. The paradoxes of relating extended to Bourgeois' relationship to language: "My knifes are like a tongue. I love you, I hate you" (Bourgeois 1998, 222). She said she "had fun with the English language", which she learned through her nanny and father's mistress, who simultaneously offered her access to a new window of communication and betrayed her trust (Wye and Smith 1994, 72). For

24 This list of adjectives is a compilation of descriptions in Lippard 1975 and Meyer-Thoss 1992.

Bourgeois language was "perfect, but not enough" (Wye and Smith 1994, 14): things could be tolerated when written down, but words were "not completely satisfying" (Wye and Smith 1994, 72).

Bourgeois trusted in the eyes, saying "they never lie." From her three diaries (the written, the spoken, and the drawn) the only one that counted for her was that which consisted of drawings (Bourgeois 1998, 303–305). And yet several works of her include language. In her early work *He Disappeared into Complete Silence*, nine engravings appear in parallel to nine parables in the space of a book, opening up a new space of associations for the reader. She stated that this work was about failure of communication. Bourgeois was bitterly aware that it takes two to parrhesiazesthai, but she also said: "If you don't like yourself you are not ready to communicate" (Meyer-Thoss 1992, 121). Communication may take place through language, but is not confined to it. Speaking one's mind may also include non-verbal, physical and performative aspects. In her own words: "Color is stronger than language" (Bourgeois 1998, 222).

In her early eighties Bourgeois claimed that she accessed her unconscious through "an affective communication with people playing along" with her (Bourgeois 1998, 251). According to her assistant Jerry Gorovoy, however, "her work wasn't really about the need to communicate; it was about the need to express what she was feeling" (Wroe 2013). It seems there was an element of magic, an alchemical process involved in this stone woman's sculpting time, which spiraled around the question: "what's the use of talking if you already know that others don't feel what you feel?" (Bourgeois 1998, 308). This element of magic was a prerequisite to seducing, trapping the viewer and leading him/her to a transformative experience in turn:

> If the artist is successful, at ease with his sources, magic operates in his process. The viewer feels the positive vibes of the work, illuminated by the artist in touch with his unconscious. There will be communication. If there is magic in the making, then there is magic in the discovery. Let's hope. (Louise Bourgeois in Meyer-Thoss 1992, 121)

A magic transformative process: the artist cured from her actual life's past through making work — Bourgeois defined "process" as elimination (Bourgeois 1998, 249), an exorcising of one's fears — raw emotions transformed into form, failed relations transformed into meaning and communicating through the working of the material, the viewer transforming in turn upon receiving this experience. This happened to me personally, during a period of intensive reading and writing around her practice: While I was literally sleeping, she put her finger on my wound — spot on. In my dream, the tension building up through an unpleasant discussion with my deceased father escalated to a burst of tears upon handing him Bourgeois' book Destruction of the Father/Reconstruction of the Father to read, and seeing him open the book and look through its pages. I woke up crying. Maastricht-based psychologist and psychotherapist Mieps Van Hest explained to me that a trauma can only be processed through the body, and this was exactly what was happening in my dream: I was processing my trauma under Louise Bourgeois' influence.

Bourgeois contributed significantly to the development and acceptance of idiosyncratic process-based artistic practices that subscribe to a "personal logic." Among other texts, this is analyzed in curator Helaine Posner's essay "Louise Bourgeois: Intensity and Influence," which focuses on the artist's role as "artistic mother" of feminist artistic practices (Posner 2013, 51). Through her courageous persistence, her work and stance deeply affected a generation of younger artists seeking alternatives to modernism's rigid formal solutions. In turn, it played an important role in expanding and therefore transforming our reception of art.

Conclusion: Who is the parrhesiast-artist?

The above examples of artistic strategies can help us construct a portrait of the parrhesiast artist. Before arriving at some conclusions regarding parrhesia's role in contemporary art, however, I would like to take a step back and reconnect with Foucault's art-historical stopping points in *The Courage of Truth*: Cynical art, the literature studied by Mikhail Bakhtin, and the figure of the modern artist.

Foucault notes that comedy and satire "were often permeated by Cynical themes and even better, they were, up to a point, a privileged site for their expression." He refers to the literature of medieval and Christian Europe, specifically to the fabliaux,[25] bawdy tales of medieval France, and the grotesque, carnivalesque Renaissance literature studied by Bakhtin, as evidence of a line of continuity from the Cynics to carnival and other festive forms (Foucault 2011, 186–9).

In exploring "cynicism as a moral category in Western culture" and wandering around "the problem of Cynicism as a 'trans-historical' category" (Foucault 2011, 177–9), Foucault keeps the reader on the trajectory of parrhesia as a way of life — as the courage to express truth through one's life — while locating later descendants of Cynicism within Western culture. Foucault argues that this way of life emerged in forms of Christianity (such as beguines in the Middle Ages) and, later on, into political movements in the 19th century, which he distinguishes as three types: secret societies, revolutionary movements, and parrhesia, as it manifests in the artist's life (Foucault 2011, 182–6).

In walking this "trans-historical" line of the Cynic life, Foucault mainly places his interest in the emergence of the 19th-century modern artist. He argues that parrhesia is about living a life as an artist. Foucault concludes that it is within art that the "most intense forms of a truth-telling with the courage to take the risk of offending are concentrated" (Foucault 2011, 189), as opposed to those forms of "good" parrhesia (for example the Socratic) characterized by "a certain harmony, a certain homophony between what the speaker says and his way of life" (Foucault 2011, 169).

My explorations into contemporary artists and visual arts strategies demonstrate that we are now somewhere else: in our current highly complex and multilayered reality, in which we live with an abundance of mediated images, more refined, context-specific strategies are required to enable parrhesia. Constantly exposed to various media claiming various truths, we as spectators find it hard to trust our own experiences, and we become impatient and desensitized, easily bored. At the same time, confrontational laughter is under threat: in recent years sensitivities around political correctness have become fraught as the struggles of certain social groups to claim their right to be taken seriously, instead of assuming marginal positions in society, have intensified. To create artistic work that reaches out and touches people, the artist must conceive new strategies that take this into consideration. Still, I argue that a trait all parrhesiast-artists share with the Cynic is one detected by Foucault in Book III of the *Discourses* of Epictetus: the Cynic is a spy or *kataskopos* (Foucault 2011, 166–167). Parrhesiast-artists are spies. They constantly make use of their senses: they observe, listen, and smell social* issues and situations and react to them in expressive, sensational ways. Through their work, parrhesiast-artists address these issues and situations, and have the power to confront, move, and affect* other people because they have already been confronted with, embodied, or enacted these issues themselves. In communicating those embodiments and enactments, they mobilize their imaginations and their critical attitudes as well as those of their audience

25 See https://sites.fas.harvard.edu/~chaucer/special/litsubs/fabliaux

in turn. Paradoxically, parrhesiast-artists are able to both keep a certain distance from an issue in order to observe it clearly, but also come very close, be affected by it, and transform it through their art. This includes revealing to the audience "their blindness due to inattention, complacency, weakness, and moral distraction," but, as Foucault also notes, if it is a duty to show, it is up to the audience to take it or not (Foucault 2011, 16). For the artist-parrhesiast, this showing needs to be coupled with some kind of self-implication, engagement, and exposure.

The motivations, expressions, and strategies of parrhesiast-artists vary tremendously. Some follow the tradition of the mime, the clown, the Fool, and the caricaturist — mocking things, producing laughter with a goal, using satire, exaggeration, and creating new reconfigurations. Others follow a tradition of ethical obligation. Some combine elements from both strategies. In between these various unique paths, the possibility of crossing a border between good and bad, between ethical and immoral, is always present. The parrhesiastic in art is that which reveals uncomfortable truths against conventions by undoing dignity and seriousness. Theatricality is an ally: the parrhesiast-artist feels an urge to design a game which has consequences and affects others in turn. Whether the parrhesiastic game is confrontational, healing, disruptive, friendly, or aggressive, engaging and affecting the spectator is the unifying aim.

Earlier in this Chapter I briefly described the three historical Western European perspectives regarding the relation on art and truth: in Greek antiquity, the Platonic approach considered the good, the true, and the beautiful as inextricably linked — the beautiful being the face of good and of truth. A few centuries later, for Seneca (c. 4 B.C.E.–65 C.E.) and the Stoics, art was meant to give good examples to people by serving temperance and wisdom. There is a limit, according to Seneca: "Truth is complicated and profoundly obscure" (Dobbin 2012, Seneca 115 Demetrius [5]). In modern philosophy, a third perspective had been established: art is beyond good and bad. Modern artists were responsible for finding ways to express the moral attitude and aesthetic values of modernity. My examination of Sherman's strategies proves how holding a credible relationship to truth in the postmodern world further complicates the relations between art and truth. Sherman "appears" and reveals mechanisms involved in the construction of identity of a subject caught in the gaze through manipulated self-centered imaging acts. The uncomfortable truth she shares with the viewer is with respect to the problem of "true" identity.

However different the subjects, strategies and perspectives of the artists I examine in this Chapter, it is obvious that they all attempt to create set-ups, define "a time and a place, in other words a dramatic scene where truth can emerge, where subjects can be recognized in the act of truth" (McGushin 2007, 9). In these set-ups they invite the viewer to project, desire, and imagine. The set-ups function as reflective surfaces; they depend on the viewer's imagination and ability to mirror themselves in them to receive meaning and become complete. The mechanisms and strategies contemporary parrhesiast-artists use to approach the viewer and grasp and hold their attention, keep them in the artwork, include dubiousness, trickery, seduction, deception, undermining. In the present complicated and loaded post-modern, post-truth landscape, one could observe that contemporary parrhesiast-artists decide to function undergound, instead of employing straightforward approaches regarding art and truth relations, in order to have an affect on the viewer. I suggest that this attitude partly resonates with Duchamp's enigmatic statement of 1961, about the "artist of tomorrow" going underground (Duchamp 1961).

Although truth is a very contested term, the artist-parrhesiast persists in seeking it out through the power of senses and affect, using artistic freedom of expression as a weapon. The artist-parrhesiast adopts a militant vocabulary and stance. Grayson Perry has named an exhibition *Guerilla Tactics*, Louise Bourgeois spoke of "defense." During their resistance work, Claude Cahun and her partner Marcel Moore signed themselves as "The Soldier Without a Name." I argue that although not all parrhesiast-artists make explicitly political work, political questions underpin their work. By political I mean the possibility for imaginative processes to be enabled and expressed, by making associations not previously imagined and by daring to disassociate from existing associations. Parrhesiast-artists care for the conditions needed so that they can persistently keep asking the question, "How can I, as an artist, practice my ability to create a kind of shared sense of what is true or meaningful?" and have the courage to challenge, disrespect, confront, and disrupt normality, rules, and the status quo.