


Unruly Truth: On *Parrhesia* and/as Political Refusal¹

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Abstract. This article employs Bonnie Honig's concepts of refusal and intensification to conceptualize the ancient practice of 'parrhesia' as a form of conflictual, political truth-telling. This entails envisaging political truth-telling as an intense, agonal practice that does not establish unalterable foundations but takes part in world-building practices. To this end, I first reconstruct parrhesia as an agonistic practice of truth-telling. Against this background, I take up Honig's concept of intensification to make sense of parrhesia's intricate political stakes with reference to Euripides's *Ion* tragedy. Finally, I reenvision the bacchantes' secession to Cithaeron as displayed in Euripides's *Bacchae* tragedy against the backdrop of Michel Foucault's analysis of the cynic tradition, where parrhesia turns into a subversive political practice of displaying and prefiguring other forms of existence and social relations.

Keywords. Bonnie Honig; Refusal; Truth-telling; *Parrhesia*; Intensification; Euripides; Foucault

[ES] La verdad rebelde: sobre la parresía y el rechazo político

Resumen. En este artículo se emplean los conceptos de *rechazo* e *intensificación* de Bonnie Honig para conceptualizar la antigua práctica de la "parrhesía" como una forma conflictiva de decir la verdad política. Esto implica concebir la narración de la verdad política como una práctica intensa y agónica que no establece fundamentos inalterables, sino que participa en prácticas de construcción de mundo. Con este fin, primero reconstruyo la parrhesía como una práctica agonística de decir la verdad. Con este telón de fondo, retomo el concepto de intensificación de Honig para dar sentido a las intrincadas apuestas políticas de la parrhesía con referencia a la tragedia de *Ion* de Eurípides. Por último, reviso la secesión de las bacantes a Cithaeron tal y como se despliega en la tragedia *Las bacantes* de Eurípides con el trasfondo del análisis de la tradición cínica que ofrece Michel Foucault, donde la parrhesía se convierte en una práctica política subversiva que muestra y prefigura otras formas de existencia y relaciones sociales.

Palabras clave: Bonnie Honig; rechazo; decir-verdad; parrhesía; intensificación; Eurípides; Foucault

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Liberation begins with refusing the given. Bonnie Honig's *A Feminist Theory of Refusal* (2021)¹ succinctly shows that for such refusal to unleash political force, it cannot be conceived as purely negative. Politically salient refusal does not turn away from the present, its power relations, and its material conditions but comprises an affirmative flip side, encompassing

collective political practices, rehearsing alternative relationalities, and building solidary counter-communities. Refusal, on this account, is a critical, affirmative, and imaginative "world-building practice".² Thus, Honig turns against an unpolitical notion of refusal, popular within a "Bartleby left"³ that celebrates pure negativity, emblematically embodied in the notorious

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² B. Honig, *A Feminist Theory of Refusal*. Cambridge, Harvard UP, 2021, p. 104.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 14

“I prefer not to,” and unthwarted by political commitment, struggle, or strategy. In what follows, I fathom how Honig’s concept of refusal allows to account for the political import of counter-hegemonic *truth-telling* practices. I focus on how uttering the truth may, in intense political moments, constitute a practice that refuses to accept established procedures and, instead of merely stating or reiterating the given, envisages alternative social relations.

To underscore refusal’s affirmative edge,⁴ Honig sidelines *Bartleby* and *Antigone*, the “great canonical refusers,”⁵ in favor of the *Bacchae* as depicted in Euripides’s eponymous tragedy. This play dramatizes the introduction of the cult of Dionysus in Thebes, staging a conflict between Pentheus, the king, and the insurgent bacchantic women. The bacchants forsake the city and pitch camp in the mountains of Cithaeron, forming a sisterhood that subverts the patriarchal order along with its spatial and temporal regime. On Cithaeron, the bacchants “set up a para-polis [...] in which they rehearse new comportments and inaugurate new temporalities.”⁶ They practice “another way of living”⁷ beyond the androcentric order that fixes them to the roles of mother, daughter, and wife. Although their attempt to reclaim and transform the city ultimately fails, the play testifies, as Honig emphasizes, to the oppression they underwent as well as to their liberatory, prefigurative practices.

Reading the *Bacchae* allows Honig to mobilize and politicize three conceptual aspects of refusal: *inoperativity* as theorized by Giorgio Agamben (2016), *inclination* by Adriana Cavarero (2016), and *fabulation* by Saidiya Hartman (2019). In Agamben, *inoperativity* means suspending the conventional use of something to refuse the instrumental logic of means and ends. Via the *Bacchae*, Honig reframes inoperativity in terms of *intensification*: instead of merely suspending use like *Bartleby*, the bacchants enact intensified, transgressive forms of use to envisage and “ground new normativities.”⁸ Particularly striking is their intensification of care. Having left their children in the city, they do not renounce caring practices but begin to breastfeed wild animals. For Honig, this intensely “disorient[s] the human. [...] The bacchants who nurse wild animals rework the «anthropological machine» to contest sovereignty.”⁹ Thereby, they also recode Cavarero’s maternal image of *inclination* – denoting both caring affectivity and bodily bending (over the beloved child), as opposed to the masculinist-rationalist image of man standing sovereignly upright – by displaying “a gesture of inclination that is sororal, agonistic, and (figuratively) regicidal.”¹⁰ Hartman’s notion of *fabulation*, finally, takes center stage when it comes to transforming the city and its historical self-conception. Emboldened by the collective prefigurative experience, the bacchants return to the city, struggling over how their strike will be remembered. Alluding to

W.E.B. Du Bois, Honig calls their effort a “splendid failure”;¹¹ although it eventually failed, its fable entered the archive to become a quotable gesture of freedom and liberation.

To mobilize Honig’s concept of refusal for rethinking the political import of truth-telling, I am particularly interested in her notion of “intensification”. For intensification has always loomed large in the intellectual struggle over democracy and its relation to truth. Since Plato, democracy skepticism denounces the excessive nature of democratic freedom and the destabilizing dangers of an all-too intense enactment of freedom,¹² without any respect for the truth and the essential foundations and hierarchies the community purportedly rests upon. The problem of excessive freedom as hubris is already at stake in Sophocles’s *Antigone*, who is depicted as both mourning and acting excessively.¹³ Her excess of action is denounced as *panourgia*, an unbridled agitation that relentlessly puts into question given relations of power and domination. In parallel, I argue that such excessive intensification is at stake in the notion of *parrhesia*, an ancient practice of truth-telling that first occurs in Euripides’s tragedies and that later, in the tradition of Cynicism, evolved into a resistant form of life that breaks with existing normative orders to testify to the possibility of another life. In the Greek mindscape, the parrhesiast (the one who uses *parrhesia*) essentially *refuses* to remain silent or to comply to the norms of appropriacy, even in face of the gravest dangers for their own life, thus exposing their own vulnerability and *intensifying* the otherwise conventional act of telling the truth.

To explore *parrhesia* as truth-telling in terms of refusal and intensification, I strike a path that Honig left untapped in her account of Euripides, namely Michel Foucault’s late *Collège de France* lectures on the ancient history of *parrhesia*.¹⁴ Applying Honig’s notions of refusal and intensification to the problematics of *parrhesia* may help envisage truth-telling as an intense, agonal practice that does not establish unalterable foundations (which is the classical depoliticizing function of truth) but is itself part of world-building refusal practices.¹⁵ To this end, I first (1) reconstruct *parrhesia*

⁴ In an earlier reading of Honig’s reflections, I proposed to speak of “affirmative refusals” S. Seitz, “Affirmative Refusals: Reclaiming Political Imagination with Bonnie Honig and Lola Olufemi”, *Genealogy+Critique*, 8, 1, 2022.

⁵ B. Honig, *op. cit.*, p. xi.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 66.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 96.

¹² S. Gebh, “Lizenz als grundloser Grund der Radikaldemokratie?”, in *Transformationen des Politischen*, edited by V. Gengenagel, G. Spoo, K. Schubert, and L. von Ramin, Bielefeld, transcript, 2023.

¹³ B. Honig, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹⁴ This attempt to think, with Honig, about parrhesiastic truth-telling and/as refusal is supported prima facie by how the bacchants’ quest for sororal liberation commences with an agonal scene of truth-telling. In Honig, this motif reoccurs in her reconstruction of Hartman’s notion of fabulation, when “the archive,” as the ensemble of a society’s institutions of historical authority and narrative continuity, is problematized “as part of a truth-telling infrastructure” *Ibidem*, p. 99. Not least, one of the most prominent modern refusal figures that Honig discusses is Muhammad Ali, whose resistant truth-telling is seen as part of a whole “repertoire of refusal” *Ibidem*, p. 125.

¹⁵ Note that in this regard, I do not *presuppose* a specific concept of truth or a certain truth-theoretical approach. Reflecting upon truth within the political field does not so much necessitate subscribing to some extra-political, purely epistemological version of truth but requires acknowledging how truth-telling itself is a political gesture that can serve various – conservative and

as an agonistic practice of truth-telling. Against this background, I (2) take up Honig's concept of intensification to make sense of *parrhesia's* intricate political stakes with reference to Euripides's *Ion* tragedy. Finally (3), I reenvision the Bacchantes' secession to Cithaeron against the backdrop of Foucault's analysis of the cynic tradition, where *parrhesia* turns into a subversive political practice of displaying and prefiguring other forms of existence and social relations.

1. *Parrhesia* or Truth, Intensified

As Honig points out, the *Bacchae* begins with a conflictual scene of truth-telling: Dionysus himself demands the city to "face the truth about his mother's death," which involves no less than "rupturing Thebes's reality"¹⁶ and confronting a collectively disavowed past. Dionysus's act of truth-telling thus exemplifies "the power of plural perspectives to de-center the dominant one, while highlighting the full force of the grip that buried pasts can have on the present. That grip is so powerful it might take a god to loosen it."¹⁷ The whole dramatic action then unfolds on account of the god himself acting as a truth-teller. And more generally indeed, no close reading is needed to acknowledge how Euripides's tragedies present a whole tableau of scenes and modalities of conflictual truth-telling.

It is thus no wonder that the notion of *parrhesia* surfaces for the first time in Euripides. *Parrhesia* derives from *pan* (everything) and *rhema* (the said), literally meaning "to say everything." This, however, comprises two contradictory connotations, as Foucault points out. On the one hand, *parrhesia* "consists in telling the truth without concealment, reserve, empty manner of speech, or rhetorical ornament which might encode or hide it";¹⁸ on the other hand, saying everything can be understood in the pejorative sense of "saying anything, saying whatever comes to mind without reference to any principle of reason or truth"¹⁹ This double bind lays bare the *aporia* common to *parrhesia* and democracy.²⁰ Democracy implies the universal right to speak and seize the word, but at the same time, democracy itself can be threatened if everyone is allowed to say everything, even the most stupid and dangerous things for the state and the political community. A constitution in which power is exercised by the people seems to be "condemned to give place to any kind of *parrhesia*, even to the worst."²¹ While this problem is quite familiar to us today, for the Greeks, the "discovery of [a] [...] necessary antinomy between *parrhesia*, freedom of speech, the relation to

truth and democratic institutions" opened up "a very long and impassioned debate" about the "dangerous relations between democracy, *logos*, freedom, and truth."²²

Parrhesia is thus tenuously related to democratic freedom, which is also attested by how the Roman rhetoricians translated *parrhesia* both as *libertas* and as *licentia*. This readily captures *parrhesia's* unruliness in regard to social and juridical norms, as it can be seen both as the legitimate enactment of freedom (*libertas*) and as excessively transgressing or violating the norms of discourse (*licentia*).²³ In the interplay of *libertas* and *licentia*, *parrhesia* involves an insurgent moment. Accordingly, in the ancient understanding, *parrhesia* requires an asymmetry of power. *Parrhesia* can only be uttered from a less powerful position and is connected to courage and risk, as the addressee of one's discourse can always shift, in their response, from speech to physical violence. *Parrhesia* involves binding oneself to the truth one speaks and exposing oneself as the one who utters it. In this sense, *parrhesia* performs a gesture of empowerment, of constituting oneself as a free subject by binding oneself to the truth in a dangerous situation.

Parrhesia involves a moment of rupture: the intervention of a critical truth changes the shape of a situation by force of the speaker's exposition to vulnerability. Thus conceived, *parrhesia* does not rely on pre-given linguistic conventions and discursive norms but shatters them.²⁴ Foucault reflects this terminologically by distinguishing between discourse pragmatics and what he calls the "dramatics" of discourse.²⁵ While discourse pragmatics à la Habermas or Searle deals with the analysis of conventional rules that serve as conditions of possibility for a given speech act, *parrhesia* undoes the conditions of possibility that are at stake in a given discursive situation. It involves a "dramatics of true discourse which brings to light the contract of the speaking subject with himself in the act of truth-telling."²⁶ While discourse pragmatics analyzes speech as oriented towards understanding in the horizon of consensus-building, *parrhesia* "creates," as Frédéric Gros puts it, "*dissensus* and runs the risk of a hostile

emancipatory – political functions. Gerald Posselt and I recently proposed a typography of political truth forms, see G. Posselt, S. Seitz "Truth and Its Political Forms: An Explorative Cartography," *Contemporary Political Theory*, 2023.

¹⁶ Honig, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

¹⁸ M. Foucault, *The Courage of Truth*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2011, p. 10.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

²⁰ G. Posselt and S. Seitz. "Sprachen des Widerstands," in *Foucault und das Politische: Transdisziplinäre Impulse für die politische Theorie der Gegenwart*, edited by O. Marchart and R. Martinsen, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2019, p. 199.

²¹ M. Foucault, "Discourse and Truth" and "Parresia", edited by H-P. Fruchaud and D. Lorenzini, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019, p. 124.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 124.

²³ On the relation of *parrhesia* and rhetoric, see B. Waldenfels, "Wahrsprechen und Antworten", in *Parrhesia: Foucault und der Mut zur Wahrheit*, edited by P. Gehring and A. Gelhard, pp. 63–81, Zürich, Diaphanes, 2012, p. 68; G. Posselt "Wahrsprechen, Wortergreifung und Collateral Murder." *Rhetorik*, 32, 1, 2013, pp. 6–7; G. Posselt and A. Hetzel "Rhetoric as Critique: Towards a Rhetorical Philosophy", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 40, 3, 2023. Sara Gebh, *op. cit.*, recently elaborated on the history of *licentia* in anti-democratic accounts from Plato via Saint Thomas Aquinas and Thomas Hobbes up to contemporary critiques of radical democracy. Gebh's account chimes well with what I aim to lay out here, as she shows how *licentia*, far from undermining democratic aspirations, can be reconstructed as the "groundless ground" of radical democracy.

²⁴ A. Hetzel, "Die Dramatik des Diskurses: Szenen der Wortergreifung bei Foucault, de Certeau, Nancy und Ranciere," in *Parrhesia: Foucault und der Mut zur Wahrheit*, edited by P. Gehring and A. Gelhard, Zürich, Diaphanes, 2012, p. 235.

²⁵ M. Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, New York, Palgrave, 2010, p. 68.

²⁶ M. Foucault, 2019, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69.

[...] response”.²⁷ *Parrhesia* thus marks a truth-event that cannot be reduced to conventional procedures of consensually establishing the truth. Instead of relying on the promise of consensus, it outlines dissent as the dramatic site where truth is uttered.²⁸

Taking up Honig’s concepts, *parrhesia* can be explicated as refusal and intensification. First, *parrhesia* constitutively involves refusal: a refusal to remain silent, even if one’s life or social status is at risk; but also a ‘dramatic’ refusal of the conventions of discourse that govern regular ‘pragmatic’ speech acts. Second, *parrhesia* can be conceived in terms of what Honig calls *intensification*. Just as the bacchantes, in their sororal uprising, intensify otherwise conventional practices, the parrhesiast intensifies the everyday practice of “saying what is” by making truth the site of dissent, risk, bodily vulnerability, and exposure to violence.²⁹

2. Creusa: Claiming the Truth, Resisting the God

Foucault shows that the Greeks reacted to the aporia of *parrhesia* and democracy and the crisis of truth it entails by introducing moral and social qualifications on who is able to speak the truth. While *parrhesia* remains not strictly codified, certain conventional boundaries are drawn to prevent the excesses of truth-telling and restrict the scope of eligible speakers. Generally, slaves, strangers, and women are not regarded as possible subjects of *parrhesia*.³⁰ This problem of drawing lines on who may count as a parrhesiast is precisely at stake in Euripides’s *Ion* tragedy.

Ion, the tragedy’s hero, faces the problem that only Athenian citizens can speak *parrhesia* while strangers are excluded. However, in order to soar as the founder of the new Athenian order, he must first be able to use *parrhesia* and to appear as a parrhesiast. The play thus deals with the problem of Ion’s descent and how he can attain a status worthy of *parrhesia*. While Foucault focuses on Ion’s *parrhesia* as a matter of genealogy and social status, it is decisive to note that Ion in the end only attains this status and the capacity to use *parrhesia* by force of another parrhesiastic act. Most strikingly, this act is performed by someone who precisely lacks the mentioned social qualifications

for *parrhesia*. It is the speech of Creusa, Ion’s mother, who had been raped by Apollon, Ion’s true father and, among other occupations, the god of truth. Creusa denounces Apollon in Delphi, the god’s homestead and the site of his oracle, publicly exposing him to shame. Her parrhesiastic speech smashes the truth about the rape into the god’s face in front of everyone. Calling Apollon “son of Leto”, Creusa parallelizes him with her own child and inscribes him into a maternal genealogy, the same genealogy that will then, as a consequence, grant Ion the status to legitimately use *parrhesia* and reorder the Athenian relations.

While Foucault, in his reading, tends to depoliticize Creusa’s *parrhesia* as an emotional, motherly outburst, I take the anticipatory structure of her *parrhesia* to be decisive for understanding its political import. In fact, in the dramaturgical logic of the play, only Creusa’s anomic, illegitimate *parrhesia* leads to the sea-change that will enable Ion to be regarded as legitimately capable of *parrhesia* in the first place. In view of this intricate constellation, Andreas Hetzel poignantly draws attention to how the whole *Ion* tragedy can be read as a “struggle for a part of those who have no part. [...] Not only Ion himself is partless and fights for a part [...]: the whole myth is about a struggle over the *logos* that is wrested from Apollon and realized politically”.³¹ Creusa’s intensified, excessive parrhesiastic act manages to dispossess Apollon and his oracle from having supreme authority over truth. This not only leads to Ion being recognized as capable of *parrhesia*. Much more fundamentally, Creusa’s dramatic truth-telling relocates the site of truth as such within the human, political agon over dissenting *logoi*. From this perspective, Creusa’s impossible *parrhesia* is no less than at the origin of the political. Once the god of truth is exposed as a liar and a rapist (in fact, Apollon is even too ashamed to resolve the conflict in the end as a *deus ex machina*; Athena has to step in for that), truth becomes a human matter, a matter no longer of godly fiat but of human agonistic practice. Creusa’s *parrhesia* thus anticipates itself: bursting out, denouncing the shameful truth about the god, it installs the very conditions of truth-telling as a human affair.

This reading of Euripides’s *Ion* shows how the political institution of truth-telling requires an institutionally unwarranted act of telling the truth about the god that had monopolized it. In *Ion*, Creusa’s refusal to keep silent about the rape marks the beginning of a detranscendentalization of truth. Once wrested from Apollon, it can no longer be relegated to the mysterious realm to which the oracle provides only precarious access, or to a transcendent, godly will. Even if *parrhesia* is in the end to conform to the *nomos* (as in the case of Ion’s quest for recognition), it first requires nonconformity with the divine *logos* (as Creusa’s speaking teaches us). Creusa’s refusal can thus be seen as the primal intensification of truth, so that all invocation of truth, all defense, and all attacks on truth will from now on be inevitably political. Note that this does not imply to reduce truth into a mere plaything in political power struggles. Quite the contrary, Creusa’s gesture of intensification amounts to acknowledging

²⁷ F. Gros in M. Foucault, “Discourse and Truth” and “Parresia,” edited by H-P. Fruchaud and D. Lorenzini, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2019, p. xv.

²⁸ I fathomed the relation of *parrhesia* and dissent more closely in S. Seitz, “Truth beyond Consensus: Parrhesia, Dissent, and Subjectivation”, *Epekeina. International Journal of Ontology, History and Critics*, 7, 1-2, 2017.

²⁹ In his reading of the Euripidean tragedies, Foucault turns to the *Bacchae* in order to introduce the concept of the “parrhesiastic pact” (M. Foucault, 2010, *op. cit.*, p. 177), as a device to mitigate the risk the parrhesiast has to take. When the messenger comes to Pentheus to report on the bacchantes’ deeds on Cithaeron, he first makes sure that he can speak without caution: “may I speak freely [*parrhesia*] / of what happened there, or should I trim my words?” (*Bacchae*, l. 668/669) Pentheus replies: “Speak freely. / You have my promise: I shall not punish you.” (*Bacchae*, l. 673/674) The parrhesiastic pact effects an exchange of truth and power: I say what I know if you promise me to inflict no harm. Note that this exchange of truth and power remains asymmetrical. The king can always abandon his promise afterwards while the parrhesiast cannot unsay his words once they are uttered. The pact only mitigates the risk but does not remove it.

³⁰ M. Foucault, 2019, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

³¹ A. Hetzel, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-245.

how truth must now be struggled for “in the dirt of experience,” to speak with Honig.³²

This may also dovetail with Honig’s early reading of Hannah Arendt’s criticism of the invocation of truth in the US Declaration of Independence with its famous phrase “We hold these truths to be self-evident.” For Arendt, the invocation of an absolute, self-evident truth is the anti-political gesture par excellence, insofar as such truths “demand an isolated acquiescence [...]. They are not held by us, we are held by them. In short, they silence us – hence Arendt’s insistence that they are illicit in the realm of action, which is the realm of speech.”³³ The absolute deprives us of political agency, as it cannot be resisted. Consequently, Honig showcases “resistibility” as Arendt’s prime criterion for the political: “an absolute is illicit in politics because it is irresistible. God, self-evident truths, natural law, are all despotic in character because they are irresistible [...]. [T]hey do not persuade to agreement, they command acquiescence. [...] In short, resistibility is the sine qua non of Arendt’s politics.”³⁴ Against this background, we could think of Creusa’s *parrhesia* as resisting the irresistible, given that she deploys her weak human power precisely to resist the god of irresistible truths.³⁵

3. Other Lives, True Lives

To conclude, let me refer these considerations on resistant truth-telling back to Honig’s account of the *Bacchae*. With Foucault’s historical analyses of *parrhesia* in mind, it is tempting to read the bacchants’ prefigurative heterotopia on Cithaeron in an anachronistic dialogue with the tradition of Cynicism. Foucault shows how *parrhesia* underwent several significant shifts throughout antiquity. From a political notion of truth-telling, it later evolves into a philosophical self-practice and then, most prominently with the cynics, into a form of life that testifies to the truth: the cynic is one who not so much speaks the truth but lives it. With his scandalous behavior, he gives us glimpses of the other life as the true life in his very performance.³⁶ Cynicism raises the question of whether, “for life truly to be the life of truth, [it] must [...] not be an other life, a life which is radically and paradoxically other”.³⁷ The cynic leads his life to testify to the possibility of (as well as the necessity of establishing) another world; he “transposes [...] the idea of an other life into the theme of a life whose

otherness must lead to the change of the world. An other life for an other world”.³⁸

This idea of truth as a parrhesiastic performance testifying to the possibility of another life can be retraced, according to Foucault, from Socrates and the cynics across Christian ethics up to modern revolutionary consciousness. “Revolutionary militantism” embraces the “true life as an other life, as a life of combat, for a changed world”.³⁹ Perhaps, such an account of *parrhesia* in terms of a revolutionary testimony to another life and a changed world resonates well with Honig’s reading of the bacchants’ secession to Cithaeron as an “inclinational heterotopia”⁴⁰: although their strike was not on display in the city like the cynics’ testimonial performances, their actions can be regarded as a testimony to the possibility of the other life. But other than the (male) cynic, who self-confidently and (self-)righteously addresses an essentially inferior, exterior public from a dimension of sublime height, the women on Cithaeron have to first address their peers, their newly found sisters, to mutually aver to each other the possibility of an other life, thus prefiguring the horizontal relations they aim to establish.

Against this background, *parrhesia*’s resistant workings can perhaps, drawing on Honig’s conception, be described as a repertoire of alethic refusal. In terms of a “dramatics of discourse,” *parrhesia* points to the agonal character of truth and validity claims. Additionally, Creusa’s parrhesiastic act has shown how a forceful transgression and resistance of irresistible transcendent foundations makes truth a human affair in the first place. And the revolutionary practice of striving for another life by testifying to the truth opens up the realm of the radically possible in the first place.

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³² B. Honig, 2021, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

³³ B. Honig, “Declarations of Independence: Arendt and Derrida on the Problem of Founding a Republic,” *American Political Science Review*, 85, 1, 1991, p. 106.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 108.

³⁵ This notion of resisting the irresistible could also accommodate for the Derridean twist in Honig’s article on Arendt and the Declaration of Independence, insofar as on Derrida’s reading of the Declaration, we cannot simply do away with the incursion of the absolute within politics. The political field will continue to be haunted by the intrusion of the irresistible. See B. Honig, 1991, *op. cit.*, p. 111; J. Derrida, “Declarations of Independence”, *New Political Science*, 7, 1, 1986.

³⁶ A. Wieder, “Kritik, Widerstand und die Erben des Kynismus: Wahrsprechen und politische Praxis beim späten Foucault,” in *Foucault und das Politische: Transdisziplinäre Impulse für die politische Theorie der Gegenwart*, edited by O. Marchart and R. Martensen, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2019, pp. 65-85.

³⁷ Foucault, 2011, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 287.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 303.

⁴⁰ B. Honig, 2021, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

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