2 A Discourse Analytical Approach to Political Violence

2.1 The Representation of Violence in the Context of Political Struggle

The term violence can be used in many ways. In common language we refer to natural phenomena, such as earthquakes or tornados, as violent. We may also generalize violence, referring to all forms of behavior or forms of life involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill other forms of life. We may also speak metaphorically of the violence of feelings, of violent speaking or writing, of certain forms of representation—the violence of a song, a novel or a poem—, of political systems, of the law, and so on. The term violence is used to refer to a wide range of phenomena with various connotations, which is why it is important to clarify what form of violence is at stake in this investigation. First of all, it is necessary to focus on the relation between violence as a term and real phenomena. For this reason, I operate with two levels of delimitation. The first realm of delimitation concerns the phenomena referred to, namely the denotation of the term, while the second concerns the meaning of the term, that is, the connotation it assumes through different uses.

The term violence refers to historical events where human beings act with their bodies to damage other bodies. Bodies are the means through which acting individuals exert physical force on other individuals. Violence happens in a specific historical moment and involves human beings acting with their bodies to change the status, or the integrity, of other bodies. Starting from this formulation, we can make two general phenomenological delimitations. The first is obvious: only human beings commit the form of violence examined in this investigation. Secondly, we are not dealing with phenomena that are violent in a metaphorical way, nor is the violence referenced here exercised by means of language. It is also not the violence of perceptions or feelings focused on subjective experience. The focus of this study is the phenomenon of action which has material and bodily consequences and happens at a certain, specific moment.

In the history of humankind, this form of violence was and is inflicted daily on a large number of men and women. Most violent acts that occur on a daily basis, today and throughout history, do not become objects of discourse; on the contrary, most accounts are never told, never represented, and fade into oblivion. It can be assumed that in any historical period, rep-

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resentations of acts of violence in public spaces are a minority among many acts of violence. Obviously, this cannot be empirically proven, because historical events that were never told, that were not represented and/or recorded, are not observable for future generations and thus limit our historical knowledge. While this is true, it is self-evident that only a tiny part of the violent acts that actually happened in history have been narrated, documented and represented, and have thus become part of our historical and collective memory. Moreover, it can be assumed that acts of violence occurring in what is generally called the «private sphere of life» are documented to a lesser extent than those occurring within a public context. Acts of violence exercised in places far from an observing audience (for example, a barn, house, convent, or workroom), are less represented and narrated than those that occur in a space frequented by a multitude of people. In other words, the larger the audience, the greater the chance of acts of violence being represented and narrated. Perhaps this is the reason (or at least one of the reasons) why our libraries and museums are filled with representations of wars, battles, executions, public tortures and killings of all kinds. Conversely, acts of domestic violence are less frequently documented. This, then, allows me to make another phenomenological distinction between different types of violence. The acts of violence at stake here are those that occur in front of an audience and of which there is at least one documented representation that is embodied in a material medium.

Representations of violence vary; for example, murder can be represented as a result of God's plan, as necessary for the salvation of a community, as an act of pure evil, or as a psychopathological outcome. Thus, if it is true that the term violence, as we define it, always denotes the typology of phenomena described above, it is also true that there is always a connotation. The connotation of the term depends on the way the term is used within discourse or, more precisely, within a discursive practice. The term always assumes a certain meaning within a certain pragmatic and hermeneutical context. This means that the same act of violence can assume different connotations, depending on how, by whom, when and where it is represented. At this point, we can approach the second kind of delimitation. This investigation addresses a real phenomenon, a historical event, which is largely and regularly represented as an act of political violence.

In modernity, there are two terms generally used, depending on the context, to define acts of violence within the context of a struggle against an existing political authority: resistance or terrorism. The first term normally carries a positive connotation and represents violence as a legitimate means

in the fight against a political authority that is considered illegitimate. One example of this is the struggle against the Italian Fascist regime under Mussolini. The concept of martyrdom, which in its «original» context of apparition indicated a passive act of resistance against violence perpetuated by the political authority, is also used to represent people who actively acted violently against totalitarian and despotic states. In Italy, the cult of the «martyrs of the Resistance» against Fascism is widespread, evidenced by the many plaques erected to partisans in the squares and streets of many Italian cities; but the allocation of the martyr role also affects people who actively fought violently against democratic political systems. In fact, even the men responsible for the September 11 attacks, to name only the most striking example from this century, are considered martyrs among certain groups and communities. In short, individuals considered to be «terrorists» by some people can be considered «martyrs» by others.

Terrorism is a term that was and is still used to describe violence perceived as illegitimate. One contemporary example of this is the violence perpetuated in the name of the so-called Islamic State or DAESH. Obviously, the perception of a certain act of violence as legitimate or illegitimate is a question of perspective, inasmuch as some individuals and groups regard a political authority as legitimate, while others do not. The Red Brigades saw themselves as inheritors of the *Resistenza* against the Italian Fascist regime during World War II and as legitimate revolutionary fighters against the *Stato Imperialista delle Multinazionali*. This, to them, was the historical continuation of the Fascist regime responsible for imperialism and the economic exploitation of workers by the bourgeois class. Most Italian citizens disagreed with this view (although, as we shall see, the project of *lotta armata* was, for a time, partially supported by the student movement). Instead, to most citizens the Red Brigades were nothing but terrorists and brutish murderers, who indiscriminately killed people.

At first glance, it thus seems that the terms «martyrdom» and «terrorist attack» can be used to represent the same identical act of political violence, depending on the perspective and ideological setting of both the producers and consumers of discursive practices. This is also the thesis of Karin Fierke, who, as we will see in detail in the next chapter, distinguishes between two different, competing language games: the language game of those who resist state violence, which represents a person who died in passive or active resistance as a martyr; and the language game that «expresses the meaning structure employed by state authorities, which depoliticizes, by identifying the actor as a criminal or terrorist, whose death may be at-

tributed to ‹suicide.›»[1] What I take care to emphasize is that, despite their antithetical meanings, the two words «martyr» and «terrorist» both refer to people that died within the context of a struggle against existing state apparatuses.

If we look at the history of the term «terrorist», we realize that the origin of the word has a completely different meaning from its current application. In fact,

> the term was coined to refer to an allegedly illegitimate use of violence by the revolutionary government of France against its own people in the period of the ‹terror› (1793-94). By the early twentieth century the word had shifted to refer to the illegitimate use of violence *against* the state, which could be seen as, in some sense, operating within the nation.[2]

The term «terrorism» is thus no longer used to represent the use of violence by a political authority as illegitimate, but is rather used to make the repressive state apparatuses appear absolutely necessary for the defense of citizens and society. The term «martyr» also underwent a transformation, but one far more complex than that of the term «terrorist» and with much more ancient historical roots. In fact, as we will explore in the next chapter, the term underwent a series of shifts in a long process of re-signification, by which it was transposed from a *discourse of rebellion* to a *discourse of sovereignty*.

In the lectures at the College de France, particularly the lectures in the years 1975–1976, which were published with the title *Society Must Be Defended*, Michel Foucault argues that war and violence are central to understanding power as a «relationship of force» and as «something that is exercised and exists only in action.» Inverting Clausewitz's famous proposition, he proposes approaching power as «the continuation of war by other means.»[3] Furthermore, he analyzes the «how» of power, namely the way in which discourses of power generate powerful effects. He is interested in the «multiple relations of power» that «traverse, characterize, and constitute the social body.» Foucault also stresses the fact that power relations «are indissociable from a discourse of truth» and that they «can neither be established nor function unless a true discourse is produced, accumulated,

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1 Fierke 2013, 48.
2 Janes/Houen 2014, 1.
3 Foucault 2003, 14–15.

put into circulation and set to work.»[4] Foucault's analytical approach is characterized by a focus on the effective practices, the networks, the dispositives, and the micro-mechanisms through which discourses of power and subjectivity are produced.

Starting from this conceptualization of war and power, Foucault addresses the emergence and political function of the two aforementioned discourses. His main thesis can be summarized as follows: until the end of the Middle Ages, the discourse of sovereignty had the main function of enforcing, glorifying and legitimating power relations. Foucault underlines the continuity between the discourse of sovereignty in the Middle Ages and the «politico-legendary history of the Romans.»[5] He argues that the way in which the discourse of sovereignty represents power corresponds very closely to the Indo-European and especially Roman representations of power. Implicitly referring to Georges Dumezil, he indicates the two main functions of this system of representation: on the one hand, the power to subjugate and to bind through the use of obligations, oaths, commitments and the law and, on the other hand, the power to fascinate and terrorize through the use of rituals and discursive practices of glorification.[6] In other words, the discourse of sovereignty was at once «juridical and magical.»[7]

On the threshold of modernity, especially with the constitution of modern nation-states, the concentration of power, and the monopolization of war and violence, a new discourse appeared. Foucault characterizes it as a «counter-historical» discourse, which «was no longer a discourse of sovereignty, of even race, but a discourse about races, about a confrontation between races, about the race struggle that goes on within nations and within laws.»[8] Just as he emphasizes the analogy between the discourse of sovereignty and the Roman way of representing power, he also identifies the presence and operativeness of «a certain number of epic, religious or mythical forms which, rather than telling of the untarnished and uneclipsed glory of the sovereign, endeavor to formulate the misfortune of ancestors, exiles, and servitude» within this new discourse.[9] These new forms of representation and narration of war and violence, Foucault ar-

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4 Foucault 2003, 24.
5 Foucault 2003, 71.
6 See Foucault 2003, 68.
7 Foucault 2003, 73.
8 Foucault 2003, 69.
9 Foucault 2003, 71.

gues, «are much more closer to the mythico-religious discourse of the Jews than to the politico-legendary history of the Romans»; in fact,

> at least from the second half of the Middle Ages onward, the Bible was the great form for the articulation of religious, moral and political protests against the power of kings and the despotism of the church [...]. In the Middle Ages, Jerusalem was always a protest against all the Babylons that had come back to life; it was a protest against eternal Rome, against the Rome of the Caesars, *against the Rome that shed the blood of the innocent in the circus*. The Bible was the weapon of poverty and insurrection; it was the word that made men rise up against the law and against glory, against the unjust laws of kings and the beautiful glory of the Church. To that extent, it is not surprising that we see, at the end of the Middle Ages, in the sixteenth century, in the period of the Reformation, and at the time of the English Revolution, the appearance of a form of history that is a direct challenge to the history of sovereignty and kings—to Roman history—and that we see a new history that is articulated around the great biblical form of prophecy and promise.[10]

This new «discourse of rebellion and of prophecy, of knowledge and of the call for the violent overthrow of the order of things» challenges the discourse of sovereignty, because, by iterating biblical motifs, figures and narratives, it uncovers what the discourse of sovereignty deliberately and strategically concealed: that power, rulers, kings, and laws are the result of the triumph of some through the submission of others.[11] According to Foucault, the discourse of rebellion relates to a new kind of historical memorialization:

> In Roman-style history, the function of memory was essentially to ensure that nothing was forgotten—or in other words, to preserve the law and perpetually to enhance the luster of power for so long as it endured. The new history that now emerges, in contrast, has to disinter something that has been hidden, and which has been hidden not only because it has been neglected, but because it has been carefully, deliberately, and wickedly misrepresented. Basically, what the new history is trying to show is that power, the mighty, the kings, and the laws have concealed the fact that they were born of the contingency and injustice

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10 Foucault 2003, 71 (emphasis added).
11 Foucault 2003, 74.

of battles. […] Unlike the historical discourse of Indo-European soci-
eties, this new discourse is no longer bound with a ternary order, but
with a binary perception and division of society and men; them and
us, the unjust and the just, the masters and those who must obey
them, the rich and the poor, the mighty and those who have to work
in order to live, those who invade lands and those who tremble before
them, the despots and the groaning people, the man of today's law and
those of the homeland of the future.[12]

This new kind of memorialization is explicitly eschatological, inasmuch as
it unmasks «Rome as a new Babylon» and demands «the lost rights of
Jerusalem.»[13] As Foucault highlights, in the Middle Ages, Rome «func-
tioned as a sort of permanent and contemporary historical presence», inas-
much as «all the nations of Europe claimed to have been born of the fall of
Troy»; this is the reason why «all the nations, all the States, and all the
monarchies of Europe could claim to be Rome's sisters.»[14] By iterating and
referring to biblical motifs, figures and narratives, the discourse of rebel-
lion reproduces and recontextualizes an eschatological understanding of
history. The European Nations are represented as oppressive powers that,
like those of Babylon and Rome, will be defeated by an approaching new
and definitive political order. However, as Foucault explains, it would be a
mistake to regard the discourse of rebellion as belonging only to the op-
pressed and the enslaved:

> It is true that we see it taking shape, at least initially perhaps, in the
> eschatological themes or myths that developed together with the popu-
> lar movements of the second half of the Middle Ages. But it has to be
> noted that we very quickly—immediately—find it in the form of his-
> torical scholarship, popular fiction, and cosmo-biological speculations.
> For a long time it was an oppositional discourse; circulating very
> quickly from one oppositional group to another, it was a critical instru-
> ment to be used in the struggle against a form of power, but it was
> shared by different enemies or different forms of opposition to that
> power. We see it being used, in various forms, by radical English
> thought at the time of the seventeenth century revolution. A few years
> later, we see the French aristocratic reaction using it against the power
> of Louis XIV, and it has scarcely been transformed at all. In the early

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12 Foucault 2003, 72–74.
13 Foucault 2003, 74.
14 Foucault 2003, 75.

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nineteenth century, it was obviously bound up with the post-revolutionary project of at last writing a history whose real subject is the people. But a few years later, we can see it being used to disqualify colonized subraces. This is, then, a mobile discourse, a polyvalent discourse. Although its origins lie in the Middle Ages, it is not so marked by them that it can have only one political meaning.[15]

Foucault defines the new discourse as a discourse about race and not about class struggle, precisely because it was soon used to qualify and legitimize the political interests of different political groups in the struggle against each other. This is why the term «race» should not be understood as «pinned to a stable biological meaning», but rather as a word that «designates a certain historico-political divide.»[16] In other words, the discourse of rebellion is a discourse about race struggle as it represents history as the conflict between at least two major «groups which, although they coexist, have not become mixed because of the differences, dissymmetries, and barriers created by privileges, customs and rights, the distribution of wealth, or the way in which power is exercised.»[17] However, Foucault clearly says that the history of revolutionary projects and practices is intrinsically bound to the emergence of counter-historical discourse.[18]

According to Foucault, the counter-historical discourse of rebellion did not replace the discourse of sovereignty. Rather, both continue to operate throughout modernity and into postmodernity in a struggle characterized by perpetual interaction between each other, producing fields of knowledge and knowledge-contents. More precisely, at a certain historical moment, the discourse of sovereignty intruded upon and took possession of the discourse of rebellion, inverting its functionality. The glorification of power relations, then, is realized through the representation of the state as the bastion of the defense of society and the social heritage of one race, that is: the nation-state as a unified social body that must be defended from inside and outside. As Foucault puts it:

> Whereas the discourse of races, of the struggle between races, was a weapon to be used against the historico-political discourse of Roman sovereignty, the discourse of race (in the singular) was a way of turning that weapon against those who had forged it, of using it to preserve the

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15 Foucault 2003, 76–77.
16 Foucault 2003, 77.
17 Foucault 2003, 77.
18 See Foucault 2003, 79.

> sovereignty of the State […]. Thanks to the shift from law to norm, from races in the plural to race in the singular, from the emancipatory project to a concern with purity, sovereignty was able to invest or take over the discourse of race struggle and reutilize it for its own strategy. State sovereignty thus becomes the imperative to protect the race. It becomes both an alternative to and a way of blocking the call for revolution that derived from the old discourse of struggles, interpretations, demands, and promises.[19]

Fundamental to this study, this passage allows us to understand and analyze the emergence of the state martyr figure. Foucault delineates the historical process through which the discourse of sovereignty took possession of the biblical figures and narratives that previously belonged to the discourse of rebellion. The martyr figure is precisely one of these appropriated biblical figures, just as martyrology is one of these narratives. In fact, when Foucault writes that «Jerusalem was always a protest against […] eternal Rome, against the Rome of the Caesars, *against the Rome that shed the blood of the innocent in the circus*», he implicitly refers to the martyr figure, inasmuch as among the people who died in the circus of the imperial cities disseminated in the Roman Empire, there were many who in the counternarrative of Christian martyrology are represented as martyrs. As we will see, just as the sovereign figure is essential to the discourse of sovereignty—whose function ultimately is nothing more than to make the power and monopoly of violence appear absolutely necessary for the protection of race (or, more precisely, of society within the boundaries of the nation-state)—, the martyr figure is indispensable to the discourse of rebellion. Therefore, to understand the nature, structure and development of the discourse of rebellion, as well as to understand how the discourse of sovereignty took possession of certain elements that originally belonged to the «mythico-religious discourse of the Jews», we have to analyze the emergence and shifts of the martyr figure.

2.2 Narratives of Sovereignty and Rebellion

Before I focus on the process that led to the emergence of the state martyr figure, it is necessary to delineate in more detail the modes of emplotment of both discourses of sovereignty and rebellion as well as to describe how

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19 Foucault 2003, 81–82.

they function, or the source of their performative efficacy. The concept of emplotment was coined by Paul Ricoeur and defines the arrangements of events into an ordered narrative whole.[20] Since the goal here is not to describe the two discourses in terms of their historical emergence and positivity, but rather to identify their two general structures, two modes of narrating and representing events of violence that can be found in different pragmatic-hermeneutic contexts, I will no longer talk of discourses, as discourses are always unrepeatable singularities appearing positively in specific historical contexts, but of narratives. The narrative of sovereignty and the narrative of rebellion are not to be considered to be two historical manifestations, that is, two narratives recounted and invented by specific authors in places and times that could be clearly localized in history, but rather as the *historical a prioris* or conditions of possibility for the emergence of positive and very concrete discourses of sovereignty and rebellion.[21] They are, in other words, not things locatable in a chronology, but rather operative forces within history.[22]

The narrative of sovereignty refers to war and violence as fundamental presences in the history of mankind and as permanent threats that can destroy society at any moment. Within this narrative, violence is represented as something inherent in human beings, as if humans had some sort of natural predisposition to violence that permanently threatens the social order. The sovereign seeks to neutralize or at least to minimize the potential for violence inherent in every society and every historical period. To prevent the emergence of primitive, anarchic and savage violence, the sovereign must take possession of violence and monopolize it. In other words, it must be so powerful that it can impose peace by the means of violence. The narrative of rebellion instead refers to war and violence as a confrontation between two groups, as a hostile encounter between the oppressed and their oppressors, and always emerges as the negation of the narrative of sovereignty inasmuch as it challenges its way of representing history, specifically historical events of violence. Instead of enforcing and legitimizing the power of the sovereign as necessary for the defense of society, the narrative of rebellion seeks to reveal the iniquity of sovereign power and unmask its contingency and injustice. The narratives of sovereignty and of rebellion can be understood as antithetical ways of referring to and giving meaning to political violence. The first represents violence as a per-

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20 See Ricoeur 1991, 138–139.
21 See Foucault 1972, 126–131.
22 See Agamben 2009, 110.

manent threat to society, which must be controlled and held off by the political authority, while the other represents violence as an instrument of oppression used by a certain group to rule and control another. Thus, these narratives hold two opposite political functions. The narrative of sovereignty legitimizes the use of violence by a political authority as necessary to prevent the use of violence by the enemies of society. In contrast, the discourse of rebellion does not legitimize any kind of violence, but rather unmasks it as a simple and pure instrument of the fight and struggle for power. Within the discourse of rebellion, violence is neither legitimate nor illegitimate, but merely a means to the attainment of power.

At the base of modern hegemonic political thought, with the idea of sovereign power at its ideological core, is the anthropological Hobbesian premise: in the «state of nature» men are *homo homini lupus*. This anthropology postulates a state of nature, in which human beings live in a permanent «war of all against all» while life is «solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short», due to man's passion and to the «perpetual and restelesse desire of Power.»[23] To avoid the infinite perpetuation of war, individuals must relinquish a degree of individual sovereignty to an authority that, in return, provides protection. In order for man to recognize the authority of the sovereign, a permanent fear of punishment is necessary. To counter the «state of nature», Hobbes conceives the state as a *machina machinorum*, which holds a monopoly on violence to ensure peace.

The mechanism that legitimates holding a monopoly on violence within modern hegemonic political thought follows a mythical narrative structure. The «mythical symbol of the Leviathan» does not simply function as an illustration of political theory, but is rather a symbol that recalls and highlights the mythical substrate that accompanies hegemonic modern political thought.[24] According to Hans Blumenberg, myth is one of the original structures of human thought: because «fear [*Angst*] must be rationalized to fear [*Furcht*] again», and man invents «artifices such as the supposition of the familiar for the unfamiliar, the explanations for the unexplainable, the names for the unnamable.» The myth, in other words, is an «absolutism of reality.»[25] Thus, on one hand, the Leviathan is the explanation of the inexplicability of chaos and, on the other, puts order into reality. Chaos is the situation of war of all against all. This chaos is generated from below, by the masses in revolt, by the mob. The mob is Behemoth, the monster

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23 Hobbes 2003, 79 (EW III 85).
24 See Taubes 1983, 9–15.
25 Blumenberg 2014a, 10–11.

that lives in the shadows and in the mud (Job 40: 19–24), and the Leviathan is its corrective: an awesome power that keeps the chaos in check. Consequently, the function of the Leviathan's symbol is to keep the mythical fear of chaos alive. Without the Leviathan, the mechanism that legitimizes violence perpetuated by the state loses its symbolic power, and therefore, the sovereign remains a sterile figure, without body and without authority.

In the 20th century, the narrative of sovereignty found its greatest representative in the jurist Carl Schmitt. Schmitt brought Hobbes' reasoning to its most extreme consequences. In Schmitt's thought, the sovereign is defined as one who decides on the state of exception:

> He [the sovereign] decides whether there is an extreme emergency as well as what must be done to eliminate it. Although he stands outside the normally valid legal system, he nevertheless belongs to it, for it is he who must decide whether the constitution needs to be suspended in its entirety […]. There exists no norm that is applicable to chaos. For a legal order to make sense, a normal situation must exist, and he is sovereign who definitely decides whether this normal situation actually exists. All law is ‹situational law›. The sovereign produces and guarantees the situation in its totality. He has the monopoly over this last decision. Therein resides the essence of the state's sovereignty, which must be juristically defined correctly, not as the monopoly to coerce or to rule, but as the monopoly to decide. The exception reveals most clearly the essence of the state authority. The decision parts here from the legal norm, and (to formulate it paradoxically) authority proves that to produce law it need not be based on law.[26]

The power to decide on the state of exception is the missing piece in Hobbes' theory. It is the piece that manifests the sovereign as legitimate only within a framework of mythical thought. The sovereign is only absolutely necessary to the preservation of order when confronted with advancing chaos. This is the strategic core of Schmitt's political theology: he conceives the state as a *katechon*, an arresting power whose *raison d'être* is to stop the anarchic, chaotic and demonic forces that perpetually threaten the social order.[27] This also reveals that the representation of violence and war as a potentially omnipresent threat plays a central and strategic role in the discourse of sovereignty.

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26 Schmitt 1985, 7, 13.
27 See Schmitt 1988, 59–62; Schmitt 1996.

In the contemporary world, the mythic structure of violence legitimization manifests itself in the language and rhetoric adopted by many purported democratic and liberal governments. A paradigmatic example of this rhetoric comes from US President George W. Bush's administration in its justification of the US' military intervention in Iraq. The Bush administration represented enemies of the United States not simply as political opponents tied to specific interests—economic, national, cultural etc.—but as the acolytes of absolute evil. By placing the concept of the «terrorist» at the center of foreign policy, the Bush administration managed to universalize the enemy. The figure of the terrorist is the main character of a mythical narrative. In the rhetoric of the «war on terror», the «terrorist» is not a specific enemy within a specific cultural context linked to its own historicity, but rather a variable without determinations; it could be anyone and be anywhere. The enemy embodies the Otherness in body politics: an outsider that is at the same time an insider. Fear of foreigners and complete difference on the one hand, and fear of chaos caused by the masses, or the social body itself, on the other are constitutive for the acceptance of violence perpetuated by the state. What sustains this narrative is not a structure of logical and rational thought, but rather a mythical one. The mythical narrative of the sovereign is based on the idea of permanent violence and war, in which the enemy can be anyone. It is this mythical universal enemy that allows states to declare a permanent state of exception, in which the use of violence always seems necessary, inevitable, and therefore, legitimate.

According to Jacob Taubes, the narrative of sovereignty finds its opposite in Walter Benjamin's idea of the messianic revolution. In his eight theses on the philosophy of history, Benjamin takes the fundamental concepts of Schmitt's thought and overturns their meaning: the state of exception, which in the writings of Carl Schmitt is dictatorially imposed or dictated from above, becomes the starting point for a messianic revolution from the bottom.[28] To understand the meaning of this reversal, it is necessary to take into account the distinction made by Benjamin between mythical and divine violence:

> Far from inaugurating a purer sphere, the mythical manifestation of immediate violence shows itself fundamentally identical with all legal violence, and turns suspicion concerning the latter into certainty of the perniciousness of its historical function, the destruction of which

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28 See Taubes 1987, 28.

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thus becomes obligatory. This very task of destruction poses again, in the last resort, the question of a pure immediate violence that might be able to call a halt to mythical violence. Just as in all spheres God opposes myth, mythical violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythical violence is law-making, divine violence is law destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood.

When Benjamin speaks of mythical violence, which founds the law, he clearly has in mind the violence perpetuated by the state, specifically the kind of violence that legitimizes itself through recourse to fear of chaos. In this sense, violence is lawmaking: it constitutes the established order, which contains the chaos that arises from the masses, from the mob. Law does not possess the power to legitimize violence perpetuated by the state —it has only the function of making it legal. Furthermore, law is a result of mythical violence, and violence is the means to deploy the power over mere life. The concept of mere life is a boundary concept since it marks the intersection of mythical and divine violence. Within the narrative of sovereignty (and therefore within the logic of mythical violence), a human being can be reduced to mere life—to a body that a political authority may freely dispose of—where authority may find legitimacy in destroying it for the sake of maintaining peace. In a sort of dialectic inversion, mere life is also the condition of possibility for the redemption of the oppressed; it is a specific form of life, from which it is possible to destroy the law and delegitimize violence perpetuated by the state. What Benjamin calls divine violence is precisely that form of power that manifests itself and becomes possible in the condition of mere life:

> [...] with mere life the rule of law over the living ceases. Mythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake, divine violence pure power over all life for the sake of the living. The first demands sacrifice, the second accepts it.[29]

What is this violence that «accepts sacrifice», that «is lethal without spilling blood»? Is it not a contradiction to speak of violence that accepts sacrifice? I propose to elucidate this distinction by resorting to the distinction be-

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29 Benjamin 1995, 297.

tween active and passive violence. An example of passive violence, for Benjamin, is a general strike, which aims at suspending sovereign power over mere life and annihilating the rule of law.[30] A strike is violent because it opposes the violence of the state, and it is passive because it opposes violence without spilling blood. Accepting sacrifice means accepting the possibility of giving up one's own life for a cause larger than life itself. In the context of oppression, sacrifice is a «form of life» through which a single subject, passively resisting the violence perpetuated by the state, highlights the injustice suffered by a group of individuals. The kind of violence that resides in the act of sacrifice is no longer a means, as it is in the case of violence that founds the law and maintains order, but *pure manifestation*.[31] In this sense, sacrifice is an «act of speech» in which the suffering body manifests the injustice experienced by a group to a larger audience. The injured or dying body becomes the medium that bears witness to the condition of an oppressed group. The transformative power of self-sacrifice lies precisely in the reconstitution of the boundaries surrounding the individual body that is sacrificed and the larger body politic. Double performativity of the act of sacrifice therefore exists: the act not only witnesses injustice, but also shapes the body politic, making possible a common identity between people who may never meet but who are still united by a common experience. Therefore, the divine violence mentioned by Benjamin can be understood as the symbolic power that flows from the suffering or dying body. Perhaps, then, this is the meaning behind the concept of mere life. With mere life the rule of law, (a system of rules that legalizes violence perpetuated by the state), ceases, because its deep iniquity is «materialized» in the body of the one who sacrifices himself or herself.

Why does Benjamin define the violence related to the act of sacrifice as «divine»? Once again, we can find the coordinates to answer this question in Jacob Taubes' writings. In his interpretation of the Pauline letters, Taubes clarifies Benjamin's messianism. His argument begins as such: the Messiah is a martyr, meaning the one whom with his own sacrifice bears witness to injustice. In the tradition of Western thought, the best-known example of such a sacrifice is the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Christ is the one who, with his sacrifice, undermines the authority of the Roman Empire and the authority of the Jewish theocracy, testifying with his own body the injustices perpetuated by the established power. For Taubes, in the Pauline letters, Christ is conceived as the one who, with his own sacri-

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30 See Benjamin 1995, 291–292.
31 See Agamben 2005a, 62.

fice, constitutes a universal social body. In the community of Christ there is no difference between Greeks, Jews and Romans, between fathers and sons, between slaves and masters. On the contrary, the battered body of the Christ is the symbol of the universal community of the oppressed.[32] Indeed, the identification of the individual with the community no longer takes place in terms of ethnicity, as in the case of the Jewish law of the Old Testament, and even in terms of belonging to a specific realm such as the law of the Empire, but rather in terms of belonging to a community of universal subjects.[33]

For Taubes, the martyrdom of Christ is the paradigmatic example of an act that delegitimizes the established order and simultaneously constructs and legitimizes a new community. This legitimation of the oppressed community is expressed in the idea of resurrection. The resurrection of Christ promises the resurrection of all, at the end of time, in a new body politic.[34] The dialectic of martyrdom and resurrection, of a past and future event, constitutes what both Taubes and Benjamin call a «messianic time» or «now-time».[35] This time is characterized by a conception of history in which the established order is already perceived as illegitimate, but is not yet a new order. The eschatological tension between the act of martyrdom (a past event) and the resurrection of all in a new body politic (a future event) constitutes the «now-time». This allows us to clarify Benjamin's concept of divine violence. The violence inherent in sacrifice is «divine» because it breaks the mechanism of mythical thought, in which history is conceived as circular. In fact, the circular concept of time, which is the basis of mythic thought, follows the logic of the eternal return: every time the world is threatened by chaos, mythical violence falls upon it to restore order. Divine violence departs from this concept of repetition, which implicitly legitimizes and justifies the maintenance of the status quo, and creates the possibility of a radical change.

In summary, mythical and divine violence are two different ways of conceiving the body politic and historical time. On the one hand, active violence founds the state and the dictatorship of the law, using the perpetual fear of the onset of chaos. Mythical violence always needs an enemy that signifies chaos and evil. From this point of view, the body politic of the sovereign state must always exclude someone who, as potentially danger-

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32 See Taubes 2003, 164.
33 See Taubes 2003, 146.
34 See Taubes 2003, 71–72.
35 See Taubes 1987, 21–24; Benjamin 1968, 261.

ous, does not have the same rights as citizens of the state. What makes this mechanism of inclusion/exclusion very effective is that, since anyone is potentially dangerous, anyone can be represented and perceived as the enemy. The perpetuation of this omnipresent enemy is guaranteed only within a circular conception of history. Indeed, the need for maintenance of order is provided only if the danger of chaos is perceived as always latent.

Acts of passive violence, which undermine the legitimacy of the state through witnessing evil uses of violence, are the radical antitheses of active violence. Violence perpetuated by the state loses its legitimacy when what was previously represented as an enemy, or force of chaos, is displayed in all its weakness: a weak body, or mere life. The act of passive resistance reveals the structure of the mythical narrative, showing the absurdity of the fear of chaos, and reveals the ultimate function of such a prominent narrative, which is the maintenance of power over mere life. The body of the oppressed becomes the signifier of an entire community of oppressed people, now a political body that is no longer based on a mechanism of exclusion, but on a universal conception of the human being. In this respect, the martyr figure is the antithesis of the Leviathan.[36] If the Leviathan is the mythical symbol of the authoritarian sovereign, a monster that embodies the citizen and protects the citizens from external enemies and from themselves, the martyr figure is the divine symbol of the community of the oppressed. This undermines the illegitimacy of state violence, showing its deep iniquity, and lays the basis for forming a universal political body.

From this point of view, the martyr figure becomes the model for the development of an aesthetic of resistance. In fact, the purpose of my argument is not to make a pamphlet on martyrdom, but to highlight the aesthetic dimension of political practices, especially within practices where the staging and representation of the body holds a central role. In order to highlight what is at stake here, I propose to compare the act of martyrdom with a less radical form of resistance than self-sacrifice, which, following a suggestion made by Giles Deleuze and Giorgio Agamben in two different essays,[37] is exemplified in Herman Melville's novel *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street*. Melville describes a less radical form of resistance than self-sacrifice that is still quite powerful. Bartleby is always the one who says «no, I prefer not», when his boss asks him to do something. This is an example of a speech act, in which a lack of action forces the authority of the master into a state of crisis. When Bartleby denies the will of his master,

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36 See Weigel 2007b, 15; Fierke 2013, 53.
37 See Agamben/Deleuze 2012.

the hierarchical structure of the relationship between the two characters is completely thrown into crisis. This occurs in such a way that the authority of the employer loses all meaning. The fundamental difference between the act of Bartleby and the radical act of martyrdom is obvious: Bartleby does not have to sacrifice his body or his own life to undermine the authority of the powers in charge, because Bartleby does not fight against state institutions. Instead, he fights against a particular model of work organization personified by his employer.

What is interesting, however, is not the difference between the two acts, but their similarities. In both cases, we find an act that rebels against the expectations of those who operate within dominant discourses. Just as Bartleby shatters his employer every time with every negative response, state institutions are completely unable to grasp the meaning of this kind of martyrdom. Indeed, within the narrative of sovereignty, a healthy individual never sacrifices his own life, and from the point of view of a sovereign power the act of martyrdom is a meaningless action. The reason for this is that, as suggested by the above analysis of the anthropological implications of Hobbes' thought, the narrative of sovereignty always begins with the premise that man is a selfish animal, only interested in the preservation of his own life. The power of martyrdom lies precisely in this: that the power over mere life and death ceases to exist when an individual accepts the possibility of sacrificing life itself. When faced with sacrifice, the expectation of the sovereign, (that is, that every man will do anything to save himself), collapses like a house of cards. From this perspective, it appears that the core of Benjamin's divine violence is not so much a willingness to sacrifice one's own life for a cause, but rather the ability to override the rules of the dominant narrative. The performativity of resistance lies not only in the fact that the act makes manifest the iniquity of mythical violence, but also that the act goes against all expectations. This reformulation of the passive act of resistance drives the development of a less radical concept of mere life, one in which mere life possesses power beyond sacrifice.

We may reinterpret the concept of mere life not as a reduction of the human being into a body, or living flesh, but as the condition of possibility to develop a performative language that starts from the body. As previously explored, for Benjamin, the reduction of man to a mere life occurs under the dictatorship of the law; it is a product of the practices of government in which the idea of defending sovereignty, and the need to contain chaos, justifies the use of violence. Yet, for Benjamin, if this reduction is a product of mythical violence, it is also the condition of possibility of divine vio-

lence. To determine the relationship between these two types of violence, Benjamin uses the Hegelian concept of «antithesis» to show that it is mythical violence itself that produces its own negation. The overcoming of a thesis and its antithesis lies in the production of heterogeneous forms of life, which become possible with the condition of mere life. The reduction of a subject to a mere life undermines all signifiers of social life: confronted with mythical violence, the subject ceases to identify with a particular ethnicity, gender, or social status and experiences itself as equal to all other beings. Starting from this universal «zero point», the subject develops subversive forms of life, which, against all the expectations of the dominant narrative, override its rules and undermine its structure.

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler explains the performativity of such a subversive act in the following way: «If subversion is possible, it will be a subversion from within the terms of the law, through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawns unexpected permutations itself. The cultural constructed body will then be liberated, neither to its ‹natural› past, nor to its original pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities.»[38] Here, subversion is understood particularly as a subversion of gender categories. The mechanism by which the subversion becomes possible, however, is applicable to other forms of categorization—such as those of ethnicity or social status—produced by the dominant narrative. But what mechanism is it? For Butler, the practices of drag and cross-dressing are examples of a subversive act against the categories of gender. These practices are parodies of categories constructed by the dominant discourse. By parodying the identifications of gender, these practices highlight their own contingency and gender's constructed nature. Their performativity lies in advertising the fact that any form of identification is constructed within a discourse. In fact, «performative suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning.»[39] This performativity is only possible because the body presents itself as a «signifying lack.»[40] What allows a person to become aware that every identity is constructed? It seems to me that, according to Butler, it is precisely through subversive acts that it is possible to undermine the categorizations of the dominant discourse, and therefore to make visible their constructed nature. Mere life is exactly this «zero point» from which the constructed nature of all social determinations emerges and becomes manifest. The reduction to mere life is what re-

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38   Butler 1990, 93.
39   Butler 1990, 139.
40   Butler 1990, 135.

veals to us the signifying lack of the body, opening the possibility for the creation of alternative forms of life, no longer determined by the dominant narrative.

But what kind of political practices might subvert the logic of mythical thinking? As I argue above, such a thought is kept alive by the conception of man as a selfish animal, interested only in preserving its own life and increasing its own power. Therefore, one must try to think and give a shape to forms of life through bodily and/or language performances, which destabilize this conception of human beings. Martyrdom, understood as self-sacrifice for a higher cause over mere individual survival, is one of these forms; perhaps even the most paradigmatic form. But there are many other, less radical ways to subversively use language and body. Contestations enacted by public assemblies, strikes, vigils, and the occupation of the public space are, for example, important forms of embodied action with which dominant expectations and categorizations can be subverted, especially when they bring together individuals «belonging» to social strata, ethnicities, nationalities, genders, etc. in defense of the rights and dignity of social minorities.[41] The subversive power of these practices lies in something very simple: all these practices show that human beings are capable of acting in solidarity and fighting for others, and thus have the power to make manifest the deep iniquity of the entire narrative of sovereignty. They not only show that human beings are much more than *homo homini lupus*, but also show that behind the excuse of defending national security and order lies an inhuman logic, one that is, in its nature, mythical.

2.3 Hegemonic and Subversive Uses of the Martyr Figure

If the martyr figure is antithetical to that of the sovereign, and the performative force of martyrdom lies in its ability to reveal the iniquity of state violence and to unmask the legitimizing mechanism of the mythical narrative of the sovereign, how can we explain the emergence of the state martyr figuration? How is it possible, with regard to the case at the center of this study, that Aldo Moro was represented as a martyr of the Italian Republic, who died for the defense of the state? The state martyr figure seems to function conversely to the statement above: rather than delegitimizing the political authority, and serving as a symbolic body of oppressed communi-

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41 See Butler 2015.

ties, the state martyr seems to legitimize and support the discourse of sovereignty, serving as a symbol of the national community. In other words, the central figure of the discourse seems, in this case, to become part of the discourse of sovereignty.

The two archetypical narratives outlined in the previous section introduce at least three major problems. First, by referring explicitly to the martyrdom of Christ as a model of non-violent resistance, in the previous section I deliberately omitted reflection on the presence of martyrologies within concrete and positive discourses in which violently acting individuals are also represented as martyrs. In fact, the martyr figure also played and still plays an important role in narratives that can hardly be regarded as an expression of the suffering of oppressed communities. There are thus martyrological representations in which the situation is at least partially reversed compared to what has been outlined above. In these situations the victims are not represented as martyrs who died by the hands of state apparatuses but, on the contrary, are depicted as martyrs who sacrificed themselves in defense of the nation-state, its principles and its laws.

The second problem is directly connected with the first: since the aim of the previous section was to outline the two archetypes of sovereignty and rebellion narratives, I did not problematize the different roles martyrological representations play in positive historical discourses. By focusing on «self-sacrifice» as a bodily performance, I omitted any discussion of the role of language, rhetoric and media within both mechanisms of legitimization/delegitimization, political authority and subjectification/communization. In fact, as we develop later, an act of «self-sacrifice» deploys performative power only if it is represented, recognized and accepted as such by social actors. The specific case of martyr figuration examined in this study should be considered a borderline-case, inasmuch as it is highly problematic to talk about self-sacrifice, because Aldo Moro categorically refused to assume the role of a martyr. Since Aldo Moro did everything in his power to avoid being killed, it is necessary to change our approach and focalize on the performativity of discursive practices that represent and construct his death *as* martyrdom.

A third, more general problem concerns violence perpetuated not by members of the state apparatuses (primarily police and military forces), but by those who use active violence as a means of political struggle against established forms of political authority. We must, then, consider the reality of non-state violence, namely those forms of violence that function and perpetuate the narrative of sovereignty by maintaining and spreading the fear of an omnipresent internal and/or external enemy. What happens if

the martyr figure becomes part of a narrative that represents victims of non-state violent acts as «martyrs»? In other words: what happens if terrorism becomes the point of reference for the production of state martyrologies?

The task of solving these problems is reserved for the next chapter, which describes the historical process that led to the incorporation of the martyr figure within the narrative of sovereignty. The process of dislocation from its original context of apparition suspended the fundamental opposition of the figure of the martyr to the sovereign, resulting in the annihilation of the narrative of rebellion. Potential discursive re-enactment of the narrative dropped drastically, since its central figure was incorporated within the narrative of sovereignty. The concepts of martyrdom and sovereignty coincide and overlap in a sphere of indiscernibility, from which emerged the state martyr figure.

The martyrological representation of Aldo Moro is located at the end of a long process of displacement and relocation of the martyr figure. What makes the Moro case special, taking on almost a character of exemplarity, is not merely the serial, repetitive and massive presence of representations of Moro as a state martyr, but rather that these representations were contested even before the actual event of violence, to which the representations relate, happened. Several other social actors besides Aldo Moro objected and attempted to give, both during the 55 days in which Moro was held prisoner and after, an alternative representation of the violent event. The Moro case is therefore an excellent starting point not only for analyzing the functioning and performativity of the figure of the state martyr and understanding how such a figure could become part of a discourse of sovereignty, but also for identifying and discussing alternative forms and models of representation of events of political violence, which have, at least potentially, the power to subvert hegemonic discourses. In fact, what makes this case so interesting is that the figure of the martyr was and still is used in both dominant and subversive forms of representation and narration. In other words, in the pragmatic and hermeneutic context of the case study, the subversive use of the martyr figure survived, thus revealing that, at least potentially, it still plays a role in discourses of rebellion to the mythical narrative of the nation-state.

If the martyr figure can be used in both narratives of sovereignty and rebellion in the same historical context, then the martyr's performativity cannot be understood by hypostatizing its meaning and function, but by accounting for its different uses and discursive manifestations. Martyrological representations exercise a performative force inasmuch as they strongly

influence and canalize the interpretation and perception of historical events of political violence. Within the dominant and hegemonic discourse, representations of Aldo Moro as a state martyr serve to conceal political power structures and legitimize established forms of political authority. As I will try to demonstrate in the fifth and sixth chapters, through the use of martyrological representations and the allocation of the state martyr role, different social actors tried to attribute the meaning of a voluntary act of self-sacrifice in defense of the nation-state and for the sake of the Italian citizens' well-being to Moro's death. Martyrological representations are discursive practices that deploy a performative force inasmuch as they are able to signify Aldo Moro as a sacral victim, a martyr who witnesses the truthfulness of citizen rights and the necessity of the nation state as the supreme guarantor of these rights. Here, he becomes the central figure of a narrative in which sovereign state authority is experienced and perceived as absolutely imperative. Moro's violent death in itself acquires the meaning of an absolute and meta-historical event, namely of an event that could not be avoided as it was necessary for the preservation and the defense of the Italian Republic and the laws and values at the base of a liberal, democratic political order.

Through this absolutization of a specific historical event of violence, the social struggle of the seventies in Italy assumes the connotation of a conflict between good and evil forces, order and chaos, and the preservation and destruction of life. The effectiveness of this absolutization is threefold. First, it legitimates state authority and its monopoly on violence, presenting it as necessary for the defense of society and the preservation of the rights and lives of citizens. Second, it justifies the decisions (and non-decisions) made by the Italian government during the Moro affair, in particular the decision not to negotiate for Moro's release. Third, it causes «consumers» (as well as «producers») of hegemonic representations to identify with the national community, inasmuch as Moro's body becomes the symbolical body of the national community and thus serves as a symbol of collective identification. Aldo Moro becomes the symbol of a political community who suffered and risked destruction yet found renewed strength, inner solidarity and vitality.

Now, what distinguishes the subversive use from the hegemonic use of the martyr figure? For the purpose of this study, I propose to distinguish between instrumental and poetic uses of language. According to Agamben,

> Language […] appears for each speaker as what is the most intimate and proper; and yet, speaking of an ‹ownership› and of an ‹intimacy› of

language is certainly misleading, since language happens to the human being from the outside, through a process of transmission and learning that can be arduous and painful and is imposed on the infant rather than being willed by it. And while the body seems particular to each individual, language is by definition shared by others and as such an object of common use.[42]

Each use of language units—signs, words, and constellations of words (sentences)—is an iterative use. Discursive practices take up something that is always already given, a positivity present in history, placing them in a new hermeneutic and pragmatic context. The unique character of discursive practices depends on historical location, through which the same sign, word or sentence not only takes on a special and different meaning from time to time, but also *does* something different each time. The effectiveness of language is determined not only by semantic elements themselves, but also by the signatures to which they are subjected as well as by the context in which they appear. As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, Foucault and Agamben define the iteration and dislocation of language units as a signature.

The concealment of iteration and dislocation characterizes the instrumental use of language. Discursive practices are instrumental when they use semantic elements as tools for the objectification and absolutization of reality or to hide their historicity and contingency. This concealment leads to the hypostatization of words and things, acts or events. In other words, the instrumental use of language completely hides the externality of language, the external imposition to which we are exposed every time we make use of language itself. In this way, not only is historicity concealed, but so is the historical development of the language; in addition, its performative force is masked and silenced. As Agamben notes, today we live in an age that has perfected and taken to extremes this instrumental use of language:

> What has changed […] is that language no longer functions as a historical *a priori*, which while remaining unthought, determines and conditions the historical possibilities of speaking human beings. In being totally identified with being, it is now put forward as a neutral ahistorical or post-historical effectuality, which no longer conditions any recognizable sense of historical becoming or any epochal articulation of time. This means that we live in a time that is not—or at least pretends

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42 Agamben 2015b, 86.

not to be—determined by any historical *a priori*, which is to say, a post-historical time (or rather, a time determined by the absence or impossibility of such an *a priori*).[43]

The ethical and political value of poetry and, more generally, art, lies in its ability to use semantic elements without hiding its signatures, but rather by making them manifest. Discursive practices that make poetic use of language reveal and unmask the exteriority of language:

> [Poets] must […] abandon conventions and common use and, so to speak, render foreign the language that they must dominate, inscribing it in a system of rules as arbitrary as they are inexorable […] The appropriation of language that they pursue, that is to say, is to the same extent an expropriation, in such a way that the poetic act appears as a bipolar gesture, which each time renders external what it must unfailingly appropriate.[44]

In order to be able to distinguish between instrumental and poetic, subversive uses of the martyr figuration, this investigation has to reconstruct its historical signatures and metamorphoses. In the seventh chapter, I will discuss examples of alternative usages of the martyr figuration that operate poetically, at least in the sense of the definition presented above, since they make explicit and highlight its radical historicity, versatility and ambiguity. A large majority of martyrological representations of Aldo Moro operate according to instrumental language usage, since they hide the martyr figure's stratifications of meaning and metamorphoses. They disguise in particular the strong subversive potential it had in its «original» context of appearance, that is, within a discourse of rebellion.

2.4 The Discourse Analytical Approach

Discourse theory has already been incorporated into the study of religion for some time. Fundamental reflections on the fertility of the «discursive study of religion» were first formulated in the eighties.[45] Hans Kippenberg proposed an interpretative model, which refers to the theory of speech acts and rejects an essentialist separation of action and language by understand-

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43 Agamben 2015b, 114.
44 Agamben 2015b, 86.
45 See Kippenberg 1983; Lincoln 1989.

ing linguistic expressions as acts. This creates the possibility of examining religious expressions as discursive practices that significantly determine the construction of reality. Kocku von Stuckrad in particular argues for the discursive study of religion.[46] More specifically, he argues for the inclusion of both sociological discourse analysis as well as historical discourse analysis in the theoretical framework of the study of religion. Sociological discourse analysis assumes that everything perceived, experienced and felt is structurally intertwined with the socially constructed forms of preserved, recognized and objectified knowledge.[47] On the other hand, historical discourse analysis examines the discursive genealogy of meaning or reality-generating processes of communication in history.[48] According to von Stuckrad, the combination of these two approaches opens up a new perspective on the research subject of the study of religion. From the perspective of discourse theory, religion loses the status of a phenomenon *sui generis* and therefore can be studied as an empty signifier, which constantly receives new meaning within different discursive practices and is constituted by them. The subjects of a discourse analysis-oriented study of religion are, accordingly, discourses on religion. These discourses produce meaning and orders of knowledge materialized in certain concrete practices and institutions.

This investigation is in line with von Stuckrad's proposal of a discursive study of religion. However, since the discursive practices investigated in this investigation cannot all be explicitly considered elements of a discourse *about* religion, the selection criteria of what is a legitimate research subject within the study of religion must be extended. I am of the opinion that the discipline is not limited to discourses on religion, but also extends to discourses in which linguistic and visual elements occur, which iterate semiotic, narrative and rhetoric models that «belong» to historically preserved religious systems of knowledge and representation. This extension allows the examination of the role and function of «religious signs» within discourses, which are difficult to identify as explicitly «religious». The focus of this investigation resides, on the one hand, in those representations and narratives that recall and iterate elements of language linked to the figure of the martyr, and on the other, in the political use and function of those elements of language.

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46 See von Stuckrad 2003; von Stuckrad 2010; von Stuckrad 2013.
47 See Keller 2008.
48 See Landwehr 2008, 92.

Following Foucault's understanding of the goal and analytical strategy of «historical-philosophical research», rather than conceptualizing and isolating putative transhistorical universals, I want to establish a conceptual framework that allows for the exploration of an event of political violence and its representation in discursive practices as singularities. Foucault calls this interpretative path an examination of «eventualisation» (*événementialisation*).[49] Using a topological terminology, the aim of this investigation can be described as an attempt to map the history of the event. The positivity of the historical event is the focal point on the basis of which it becomes possible to analyze the organization, function, and the interconnection of the discursive practices referring to the event. The unit of these discursive practices is what from now on I will call *discursive formation*. The goal of historical–philosophical research is to «record the singularity of events outside of any monotonous finality», to «reject the meta-historical deployment of ideal signification and indefinite teleologies»[50] and to analyze «groups of elements where, in a totally empirical and temporary way, connections between mechanism of coercion and contents of knowledge can be identified.»[51] A central question concerning historical–philosophical research into discursive formations is: «How is it that a particular statement appeared rather than another?»[52] If we apply this principle to this study, further questions are raised: how and why is a concrete historical event of political violence repetitively and regularly represented in different media with the martyr as a central figure? Which interplaying mechanisms of coercion determine the acceptance and diffusion of martyrological representations? Which mechanisms of coercion organize, select and canalize the modes and contents of the representations of the event in a certain direction rather than another? What effects of power are linked to the martyrological representation of the event?

The state martyr figure cannot deploy effects of power without a certain diffusion and regularity of manifestation in the public space and materialization in different media. It would be hard to sustain the thesis presented above if there were only one or few martyrological representations. If the first task of this investigation is the individuation of martyr figuration signatures, its second task is to analyze its diffusion and regularity within the discursive formation referring to the Moro case and to describe how, when

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49 Foucault 2007, 59.
50 Foucault 1977, 139–140.
51 Foucault 2007, 59.
52 Foucault 1972, 27.

and where this figure emerged. In other terms, it has to analyze the general organization of the discursive formation referring to Moro's death to prove that the martyr figure has effectively a prominent presence within it. To master this task, I will use some of the instruments found in Foucault's different «toolboxes», as the French historian and philosopher once defined his books.[53] One toolbox in particular will serve as a central point of reference: the work *Archeology of Knowledge.* In the center of this book stands the effort to relate the description and individuation of statements in their singularity of appearance with the broader task of analyzing discursive formations. The starting point is the demarcation or distanciation of archeology from traditional scientific procedures and the epistemological premises of what is generally known as the «history of ideas». This critique concerns a range of categories, such as «tradition», «science», «literature», «politics», «book», «authorship», etc., whose functions are to synthetize a «population of dispersed events», to set and define unities of knowledge and to link those unities with the ideas of a genuine source or origin, continuity and collective consciousness.[54] Foucault proposes to deconstruct this principle of ordering so as to identify and describe other unities, or other «discursive formations». He also criticizes what we could call an essentialism of meaning, namely the idea that historical statements, events and objects are always to be considered and analyzed as «documents», or signs of something else, searching for their hidden meaning and essential truth.[55] He opposes this with his conception of enunciations as unrepeatable events, which must be described as «monuments», i.e. to describe the historical, discursive, institutional and material conditions for their appearance.

The position of *Archeology of Knowledge* within Foucault's thought is controversial. There have been many attempts to distinguish Foucault's works according to phases,[56] wherein some researchers understand the *Archeology* as part of a first group of discourse analytical works, opposed to and viewed as outdated after a second phase of analysis of power.[57] Others consider this work quite relevant and not obsolete in relation to Foucault's theory of power.[58] Although preferring the latter reading, this study does not defend a certain model of systematization of Foucault's works, but

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53 Foucault 2002, 887.
54 Foucault 1972, 22; See Kammler 2014b, 54.
55 See Foucault 1972, 138–139.
56 See Kammler 2014a, 11.
57 See Davidson 2003, 192; Gehering 2004, 10.
58 See Dreyfus/Rabinow 1983, 79–100.

rather takes seriously his exhortation to use his books as research tools. From this point of view, I follow the line traced by British cultural studies, especially by Stuart Hall, and seek to address discursive practices as «signifying practices» that have an intrinsically performative force, i.e. the power to exert effects. Hall addresses discourse as a «system of representations», i.e. «a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment.»[59] Here, the effectiveness of the relation power/ knowledge is at stake, namely the way in which the discourses assume the authority of the truth and the power of discursive formations to produce and sustain regimes of truth.[60] It is not the content but the effects of the truth of discursive practices that are at stake here.

Stuart Hall defines representation as «the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language», arguing that «it is the link between concepts and language which enables us to *refer to* either the ‹real› world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary world of fictional objects, people and events.»[61] The representations that are at stake here are of the first kind, since they refer to a real event—the assassination of Aldo Moro—and a real individual, which is at the same time a material object—Moro's dead body. This is obvious: the statements «Aldo Moro is dead» or «Aldo Moro has been killed» refer to something real and not imaginary. The language elements within these statements are signs—written or spoken words—that carry and express meaning. The kind of meaning they carry is understandable to all, because we all agree on the meaning of «is dead» or «has been killed». There is a general consensus that guarantees that all who use, read or listen to these words correlate them with shared conceptions of what it means to be «dead» or to be «killed» (which obviously is not the same). The same can be said for the proper noun «Aldo Moro», which refers to a certain person and not another, and all will agree without discussion—no work of interpretation is needed—which individual is intended. This representation is *denotative* inasmuch as the consensus is wide and all people agree on the meaning of the sentences and to what the individual words refer.

This first level of meaning does not seem to pose problems of any kind. The allocation of meaning and communication work smoothly. But if we say, write, listen or read «Aldo Moro died so that the Republic can live» or

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59   Hall 1993, 291.
60   See Hall 2013b, 33–34.
61   Hall 2013b, 3.

«Aldo Moro has been killed by beasts», the work of representation is not the same. Here we are faced with a second level of signification referred to as *connotative*. Here, the signifiers used connect with broader themes and meanings, linking them with what Hall calls «the wider semantic fields of our culture» and the «wider realms of social ideology».[62] In fact, a meaningful use and understanding of these statements presuppose that we have an idea of the «life of the Republic» or an idea of «bestiality». In the first statement, the word «life» is used metaphorically, as it refers to something (the Italian Republic) that does not have a life in the common sense of the word. The same can be said of the attribution of bestiality to the BR, which for all we know had no animals in their ranks. The Republic is not a living organism or, more precisely, can be considered a living organism only in a broader, metaphorical sense. The BR were not beasts but, as we will see, for many social actors they acted, thought and felt *as* beasts. Both statements thus require an active process of interpretation.

The first statement has meaning only for those who are familiar with political language—a second kind of shared code, which presupposes, but is not identical with, the basic code of language. Only if we know the code of political language can we interpret the statement and create meaning for ourselves. The statement presupposes, for example, that we have an idea of a republic as a form of government, or a sovereign state, that may cease to exist (for example, because of a coup, a war—civil or with other nations—, a revolution, etc.). Furthermore, it presupposes pre-existent knowledge of the idea that the government «represents the body of citizens» (another political metaphor), and that if the government ceases to exist, the body of citizens symbolically «dies» due to the loss of its representation. The specific use of these words is ideological, which is demonstrated by the fact that the concept of a republic, can be contested as evidenced by Marxist–Leninists, as the BR identified themselves, or by anarchists. The implication of the republic as a good and right form of government proves the use of these words is ideological as well. To summarize, we can say that at this second level of signification, the understanding of the performance requires the knowledge of a given code of political language, and that even if individuals have this knowledge, we cannot necessarily presuppose they accept this knowledge as true.

The use of the word «beasts» in the second statement requires interpretation, because we must know the meaning of this attribution of «bestiality» to a group of individuals. As we will see, within the specific cultural con-

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62 Hall 2013b, 23–24.

text of this statement, bestiality implies ferocious animal behavior and the non-reflected use of violence. To say that the BR are beasts implies that they acted, or killed, like beasts—that is, without a clear political purpose. The very act of killing assumes the meaning of an act that is not political but ferocious and tied to the most bestial human passions: an ancestral and primitive death wish. As we shall see, the denial of the political nature of the act strategically denies the responsibility of government policies, political parties, and in general, all those involved in the affair. With beasts, in fact, it is not possible to negotiate. Thus, this second level of signification is linked to wider realms of ideology. It does not only imply the knowledge of the conventional use of «beasts» as a metaphor in reference to individuals acting violently, but also a certain interpretation of the *causes* of the violent act. The event is inscribed in a meaningful system of causes and effects. The representation should therefore be considered part of a narration, a way of telling what happened, which of course can be (and has been) contested.

Let us return one more time to the first statement. Here, we are faced with a more complex, meaningful construction of a causal relationship through the use of the word «for», by which the perpetuation of the Republic is represented as an effect of Aldo Moro's death. Death is not represented as a simple fact, but as an event with a political reason and meaning. Now, taken in its singularity and without knowing the context in which the statement was written or spoken, it is impossible to exactly identify its meaning. We understand that the statement constructs a causal relationship, but we are not able to say how to interpret it. Why is the death of a single man, who as president of the Christian Democratic Party played an important political role even without acting as a government representative, important for the subsistence of the Italian Republic? It is only by taking into account the general pragmatic, discursive and hermeneutic context in which the statement was made that we can grasp its meaning. For example, we have to know that the Italian government refused to negotiate with the terrorists (even before the terrorists proposed negotiations) for the liberation of Aldo Moro and argued that such a deal would be equal to political legitimation of the terrorists and undermine the values and principles at the base of a democratic political order. We have to know that this statement was the title of the first page of the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* the day after Moro's body was found, and that during the entire period of the kidnapping this newspaper supported the government's «line of firmness». We also have to know that Moro's death was represented, even before its occurrence, as inevitable according to the following scheme

of logic: If Moro lives, then the Republic will die; if the Republic lives, Moro will die.

All this will be discussed in detail afterwards. Here, I want to call attention to the fact that the meaning of single signs and statements often depends «on larger units of analysis—narratives, statements, groups of images, whole discourses which operate across a variety of texts, areas of knowledge about a subject which have acquired widespread authority.»[63] This is why to analyze the production of meaning through representation, we must switch from a genuine semiotic to a discursive approach, and thus not study language, but discourse as a system of representation. Representation itself is not analyzed as a way to produce meaning, but as a source of the production of social *knowledge* connected to social practices and micromechanisms of power. This switch from the semiotic to the discursive approach directly leads into the orbit of Michel Foucault's thought, whose studies were focused primarily on the analysis of rules and practices linked to the production of knowledge. Especially in his later work, he was concerned with the implementation of knowledge through discursive practices in specific institutional settings to regulate the conduct of people. By focusing on the link between knowledge and power, he drew attention to the effectiveness of discursive practices, their ability to not only produce meaning, but also to signify in one way rather than in another and thus to profoundly affect the way we perceive the world, others and ourselves. This also affects our way of being in the world, to act (or not act). In other words, he highlighted the performativity of discursive practices.

2.5 *Performativity of Discursive Practices*

The first researcher who drew attention to the performativity of language is John Langshaw Austin through his general theory of speech acts. According to this American philosopher, speech acts are not simply a way to communicate something, but a way to do something. They actively deploy effects on reality and factuality. Austin identifies «three groups of things» that are done by saying something. He calls the first one a locutionary act, «which is roughly equivalent to uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which again is roughly equivalent to ‹meaning› in the traditional sense.»[64] He opposes traditional ways of conceiving the use of

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63 Hall 2013b, 27.
64 Austin 1962, 108.

language with two others, which he calls the performances of *illocution* and *perlocution*. What distinguishes these two different dimensions of the use of language from the former is that they produce effects or consequences, that is, they have a *force*. By focusing on the force of discursive practices, Austin introduces a completely new way of analyzing the use of language. The interest is no longer directed (only) to the truth or falsity of linguistic units, to their referential relation to the world and their function as «bearers» of meaning, but rather to the conditions in which a speech act is successful or unsuccessful or, in Austin's terminology, «happy or unhappy», in deploying some effects.[65]

One of the most typical examples of *illocutionary force* is a judge delivering a sentence, through which a man is condemned. The act of formulating the sentence corresponds to the act of condemning. The effect here is somehow internal to the performance itself, because the latter deploys its power at the same moment the formulation is expressed. The judge has this power because of conventions, the institutionalized rules that determine him as actually holding this power. It is therefore a preexisting system of conventions that stabilizes the authority of the agent and thus guarantees the success of the speech act. The *perlocutionary force* is instead defined by Austin as the effect speech acts have on the audience, such as the ability to persuade, to convince, to scare and so on. The force of a perlocutionary act is external to the performance itself because it is related to the reactions of the audience of the speech act. One of the most important differences between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts is that the former are «bound up with effects», while the latter produce consequences «in the sense of bringing out states of affairs in the ‹normal› way, i.e. changes in the natural course of events.»[66] The point here is that Austin's illocutionary acts (as well as locutionary acts) always follow conventions, while perlocutionary acts «may always achieve their response or sequel by non-conventional means.»[67] In other words, the force of perlocutionary acts lies in their ability to break with expectations, to be an exception to rules and conventions. Another important difference between the two uses of language stressed by Austin is that the effects of illocutionary acts are always intentional, while perlocutionary acts may be unintentional.[68] In fact, as Austin argues, one or more intended effects can be achieved only when

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65 Austin 1962, 132.
66 Austin 1962, 116–117.
67 Austin 1962, 118.
68 See Austin 1962, 106.

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there are conventions that guarantee the speech act has certain effects and not others. This does not apply to perlocutionary acts, as we have seen: we do not follow the tracks established by and through conventions.

Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* was an influential work that deployed itself with strong performative power. Jacques Derrida gave one of the first direct critical responses to Austin's theory of performativity in his essay *Signature Event Context*, written in 1971. In this essay, Derrida counters Austin's understanding of *conventionality* and *intentionality* on which the distinction of perlocutionary and illocutionary acts is based. According to the French philosopher, the root of the theory's problem is that Austin does not take into account the structure of locution before any illocutory or perlocutory determination.[69] For Austin the intentionality of the speaker is central to the accomplishment of the performative. This leads Austin to focus on illocutionary acts, looking for what he calls «the pure performative», namely a speech act that is realized by and through the presence of an intentional agent.[70] The presupposition is that «there is always *someone* who is delegated to speak or that performative discourse has to take the form of discrete verbal enunciation.»[71] The consequence of this is the failure to recognize (or at least the underestimation of) the performative power of language even in the absence of a speaking subject.

The second problem with Austin's theory, which is intrinsically tied to the first one, is his conception of conventionality. As Derrida observes, the success of performative utterances does not depend only on the conventionality constituting the *pragmatic* circumstances in which they occur, but also in «a certain conventionality intrinsic to what constitutes the speech act itself.»[72] In fact, the condition for the function of such acts is a certain «self-identity» of the language elements or units within them.[73] Only if this self-identity is guaranteed, are the speech acts recognizable; only if the statement «I condemn you» makes sense for the speaker and the listener, is it able to deploy an illocutionary force. Derrida's argument that a certain stability in the identity of language unities is a precondition of performativity because it allows recognition and identification should not be confused with the idea that speech acts with identical language units are in turn also identical. In fact, all concrete manifestations of language should

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69 See Derrida 1988, 14.
70 Derrida 1988, 81 (see also 83–93).
71 Butler 2010, 150.
72 Derrida 1988, 15.
73 Derrida 1988, 10.

be considered unique and unrepeatable events, even when they have the same signs in the same sequential order. In order to explain this central point, Derrida introduces the concepts of *iterability* or *citationality*:

> We should first be clear on what constitutes the status of ‹occurrence› or the eventhood of an event that entails in its allegedly present and singular emergence the intervention of an utterance [*énoncé*] that in itself can be repetitive or citational in its structure, or rather [...]: iterable. [...] Could a performative utterance succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‹coded› or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable in some way as a ‹citation›? [...] there is a relative specificity, as Austin says, a relative ‹purity› of performatives. But this relative purity does not emerge *in opposition* to citationality or iterability, but in opposition to other kinds of iteration within a general iterability.[74]

The introduction of the notion of iterability in the theory of performativity has two main consequences. First, it allows us to redefine conventionality as a condition for the success of speech acts, insofar as it now indicates not only the pragmatic, extra-linguistic conventions surrounding speech acts, but also the *conventionality of language itself*. In other words, a speech act can be performative and exert effects only if it iterates pre-existent language units that guarantee its recognizability. As Judith Butler observes, recalling the example of the judge: «the judge learns what to say, and must speak in codified ways, which means that the codification and ritualization of that discourse precedes and makes possible the subject who speaks.»[75] This brings me directly to the second consequence: the de-potentiation and relativization of the role of a conscious and intentional speaker as a precondition for the functioning of a performative utterance. If successful speech acts always iterate pre-existent language unities, pre-established formulations, then we can imagine situations—and in this investigation we will face many of them—in which language exerts a force without the immanent presence of an intentional speaker. To understand this, two operations are necessary: we must replace the concept of speech acts with discursive practices, and we must highlight the mediality and materiality of those practices. In other words, we must turn our attention to Michel Foucault's theory of discourse.

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74 Derrida 1988, 17–18.
75 Butler 2010, 148.

In *Archeology of Knwoledge*, written two years before Derrida's aforementioned essay, Foucault discusses (although he does not explicitly mention the American philosopher) Austin's theory of performativity, in particular its concept of the illocutionary act. He argues that

> the speech act is not what took place just prior to the moment when the statement was made (in the author's thought or intentions); it is not what might have happened, after the event itself, in its wake, and the consequences that it gave rise to; it is what occurred by the very fact that a statement was made, — and precisely this statement (and not other) in specific circumstances. Presumably, therefore, one individualization of statements refers to the same criteria as the location of acts of formulation: each act is embodied in a statement and each statement contains one of those acts. They exist through one another in an exact reciprocal relationship.[76]

The main innovation compared to Austin's lies in a focus on *embodiment*, i.e. on the mediality and materiality of discursive practices. In fact, it is exactly because of this shift from verbal enunciation in particular to all forms of embodiment of language in general that I propose a strategic switch from the concept of speech acts to that of discursive practices. The concept of discursive practices does not only avoid the postulate of an intentional speaking subject, implicit in the notion of speech, but also opens this research field to an analysis of correlations between singular manifestations of language: in other words, analyzing discursive practices as elements of a discursive formation. This theoretical switch changes the way we conceive and analyze performativity, since the effects of discursive practices cannot be identified without taking into consideration their medial and material manifestation: «Could one speak of a statement if a voice had not articulated it, if a surface did not bear its signs, if it had not become embodied in a sense-perceptible element, and if it had not left some trace—if only for an instant—in someone's memory or in some space?»[77] Materiality and mediality are constitutive for the functioning of discursive practices because they «must have a substance, a support, a place, and a date. And when the requisites change, it too changes identity.»[78] Thus, it is always *in* and *because of* a concrete, unique context of appearance that practices have a performative force, that is, they are able to exert effects of power.

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76 Foucault 1972, 83.
77 Foucault 1972, 100.
78 Foucault 1972, 101.

Each practice should therefore be considered a unique, unrepeatable and singular event. But if this is correct, we must solve an important problem: how is it possible to analyze, as this investigation wants to, the efficacy of martyrological representations in their different contexts of appearances? In fact, if it is true that each discursive practice is unique and exerts a performative force precisely because of its uniqueness, then it does not seem possible to compare different martyrological representations in order to individuate a common function or an identical force. As we have seen, Derrida argues that what can be iterated are not concrete performances, the absolute singularities of language events, but rather language unities (signs, statements, etc.). Following this line of reasoning, he argues that it is the iterability of language units that guarantees that language performances, in their uniqueness and non-repeatability, have a performative force. Does that mean that different discursive practices using identical language units necessarily produce the same effects? Again, to solve this problem we must turn to Foucault, who argues that the task is not to find a common identity of different discursive practices but rather to identify certain *regularities* within and between them, which can then be compared with other regularities.[79] Foucault distinguishes between the uniqueness of enunciations and the repeatability of statements. It is worth quoting the central passages on this topic:

> The enunciation is an unrepeatable event; it has a situated and dated uniqueness that is irreducible. Yet this uniqueness allows a number of constants—grammatical, semantic, logical—by which one can, by neutralizing the moment of enunciation and the coordinates that individualize it, recognize the general form of a sentence, a meaning, a proposition. The time and place of the enunciation, and the material support that it uses, then become, very largely at least, indifferent: and what stands out is a form that is endlessly repeatable, and which may give rise to the most dispersed enunciations. But the statement itself cannot be reduced to this pure event of enunciation […] For a statement may be the same, whether written on a sheet of paper or published in a book; it may be the same spoken, printed on a poster, or reproduced on a tape-recorder; on the other hand, when a novelist speaks a sentence in daily life, then reproduces the same sentence in a manuscript that he is writing, attributing it to one of his characters, or even allowing it to be spoken by that anonymous voice that passes for that of the

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79 See Foucault 1972, 143–144.

> author, one cannot say that it is the statement in each case. The rule of
> materiality that statements necessarily obey is therefore of the order of
> institution rather than of spatio-temporal localization; it defines *possi-*
> *bilities of reinscription and transcription* (but also thresholds and limits),
> rather than limited and perishable individualities. […] Whereas an
> enunciation may be *begun again* or *re-evoked*, and a (linguistic or logi-
> cal) form may be *reactualized*, the statement may be *repeated*—but al-
> ways in strict conditions.[80]

Following Foucault's argumentation, we can say that a statement—for ex-
ample «Aldo Moro is a martyr»—can of course be repeated, but performa-
tivity depends on the *mediality of signs* or, in other words, the *material em-*
bodiment of language.[81] There is a substantial difference between whether
the statement «Aldo Moro is a martyr» is pronounced by a government mi-
nister, a bishop, a journalist or a Fiat worker; and it is equally different if
this statement is expressed during dinner with friends, said by a character
in a movie, delivered during a commemoration broadcast on television,
written in a newspaper or painted on the walls of a train station. The
meaning of the statement may remain the same (as we will see, this is also
not always the case) but its performative force depends on the context of
apparition. The task of discourse analysis is, then, on the one hand, to ana-
lyze discursive practices in their different context of medial and material
manifestation, and on the other, to compare them in order to find regulari-
ties and variations.

Foucault uses a series of terms to address the issue of *repeatable materiali-*
ty: re-inscription, re-evocation, re-actualization, repetition. What is at stake
here can be circumscribed with this question: What are the conditions of
possibility of the transfer of signs from one context to another? Or, to refor-
mulate the question from the point of view of semio-pragmatics: What are
the characteristics that a sign should have in order to have more success to
be repeated, and relocated in a new pragmatic and hermeneutic context?
The question of repeatable materiality is related to the discussion of itera-
tion in Derrida's writings as well as Charles Sanders Pierce's type-token dis-
tinction.[82] Both Foucault's and Derrida's discussion of the problem of rep-
etition/iteration is only understandable if one is willing to reject the idea
of the existence of an *original type*, from which all tokens would be de-

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80 Foucault 1972, 101–105.
81 See Wirth 2002, 44.
82 See Wirth 2002, 47.

rived.[83] Both philosophers argue, though with different terminology, that there is not something like an *absent* original sign, statement, representation or idea, which could be iterated and thus *presented* through discursive practices and in different material and medial manifestations. Rather, discursive practices always iterate already existing signs and statements, that is, signs and concepts that were embedded in previous historical discursive practices. The basic thesis is that there is no transcendental source or origin of language, but that any use of linguistic forms always refers to forms previously used (some of which are archived or memorialized in various types of media). If one accepts the fundamental conception of the nature of language, then it becomes possible to grasp the function of iteration through and within discursive practices. The thesis is as follows: It is the custom-creating iteration which increases the potential for further repetitions. The more widespread the signs, statements, and representations, both syncretically and diachronically, the higher their chances of being reiterated in further discursive practices increases. The analysis of martyrological representations as discursive practices that exert effects of power thus takes into account their materiality, exteriority and seriality (repetition). The success of martyrological representations depends on their *repetitive materialization and medial manifestation* in different discursive practices. Only in the massive spread of the martyr figure in public spaces can a stable and lasting «system of knowledge» emerge, through which the efficacy of the discursive practices is guaranteed.[84]

As previously mentioned, Foucault characterizes the effectiveness of discursive practices with reference to the correlation between knowledge and power. Discourse analysis must detect the «connection between mechanisms of coercion and contents of knowledge»[85] in order to understand what allows contents of knowledge to constitute themselves as elements of truth and thus deploy effects of power. For Foucault, this allows us to understand the conditions of acceptability of a system of knowledge. Discursive practices exert effects on their recipients as well as on the acting subjects themselves. They can have the power to influence the way we perceive and experience others, things and events in the world as well as ourselves. When social actors speak, write, photograph, perform (here in the sense of bodily action) or film something—in short, when they make use of *repre-*

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83 See Derrida 1988, 7.
84 Foucault 2007, 59.
85 Foucault 2007, 59.

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sentational systems[86]—they do not simply report on or describe things as they are, but instead represent them in one way rather than another. In this way, they are not only able to affect how we perceive and experience reality, but also influence our imagination, our normative view of the world and, subsequently, our actions. Referring to Louis Althusser, we can call this the power of *interpellation*, namely, the ability to appeal to the receivers, consumers and re-producers of discursive practices and demand from them subjective positioning. Through the process of interpellation, individuals are «recruited» and «transformed» into subjects.[87] We can also define this process as subjectification, referring to the process of constructing individual identity. This is not necessarily forced from outside, (it does not need to be an instrument of power used consciously by others), but it is often the result of self-allocation. The individual is able, through discursive practices, to incite its own subjectification and build its own identity. Interpellations are not able to produce only subjects, but collective identities as well. In fact, the subjectification process is almost always based on the distinction of belonging/not belonging to a certain collectivity. The distinction can be based on a differentiation in gender, race, nationality, political conviction and so on. Discursive practices then produce, in their receivers as well as in their producers, an ideological response, which launches mechanisms of subjective identification with a certain collectivity and delimitation from other forms of (existing or potential) collectivity. The construction of subjectivities and collectivities can be considered a result of discursive performances.

Judith Butler powerfully draws attention to the importance of performativity of discursive practices and, more generally, to the «reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains.»[88] Butler's research is important for this study because she links, adopting Foucault's thesis that the subject is always discursively constructed, the question of the performativity of discursive practices with the question of identification. By analyzing the process of «assuming a sex», she shows that «sexed identifications» are constructed through the means of discursive

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86 See Hall 2013a, xvii.

87 See Althusser 2014, 188–194. In line with Foucault's thought, we can understand the interpellation by discursive practices not as an instrument of power used exclusively by the state apparatuses or the ruling class (as theorized by Althusser), but rather as a form of micro-physics of power, through which «docile subjectivities» are routinely produced. For more details in this regard, see Hanssen 2000, 97–157.

88 Butler 1993, 2.

practices, which are regulated by the heterosexual imperative. Through the iteration of pre-existent and regulated discursive practices, individuals assume a specific identity over another. Stuart Hall argues that this concerns not only «sexed identifications», but all forms of social and political identification, and stresses the role played by the exclusion of what we could call counter-identities, which within discourses are represented as abnormal or abject: «all identities operate through exclusion, through the discursive construction of a constitutive outside and the production of abjected and marginalized subjects.»[89] Furthermore, Hall highlights the intrinsic link between identificatory practices and the double-sided character of discursive subjection/subjectification. Discourse does not only construct certain subjectivities, (figures that are always specific to a specific discursive regime and a specific historical time), but also provides subject positions for identification. Individuals, as they cannot live and act outside certain given discursive formations, cannot assume an identity until they identify with those positions or figures constructed and sustained by means of discursive practices.

I argue that martyrological representations of Aldo Moro have the power to appeal to people and to produce identification with the republican nation-state. Through the consumption (and reproduction) of martyrological representations, individuals experience themselves as part of a political collective, which is (constantly) threatened by those who are outside, who are external to it. The state martyr figure is part of an ideological structure, whose main function is to construct a «good, normal and sane» inside and a «bad, abnormal and dangerous» outside. A fundamental point is that this twofold mechanism of identification is connected with the construction of a regime of truth. The political community and its dangerous outside are experienced as absolute, ahistorical entities. The assassination of Aldo Moro becomes a sort of hypostatized event that symbolizes a cosmic war between good and evil forces, between the nation state and its enemies.

This last point cannot be fully understood without taking into account what I call a mythical narrative of the nation state, where «myth» indicates an «absolutism of reality» (*Absolutismus der Wirklichkeit*).[90] As a form of absolutism, the myth is a narrative that conceals precisely that it is a narrative, namely that it is only one way, among many ways, to represent and cognitively organize reality. One of the tasks of this investigation is to deconstruct this narrative, focusing peculiarly on its effects of power. Fou-

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89 Hall 1996, 15.
90 Blumenberg 2014a, 10.

cault stresses the intrinsic relationship between power and concealment strategies, arguing that «power is tolerable only on the condition that it masks a substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms. Would power be accepted if it were entirely cynical? For it, secrecy is not in the nature of an abuse; it is indispensable to its operation.»[91] The task is then to unmask the instrumental, and consequently ideological dimension of the martyrological representation of Aldo Moro, along with its central role in the construction, acceptability and maintenance of nation state mythology, which functions to legitimate established power structures. In short, I consider the martyr to be the fundamental rhetorical figure in the modern mythical narrative of the nation state.

To summarize thus far, the discourse analytical approach to the martyrological representations of Aldo Moro and their performativity takes into account the following different aspects. Firstly, the martyr figure could not be performative and deploy effects of power if people did not recognize it, that is, if the martyrological representation of Aldo Moro had not preceded historically by other martyrological representations. It is because martyrological representations iterate and implicitly refer to previous historical, successful figurations—that the figure can successfully operate in its new pragmatic and hermeneutic context of appearance. The consideration of this aspect falls under the domain of the analysis of the martyr figure's signatures. Its task is to detect the «secret index» and the historical stratifications of the figure, as well as to «attempt to restore the conditions for the appearance of a singularity born out of multiple determining elements of which it is not the product, but rather the effect.»[92] Secondly, discourse analysis describes the new pragmatic and hermeneutic context in which the martyr figure appears. Only by considering the particular social, cultural, mediatic, political and economic context of the event and its representations is it possible to identify and understand the peculiarity and uniqueness of the connotative and symbolical significance that the figure of the martyr takes on. Thirdly, the discourse analytical approach scrutinizes each martyrological representation in its temporal, medial and material context of appearance. In a following step, all martyrological representations of Aldo Moro are compared and placed in relation to each other in order to show their seriality and diffusion in public spaces and within different me-

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91 Foucault 1978, 86.
92 Foucault 2007, 64.

dia. This allows regularities and exceptions in the discursive formation to emerge.

The consideration of these last two aspects falls under the domain of the archeology of discourse. Archeology analyzes the processes of the shortage, regrouping and unification of the discursive formation. It seeks to describe the rhetorical organization and distribution of discursive practices and then identify which rules, criteria of selection, control, organization and canalization regulate their appearance. Starting from the positivity of the concrete representations of the killing of Aldo Moro, archeological analysis individuates the system of acceptability that makes a certain way of representing the event more acceptable than others. The efficacy and acceptance of representations within a discursive formation is proportional to the amount of their serial iteration. The main questions here will be: How do representations interact; how do they appear in the public space; and what mechanisms of selection, control, organization and canalization regulate their appearance?

2.6 Unity of the Discursive Formation and Methodological Framework

What are the characteristics of the discursive formation that this study seeks to examine? What are the grouping and unification principles that enable us to describe and analyze this discursive formation? More concretely, how can we unify and define the discursive formation that refers to the events of political violence, which is the starting point of this study—the kidnapping and killing of Aldo Moro? According to Foucault, the term «discourse» indicates first of all the «totality of all effective statements»[93], namely all spoken and written discursive events. At this level, one can speak of *discourse* in the singular. The strategic function of this first definition is twofold. On the one hand, it makes explicit the difference between discourse analysis and the analysis of language. Language is a «system for possible statements […] that authorizes an infinite number of performances», while the field of discursive events is a «grouping that is always finite and limited at any moment to the linguistic sequences that have been formulated.»[94] On the other hand, it serves to distance itself from other forms of unification of knowledge (books, oeuvres, science, etc.) in order to make it possible to describe and analyze other unities.

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93 Foucault 1972, 27.
94 Foucault 1972, 27.

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The positivity of all discursive practices forms what Foucault calls the *archive*, that is, the «system of formation and transformation of statements» or, recalling Hall's operationalization of Foucault's discourse theory for cultural studies, the *system of formation and transformation of representations*. This archive is not simply, at least not only, a collection of all that has been said, written, or, more generally, represented in a certain culture or society, but also what «defines at the outset the system of […] enunciability» as well as the «system of […] functioning» or «mode of occurrence» of representations.[95] In other words, the archive is not only an ensemble of memories, and past discursive and cultural practices, but also determines the horizons of what and how something can be represented, as well as the modes in which representations can occur in the public space. The archive thus not only contains all the discursive practices that can be iterated and recontextualized, but also determines the rules and modes of iteration and recontextualization themselves.

As Foucault highlights, «it is obvious that the archive of society, a culture, or a civilization cannot be described exhaustively; or even, no doubt, the archive of a whole period.»[96] For this reason each archeological analysis has to identify and determine how to group discursive practices within a certain discursive formation. Since Foucault wrote *Archeology of Knowledge*, many different proposals on how to group discursive practices within a single discursive formation have emerged in scholarship.[97] Foucault himself indicates four *systems of formation*, which concern a) the objects, b) the enunciative modalities, c) the concepts and d) the strategies of discursive formation. These systems of formations, Foucault argues,

> must not be taken as blocks of immobility, static forms that are imposed on discourse from the outside […]. By system of formation […] I mean a complex group of relations that function as a rule: it lays down what must be related, in a particular discursive practice, for such and such an enunciation to be made, for such and such a concept to be used, for such and such a strategy to be organized. To define a system of formation in its specific individuality is therefore to characterize a discourse or a group of statements by the regularity of a practice.[98]

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95 Foucault 1972, 129–130.
96 Foucault 1972, 130.
97 See Diaz-Bone 1999; Keller 2011; Jäger 2004; Hjelm 2011; Landwehr 2008.
98 Foucault 1972, 73–74.

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This means that every discourse analytical study must be designed individually, because each field of discursive practices has its own rules of formation. Within this study, the *virtual corpus* of sources of this search includes the totality of all the discursive practices in which, in one way or another, the kidnapping, imprisonment, and assassination of Aldo Moro are represented. From this point of view, violence itself is considered the extra-discursive *object/event*, or the *referent* of the group of discursive practices that this study wants to analyze. I call this a *virtual corpus*, because the amount of media referring to the kidnapping and assassination of Aldo Moro is enormous and it is therefore practically impossible to analyze them all in a single inquiry. For this reason, we need principles of selection that allow us to establish and define a *concrete corpus*.[99] In an enquiry that examines historical discursive formations, it is important that the selected media and representations are numerous and distributed over a sufficiently long period of time. In this study, the time frame is almost four decades: from 1978 to the present.

The first principle of selection concerns the *enunciative modalities* of discursive formation. The focus lies here on all the discursive practices in which the events of violence are inscribed in a *narrative*, that is, the event is *emplotted*. In other words, this study addresses discursive and cultural practices configuring events, agents and objects as part of a larger whole, in which each part takes a place in the network that constitutes the narrative response to why, how, who, where, and when. The main features of the enunciation modes in which I am interested are: the presence of a teleological representation of the event indicating the causes, reasons, motives and goals that have determined what happened; the presence of opinions and moral judgments about the main perpetrators (the «guilty people») and the main victims (the «innocent people»); and the frequent use of rhetorical patterns and figures. The second principle of selection concerns the *language forms* used in the discursive practices. The focus here is on the use of language units (blood, martyr, witness, sacrifice, innocence, torture, accusation, guilt, etc.) and rhetorical patterns («He died so that the Republic lives»; «Moro's Passion view from the Pope»; etc.) which implicitly or explicitly recall and refer to the figure of the martyr. These language units and rhetorical patterns are found mainly in sources in which a historical, moral and/or political judgment of the events is inscribed into a narrative plot. The third principle of selection concerns the strategies within discursive formation. I understand «strategy» as a threshold concept that allows

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99 See Landwehr 2008, 103.

the correlation of Foucault's project of an archeological and genealogical analysis with his works on the constellation power/knowledge. In fact, in a famous lecture entitled *Qu'est ce que la critique?*, held in 1978 at the Sorbonne for the *Société Française de Philosophie*, Foucault prescribed three sets of methodological tools required to master the task of investigating the «conditions of acceptability» that produced power/knowledge «events»: the already known archeology and genealogy, to which he added the analysis of strategies.[100] Archeology is described here as an analytical procedure that focalizes on the system of acceptability, while genealogy serves to discard the conventional monocausal model of derivation in favor of multiple «descendants» and investigate «conditions of apparition» that allow multiply determined historical singularities to be consolidated. Then he added a third tool, the analysis of strategies, which surveys the plurality of effects produced by a perpetually mobile, contentious agonistic field of struggles. In this and other lectures,[101] Foucault redefined discourse, that is, discursive formations, as strategic force fields of ever-contending discursive acts.[102]

Given this redefinition, this study takes into account sources in which there are discursive practices in competition with other discursive practices. The dimension of struggle between different representations of the event of violence is both a selection and an analytical criterion. By focusing on the agonistic element within discursive practices, it becomes possible to analyze and compare their effects on the whole discursive formation. The central task of analyzing strategies is to show that in the struggle between discursive practices, between ways of representing the event of violence, some have more success than others, thus becoming the models for further representations. This therefore serves to bring out a regularity that produces a hegemonic model of representation, as well as to individuate alternative, anti-hegemonic representations.

The concrete corpus of sources analyzed in this investigation includes a wide range of media and modes of representation. The examination of different media and modes is a methodological challenge: different semiotic forms characterize the modes, while media have their own mechanisms of production and specific strategies of mediation.[103] Discourse analysis is a

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100 See Foucault 2007, 41–81.
101 See especially *Discourse on Language* and the lectures held at the *Collège de France* in 1975–1976: Foucault 1972, 215–238; Foucault 2003.
102 See Hanssen 2000, 97.
103 See Kress/van Leeuwen 2001, 24–44.

theoretical and methodological framework, which makes it possible for us to compare different modes of representation with regard to their appearance and interaction in the public space. Different media «employ» discursive practices, and at the same time are also elements of the infrastructure that organizes, controls and selects discursive practices into an ordered system of knowledge and representation.

The primary sources analyzed in this study are articles published in seven Italian newspapers: *Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica*, *La Stampa*, *L'Unità*, *Il Popolo*, *Avanti!* and *Lotta Continua*. The first three were and still are the newspapers with the highest national circulation (except for the sports information newspaper *Gazzetta dello Sport*, which today is ranked third, followed in fourth place by *La Stampa*).[104] Since this study aims to analyze the use and performativity of martyrological rhetoric on a national scale, these newspapers are of great interest. *L'Unità*, *Il Popolo* and *Avanti!* were official organs of the three major parliamentary parties—the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the Christian Democracy (DC) and the Italian Socialist Party (PSI)—during the Moro affair and until the beginning of the nineties, while *Lotta Continua* was the newspaper of far left extra-parliamentary organization of the same name. These last four newspapers are an important source for understanding the relationship between ideologies and political positions, discursive strategies and the representation of the events. Although I examined the articles published in these newspapers throughout the year 1978, I place my focus on newspaper articles published in the period ranging from March 16, the day of the kidnapping, to May 14, the day after Aldo Moro's public funeral. The results of my analysis of the newspapers published in this time frame are presented in the fifth and sixth chapters. The seventh chapter addresses and analyses different media productions in a much broader time frame, namely from 1979 to 2016. Here the focus lies on the different practices of memorialization within different media. As mentioned in the introduction, here the analysis focuses on memorialization and commemoration of Aldo Moro, the representation of the events of political violence in literature and cinema, and finally on the debate emerging in the Italian press in response to the launch of an initiative promoting the beginning of a process for the beatification and canonization of Aldo Moro by the Catholic Church.

The sources have different semiotic modes (images, written and spoken words, images-in-motion, etc.) within different media (newspapers, maga-

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104 See http://www.adsnotizie.it/_dati_ante98.asp (accessed May 6, 2016); http://www.adsnotizie.it/_dati_DMS.asp (accessed May 6, 2016).

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zines, television, movies, books, records, etc.). My discourse analysis must simultaneously take into account the specificity of individual sources and create an interpretive space in which these can be compared and placed in relation to each other. In view of this dual task, my methodological process is divided into four steps: context analysis (contextual framework), macro-analysis, micro-analysis, and analysis of the discursive formation. This approach combines the methodological tools of historical discourse analysis[105], critical discourse analysis[106] and multimodal discourse analysis[107].

Context analysis distinguishes between four levels: each discursive practice—each representation—stands in a situational, medial, institutional and historical context.[108] Firstly, on the level of contextual analysis, this investigation must clarify the position (the situation) in which the particular discursive practice occurs, that is, who does what at what time? Furthermore, the occasion on which the discursive practice occurs (Easter Day, the funeral of Aldo Moro, the annual anniversary of the event, among others) must not be neglected. The same applies to the media (party newspapers, monuments, etc.) and the type of document in which the discursive practice occurs (editorial, novel, documentary, etc.). The institutional context must consider the institutional setting under which the document emerged. This is particularly important with regard to the citation or publication of government documents or procedural acts, press releases, party statements, etc. Finally, the entire historical context must be considered, that is, the overall political, social, economic and cultural situation.

Macro-analysis examines the general structure and surface of media representation. As regards textual sources, in this study the following aspects will be taken into consideration: material texture, formal/graphic design (photos, drawings, headings, inscriptions, etc.), the disposition in individual sections, emplotment, the way the author/speaker may stand in the document, the principles of representation or mediation strategies, and the presence of key topics and subtopics. As regards audiovisual sources, macro-analysis follows the methodology of cinematic diegesis and must consider the following aspects: figures and characters (types, roles, situations, conflicts, action structures), spaces (the function of space within the narrative, connections/breaks between space and action) and the narrative

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105 See Landwehr 2008.
106 See Jäger 2004.
107 See Kress/van Leeuwen 2001.
108 See Landwehr 2008, 107; Jäger 2004, 176.

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perspective (the relation between characters, space, time, audience position, connections/breaks between different narrative perspectives).[109]

The micro-analysis of textual sources focuses on argumentation, rhetoric and style, which is found on the text level, sentence level, and word level.[110] On the text level special consideration is given to patterns of argumentation, rhetoric structure and the acting causalities, hierarchies and categorizations. The analysis of the sentence level is concerned with the arrangement of main and subordinate clauses, the sentence types and the rhetorical figures (metaphors, prefigurations, etc.) that are used. On the word level, the denotative or connotative uses of words are determined. The micro-analysis of audiovisual media examines the «aesthetic of the surface», which encompasses the following aspects: image composition/design (framing, image composition, camera setting, camera perspective, light, color), montage (cutting style, rhythm), and the auditory level (origin of sounds, noise, music, language).[111]

The method of analyzing the audiovisual sources adopted here also uses the categories of socio-semiotic multimodal discourse analysis. These categories are not limited to linguistic texts, but are applicable to all semiotic systems, and are therefore pan-semiotic. Language and visual communication realize the same far-reaching and comprehensive systems of meaning, but have their own means, forms and restrictions in expressing them independently. From the basic assumption of the multimodality of communication results the concept of multimodal texts. These texts consist of different semiotic modes, such as music, speech, intonation, image, physical expression, etc. This study considers its audiovisual sources to be multimodal texts.

The three methodological steps just presented relate to the analysis of different media—the discursive practices embodied in the media—in their singularity. The fourth methodological step focalizes on regularities and exceptions within the whole discursive formation. It strives to identify recurrent and deviating words, motifs, rhetorical figures, images, themes, etc. as well as the central and most influential social actors. The aim here is primarily a matter of reconstructing and describing the complex interrelations between structure and action, and between discursive formation and discursive practices. Ultimately, in the analysis of practices as well as of the

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109 See Bienk 2008.
110 See Landwehr 2008, 118–134.
111 See Bienk 2008.

entire discursive formation, the main question relates to the «establishment of a legitimate worldview.»[112]

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112 See Landwehr 2008, 128.