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## Truth worth dying for: parrhesia in Lauren Oliver's novel "Before I Fall"

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The post-truth ideology seems to question the possibility of credibility in present-day society; however, the very idea of truth remains potent. In this paper, we adopt the notion of parrhesia, or the mode of telling the uncomfortable truth without deceit and concealment, to analyze how the discourse of truth is presented in contemporary fiction. Avoiding its political aspects, we limit our study to the interpersonal level of parrhesia that shapes individuals as moral subjects and belongs to the domain of ethos. We select Lauren Oliver's novel "Before I Fall" for analysis because it resembles a confession that involves the characters and readers in the practice of truth-telling. Drawing from Foucauldian theory, we examine how the protagonist participates in the parrhesiastic game and how the truth transforms her after she completes the stages of search for the truth, test of the character, and care for oneself and others. We argue that in the novel truth-telling is related to the problems of school bullying, social separateness, and suicide. Through the rhetorical approach to narrative we show how narration reflects psychological and moral changes of the protagonist and examine how narrative judgments reveal the ethical values of the author and the readers. We analyse how the novel describes the problem of violence demonstrating that its source lies within the family and school where abusive adolescent conduct is caused by the inability of adults to create a healthy climate for children. Individuals deprived of emotional support and guidance tend to direct their rage and frustration towards others to reduce inner strain. Lauren Oliver demonstrates the effectiveness of the parrhesiastic practice in renewing social bonds between interlocutors and reducing violent behavior. We conclude that the novel establishes truth as the highest ethical value that includes developing a true self, leading a true life according to the principles and having courage to oppose false opinions of others.

**Keywords:** free-spokenness, courage, veridiction, Michel Foucault, care, bullying, social bonds

### **Федосова М. О. Правда, варта, щоб за неї померти: парезія в романі Лорен Олівер "Поки я не впала"**

Ідеологія пост-правди, здається, ставить під сумнів можливість достовірності в сучасному суспільстві, однак, сама ідея правди залишається потужною. У статті ми використовуємо поняття парезії, або способу казання неприємної правди без обману і приховування, щоб проаналізувати, як дискурс правди представлений в сучасній літературі. Уникаючи політичних аспектів, ми обмежуємо наше дослідження міжособистісним рівнем парезії, що формує індивідуумів як моральних суб'єктів і належить до сфери етосу. Для аналізу ми обрали роман Лорен Олівер "Поки я не впала", який нагадує сповідь, що залучає героїв і читачів до практики правдо-казання. Застосовуючи теорію Мішеля Фуко, ми вивчаємо, як протагоністка бере участь у парезичній грі і як правда трансформує її після того, як вона завершує стадії пошуку правди, випробування особистості і турботи про себе й інших. Ми стверджуємо, що в романі правдо-казання пов'язане з проблемами булінгу в школі, соціальної роздільності й суїциду. Через риторичний підхід до наративу ми показуємо, як нарація відображає психологічні й моральні зміни протагоністки, і досліджуємо, як наративні судження розкривають етичні цінності автора і читачів. Ми аналізуємо, як у романі зображено проблему насилля, демонструючи, що її джерело знаходиться в межах родини і школи, де жорстока поведінка неповнолітніх викликана нездатністю дорослих створити здорове середовище для дітей. Особи, позбавлені емоційної підтримки і наставництва, схильні спрямовувати свою лють і розчарування на інших, щоб знизити внутрішнє напруження. Лорен Олівер показує дієвість парезичної практики у відновленні соціальних зв'язків між співрозмовниками і зменшенні агресивної поведінки. Ми робимо висновок, що роман утверджує правду як найвищу етичну цінність, що включає розвиток справжньої особистості, ведення правдивого життя відповідно до принципів і наявність сміливості, щоб протистояти хибним поглядам інших.

**Ключові слова:** відвертість, сміливість, веридикція, Мішель Фуко, турбота, булінг, соціальні зв'язки

### **Федосова М. А. Правда, которая стоит, чтобы за нее умереть: парезия в романе Лорен Оливер "Прежде чем я упаду"**

Идеология пост-правды, кажется, ставит под сомнение возможность достоверности в современном обществе, однако, сама идея правды остается действенной. В статье мы используем понятие парезии, или способа говорить неприятную правду без обмана и утаивания, чтобы проанализировать, как дискурс правды представлен в современной литературе. Избегая политических аспектов, мы ограничиваем наше исследование межличностным уровнем парезии, который формирует индивидуумов как моральных субъектов и принадлежит к сфере этоса. Для анализа мы выбрали роман Лорен Оливер "Прежде чем я упаду", который напоминает исповедь, которая вовлекает героев и читателей в практику говорить правду. Применяя теорию Мишеля Фуко, мы изучаем, как протагонист принимает участие в парезической игре и как правда формирует ее после того, как она завершает стадии поиска правды, испытания личности и заботы о себе и других. Мы утверждаем, что в романе высказывание правды связано с проблемами буллинга в школе, социальной отделенности и суицида. Через риторический подход к нарративу мы показываем, как наррация отображает психологические и моральные изменения протагонистки, и исследуем, как нарративные суждения раскрывают этические ценности автора и читателей. Мы анализируем, как в романе изображена проблема насилия, демонстрируя, что ее источник находится в пределах семьи и школы, где жестокое поведение несовершеннолетних вызвано неспособностью взрослых создать здоровую среду для детей. Лица, лишённые эмоциональной поддержки и руководства, склонны направлять свою ярость и разочарование на других, чтобы снизить внутреннее напряжение. Лорен Оливер показывает эффективность парезической практики в возобновлении социальных связей между собеседниками и уменьшении агрессивного поведения. Мы приходим к выводу, что роман утверждает правду как самую высокую этическую ценность, которая включает развитие настоящей личности, ведение правдивой жизни в соответствии с принципами и наличие смелости, чтобы противостоять неправильным мнениям других.

**Ключевые слова:** откровенность, смелость, веридикция, Мишель Фуко, забота, буллинг, социальные связи

Contemporary society seems to be infested with falsehoods and deceit. Every instant it produces so many statements, often contradictory and improbable, that the truth is made impossible to spot. The internet and social media spread emotional content more than facts thus enabling people to select only the information appealing to them. This condition characterizes our post-truth society where lies seem to engulf not only politics or advertisement but also interpersonal relations. In “The Courage of the Truth” Michel Foucault states that “subject manifests himself when speaking the truth” and “in his act of telling the truth, the individual constitutes himself and is constituted by others as a subject of a discourse of truth” [7, p. 2, 3]. The truth is produced not in the act of telling the truth about a subject but rather in the act of truth-telling by the subject herself (e.g. avowal, confession, or examination of conscience). In this practice of parrhesia, or free-spokenness, as a certain mode of veridiction (stating subjective truth accepted according to one’s worldview), subject/truth relation is established and the discourse of truth shows its close connection to a principle of identification. Foucault explains that “*parrhesia* is the activity that consists in saying everything... without holding back at anything, without concealing anything” [7, p. 10]. However, Foucault believes that parrhesia is extinct in democracy because, as he clarifies, the practice of saying anything that comes to mind has little connection to the principle of truth when the meaning is lost in the ocean of irrelevant things. To show the ways the parrhesiastic modality is displayed in literary works the paper analyses Lauren Oliver’s young-adult novel “Before I Fall” (2010). The novel is a first-person narration of Samantha Kingston within which she not only shares her thoughts and gives an account of the events but also addresses the audience involving it into her story. Such form of narration emulates the mode of confession that engages narratees (“audience addressed by the narrator” [13, p. 210]) in a parrhesiastic game.

Moreover, we may consider the novel as a representation of the writer’s ethics described from inside. According to James Phelan, narrative judgements are important for the narrative as a purposive communicative act because they reveal the underlying value system of the author, the relationship between the author, narrator, tale, and audience as well as the author’s intention of telling the story [13, p. 203, 211]. In this view, we may see how the novel counters the commercialized and sexualized images of girls that can be considered right or glamorous in popular culture and shows how some rules of conduct for young adults (e.g. be cool whatever it takes, disregard the rules imposed by the adult, lose virginity before the prom etc.) prove wrong on the moral scale of society. The readers were receptive to what was wanted to be spoken to them and the novel won numerous awards and accolades including New York Times bestseller, Publishers Weekly bestseller, Booksellers Association bestseller, and Amazon Ten Best Teen Books Ever (customer

selected). As far as we know, this novel has not attracted any academic interest; however, it was widely discussed by the reading community online [2; 3; 4]. It should be noted that some people didn’t like the novel because they lacked empathy with the protagonist and disapproved of her being saved with so little punishment for her wrongdoings. Many reviewers prized the frankness of the writer in depicting bullying and other ethical issues among teenagers while some were surprised and pleased to find moral guidance in young-adult fiction. Moreover, the novel incited several confessions of the readers about their experience of bullying or being bullied at school and was advised as a reference material on bullying to be discussed with the kids. The fact that the novel was positively received by the audience confirms the readiness of the considerable part of (young) adults to accept the traditional morality that places what is meaningful (love, friendship, family, and self-sacrifice) above what is expendable (material things, money, popularity etc.).

The novel provides interesting material for literary criticism that cannot be covered by the readers’ reviews. Since we have not find any academic studies dedicated to this novel, in our research we want to elaborate several issues mentioned within the public discussion and provide some theoretical background to explain them. The aim of the paper is to examine how the discourse of truth and the practice of free-spokenness are embedded in the narrative of the novel and inquire whether parrhesia in Foucauldian understanding is still possible in contemporary society. We rely on the rhetorical approach to narrative to investigate the ethics and communicative intentions of the novel.

Parrhesia, according to Foucault, means “truth-telling, the right to express one’s opinion, and the courage to go against the opinions of others” [7, p. 35]. It emerged in Greco-Roman philosophy as a mode of veridiction related to the city life (polis). However, free-spokenness that meant “telling the truth of things, but above all telling their truth to men” transformed into practice related to lives of individuals and oriented toward “their formation as moral subjects” (ethos) [7, p. 28, 33]. Using democratic institutions as an example, Foucault explains that parrhesia cannot function properly in certain societies and causes damage to them if it lacks ethical differentiation and reason. The first danger arises in the case of devaluation of truth-telling when everyone exercises their right to express their opinion, disrespects the opinions of others, and acts according to one’s private will disregarding social institutions and norms. Here freedom of speech turns into something opposite where “true and false discourses, useful as well as harmful opinions, all become mixed up and intermingled in the game of democracy” [7, p. 36]. When discourses are confused, truth does not lose its power; it is just made powerless due to people’s inability to recognize it. Hence, individuals face the second danger of listening to those who please and flatter them rather than those who speak

the uncomfortable truth. Foucault calls this “a contextual powerlessness” of parrhesia, when “one cannot distinguish between good and bad speakers, between discourse which speaks the truth and is useful to the city, and discourse which utters lies, flatters, and is harmful” [7, p. 40]. In the situation of the “indulgence of flattery”, the discourse of truth-telling dies because people who can tell the truth are (forcefully) silenced or remain silent from fear of being punished and their voices are not heard in the choir of flattery. Thus, parrhesia implies the possibility of disagreement and essentially contrasts with the practice that allows anyone to express any opinion in general and forbids saying anything that contradicts this corresponding totality of views. Foucault highlights that democracy as a structure does not leave any place for free-spokenness (parrhesia in the social domain) while each person whatever evil he/she is can be influenced by truth and open his/her soul to parrhesia in any social structure (parrhesia on the personal level, ethos).

In a positive sense, parrhesia means speaking with reason in a clean form without hiding anything: “*Parrhesia* is therefore ‘telling all,’ but tied to the truth: telling the whole truth, hiding nothing of the truth, telling the truth without hiding it behind anything” [7, p. 10]. However, parrhesia is not just telling the truth of what a person believes in, thus, for example, a teacher who says true formulae or concepts is not a parrhesiast. Foucault explains that in the act of parrhesia the parrhesiast has to manifest a connection between his thought and the truth he/she speaks and challenge the bond between him/her and the person to whom the truth has been spoken. This includes a sense of risk in speech because, in order to become parrhesia, the truth that reveals or exposes someone’s flaws shall go beyond the safe zone of the speaker and the listener implying the possibility of reaction and violence. Hence parrhesia “involves some form of courage, the minimal form of which consists in the parrhesiast taking the risk of breaking and ending the relationship to the other person which was precisely what made his discourse possible” [7, p. 11]. The practice of parrhesia includes the greatness of soul meaning that the teller has to have courage to speak and the listener has to have the greatness of soul to accept the truth told. Kimberly S. Engels argues that parrhesia is an ethical practice of self-recreation since it involves a personal transformation in relation to the investigation of what is true and transformation of one's relationship with others through receiving the truth [5]. As spiritual guidance, parrhesia tests the bound of friendship between the interlocutors when the parrhesiast dares to point out the shortcomings of his/her converser. The courage of parrhesia is explicit when the truth is spoken to a person in the position of power and the speaker is ready to put his/her life at risk if the person he/she has spoken to dislikes the truth and may execute his/her power over him/her. Foucault emphasized that confession as a form of telling the truth emerged long before Christianity; this practice

of truth-telling required the presence of another person who listened to the story and who was the indispensable partner or necessary helper for the teller to rely upon. The figure of this other person may vary significantly from a doctor, psychologist, confessor or friend, but his/her role is inevitably connected with spiritual guidance and enables the person to tell the truth about him/herself. Foucault regards parrhesia as a modality of veridiction (other three being prophecy, wisdom, and teaching) aimed to “unveil the present faults of the people without stepping beyond the ontological structure of the human being” meaning that the parrhesiast recognizes moral faults and weaknesses in human character and conduct; however, instead of simply telling what is wrong he/she “helps them in their blindness, but their blindness about what they are, about themselves, <...> due to some moral fault, distraction, or lack of discipline, the consequence of inattention, laxity, or weakness” [7, p. 16]. It is the moral task of the parrhesiast to speak frankly and openly about his/her convictions and opinions when he/she witnesses deviations or offenses committed by people around. The parrhesiast's truth is not an ontological but an applied truth that reveals to people and helps them to recognize their true nature and present situation as well as possible consequences of their actions.

In this context we may say that a reader of Lauren Oliver's novel “*Before I Fall*” engages in a parrhesiastic game agreeing to follow the protagonist Samantha Kingston in her search for self and the way to do the things right. The novel begins with a prologue in which Sam not only expresses her ideology and system of values but also confronts the narratees. Throughout the first chapter, Sam tells that she is a (nearly) typical student at Thomas Jefferson high school in Connecticut. She is pretty, popular and hangs around with her best friends Lindsay, Elody, and Ally – the four of them being the self-aware queens of the school. It is Cupid Day – the most important day in her life. She hopes to get many roses with Valograms that signify her popularity; she is going to lose her virginity to her super-hot boyfriend Rob Cokran; her childhood love Kent McFuller still has a crush on her and hosts a big party to welcome her there. The things go off the rails when a school freak Juliet Sykes bullied by the girls arrives at Kent's place to tell Sam, Lindsay, Elody, and Ally that they are bitches. Overfilled with rage, Lindsay attacks Juliet and everyone around catches on to pushing, calling her names, pouring drinks on her and laughing until she runs away. For Sam her perfect day is now totally ruined. She feels embarrassed about the incident (but she is too infuriated to pay attention), Kent reproaches her (but he is a loser to be worth listening to), Rob is too drunk to stay on his feet (they will do it the next time anyway), and, as the pinnacle of her today's misfortunes, on her way home she dies in the car crash caused by Juliet Sykes who throws herself under the wheels. From this moment, Sam relives the last day of her life again and again until

she completes her journey through self-exploration and revelation to salvation.

At first, the flow of Sam's narration stumbles over her bitter remarks about other people's appearance or what she considers freak ways of behavior as well as constant explanations and justifications of her own actions. Later on the reader notices that Sam's narration changes as she continues her journey toward enlightenment. It starts not at the moment of the accident followed by the time-loop, but when Juliet tells Sam and her friends (and they refuse to accept) the unpleasant truth how mean and bad they really are. At this moment, Sam gives herself away when she confesses noticing that Juliet is beautiful, Lindsay looks really ugly as an offender, and she feels uncomfortable upon manifestation of her shame. It is worth noting that Sam acts as a reliable reporter of the events but as an unreliable interpreter due to her inadequate system of values and false self-identification. Death pushes Sam into something what might be called a special coinciding reality where she relives her last day until parrhesia between her and the people around her becomes successful. Before Samantha Kingston is ready to understand and fully acknowledge the unpleasant truth spoken to her by Juliet ("You're a bitch"), she has to perceive the state of things around and find her true self by remembering who she was and examining who she has become. The most important thing Sam has to realize is that she and her friends ruined Juliet's life and consequently pushed her to suicide. This parrhesiastic game forms the plot, prepares Sam for truth-telling and makes her confession to the narratees possible.

At the beginning of the novel, Sam appears to be a mean and insensitive girl who does not care about others, who wants to do and get whatever she wants without any consequences. The goal she sets for herself is to get rid of the fear of being left behind and humiliated. During her personal search for truth, Sam recovers her lost courage to stand up for her true self and her true opinions. She becomes aware that her daring attitude and provoking behavior serve only as a cover for her fears and childhood traumas. At first, Sam's telling is full of resentment and defiance, but as the story develops the narration starts reflecting the change of Sam's character since she ceases to find excuses or justifications of her wrongdoings. In Foucauldian terms, power always contains resistance, thus both possibility and freedom are constantly present in all power relationships permitting counter-conduct as the means to change the way of conduct or express one's discontent with it [9]. In the novel, Sam's counter-conduct indicated that her life wasn't perfect and she wanted to change it, however, the means she used and the ends she met were contrary to what she expected: "I'm a nonperson, a shadow, a ghost. *Even before* the accident I'm not sure that I was a whole person – that's what I'm realizing now. And I'm not sure where the damage begins" (Ch. 4) [12]. Through years, she transformed herself into a fake person to make the peers forget her past self and stop

laughing at her. This became possible as Sam entered a new web of social relationships. As psychological and sociological studies prove [1; 6; 8], community attachments and social support play the main role in human wellbeing and without them people become spiteful, aggressive and violent. Donna Holland Barnes [1] notes that separation and lack of interpersonal connectedness cause the displacement of shame when a person dissociates his/her own actions from their consequences and tends to expel shame by blaming others. In this case, a child cannot develop a completely mature character because he/she is incapable of taking responsibility for his/her actions. In the worst cases, separation and detachment that result in hopelessness, isolation or violent behavior toward others adopted to shift one's frustration and anger, may lead to suicide or bullycide (a suicide caused by bullying). This may explain the bitterness of Sam's narration prior to her inner transformation as it reflected her attitude to life told from the point of view of a victimized child.

Through the novel, Sam tells how new social position and attachments enabled her to validate her new personality. She even started dating one of the hottest guys, Rob Cokran, who previously humiliated her in the middle of the cafeteria, to confirm her new popular status. However, nobody is fooled, as Sam admits, "Thomas Jefferson is small: you know these things" (Ch. 2) [12], and her peers' attitude toward her doesn't change. Sam's false identity influences only the surface of her school communications and drags her into the net of insincere relationships. In her narration, Sam reports but does not acknowledge that her social life is pretense, her acquaintances are casual ("I'm popular – really popular – but I don't have that many friends" (Ch. 4) [12]). She doesn't accept that many people think she is shallow, bitchy or remember what loser she was years ago and still treat her that way, such as Rob does when Sam breaks up with him during lunch in the cafeteria. In her pursuit of popularity, Sam pushed away her family and old friends who cared about her to prevent them from reminding her about past misfortunes. However, in her narrative Sam still refers to her unpleasant past refusing to realize that it holds her back from enjoying the present and traps her into a specific recurrence long before she actually gets into the time-loop. Instead, Sam's choices limited the emotional support she could get, and this deepened her loneliness and fears because she became more dependent on the opinion of her peers and especially friends she spent time with. These new cool friends proved to be equally traumatized and were not able to lead Sam toward truth. Sam shortly confides to her narratees that there are unmentionable things like that Elody is ashamed of her mother who is an alcoholic and the father is not mentioned at all; Ally's parents pay attention to their work and are not family types; Lindsay's parents are divorced and her stepfather pays money to get rid of her. The time loop gave Sam time to realize and accept in her narration that some people like Kent or her sister Izzy who do not comply with

the public opinion are actually bolder and truer than she is. They do not alter themselves in order to be liked by those who do not really care about them. Moreover, these courageous and true people do not harm others or hide their separateness by depriving others of social bonds.

The novel describes the contamination of the true discourse due to the time out of joint between generations. Parents, even the loving ones like Sam's, are not able to take care of their children and teach them to take care of themselves in terms of parrhesia. As Sam yells at her mother on the fourth day accusing her of neglect: “*You care now?*” <...> I hate both of my parents right now ... for letting the thread between us stretch so far and so thin that the moment it was severed for good they didn't even feel it. <...> I did my part too. <...> Your parents are supposed to keep you safe” (Ch. 4) [12]. All adults (parents, teachers) and institutions in the novel appear to be deprived of any positions of power from the viewpoint of the children that is why their statements are not judged to be true or influential. Sara Mills argues that a statement is recognized as “the truth” only if it is authorized within society and corroborated by those in positions of authority who are considered to be experts capable of speaking the truth [11, p. 58]. Through Sam's narration we conclude that adults neither create an atmosphere of support and confidence for their children nor set an adequate example, their statements are perceived as untrue and are not followed. They lack authority and power to take care of their children, help them to withstand the bad influences of the outer world, or advise them on how to conduct themselves. Left alone without parental guidance and example, these children are not able to establish their own character and the right way of living. Moreover, Oliver populates her novel with unhealthy and dysfunctional families (incomplete, extremely poor or violent families, families with parent(s) suffering from substance abuse or disability, alienated or neglectful parents etc.) and shows how home climate influences the children's behavior at school and their relations with their peers. Many researches [8; 10] demonstrate that domestic violence is a common cause of antisocial or abusive behavior and mental problems. Susan L. Miller [10] argues that trauma is cumulative, and people with trauma histories are likely to suffer from anxiety, depression, dissociation, substance abuse and inability to regulate or control their emotions and responses. Repeated exposure to victimization in childhood especially between their parents increases the possibility of a child to use force against others. Karel Kurst-Swanger and Jacqueline L. Petcosky [8] emphasize that children need love, nurturing, acceptance, and support from their parents in order to become confident, psychologically healthy adults. Emotionally or physically neglected and abused children usually choose violence and aggression toward weaker or younger persons as a coping mechanism to release or displace their feelings of being victimized. The researchers [6] also

report that children learn about relationships in society by internalizing interactions with caregivers. Neglected, abandoned, or abused children feel themselves to be essentially unloved and unwanted, and if they recognize life as a domain without meaning or connection they may experience a state of social detachment. Such children who did not master the proper way of conduct resort to bullying when interacting with others. They are more likely to use aggression and violence in unhealthy social environment while students at schools that provide friendly climate of collaboration and cooperation among peers as well as support from teachers have lower levels of bullying or delinquency. Moreover, it was found that overall school climate contributes more into violent behavior than previous victimization.

In the novel, to properly bond with participants of the parrhesiastic game and establish the discourse of truth Samantha has to peel off her false identities right to her true core, to “fix” herself as she states it. The seven last days of her life also help Sam to grow up and learn to take responsibility for her actions. At first, Sam involves the narratees in her actions and tries to hide under the evasive premise that no one is perfect, everyone is guilty of something, or life is not fair: “But before you start pointing fingers, let me ask you: is what I did really so bad? <...> Is what I did so much worse than what anybody else does? // Is it really so much worse than what you do?” (Ch. 1) [12]. From the point of view of the readers, this statement looks like an ethical stance that is to be challenged in the novel and thus like Oliver's invitation to participate in Sam's journey towards the moral resolution. This may also explain why many readers commented about their experience of bullying because in this case actual readers recognized themselves as the narrative audience being addressed by the character. From here, we may respond to Sam as a real person and listen to her more closely.

Sam admits that she used to belong to the school's social bottom constantly bullied and offended until the day Lindsay Edgcombe picked her up to bully other students. In the prologue, Sam belittles some offences between peers at school stating that they do not have a significant traumatizing effect: “It's no big deal. There's always going to be a person laughing and somebody getting laughed at. It happens every day, in every school, in every town in America – probably in the world, for all I know. The whole point of growing up is learning to stay on the laughing side” [12]. By diminishing the influence of bullying at school, Sam finds excuses for her actions and shifts responsibilities to impersonal society. According to her logic, if bullying is inevitable then it is better to perform violence than experience it.

As Lauren Oliver suggests, truth becomes a criterion against which the worth of one's life is ascertained. This soul-saving truth, however, does not equal a simple practice of exposing a lie. This is why Sam was not able to escape from the time loop even

when she put all pieces of information together. For Sam, parrhesia was not completed until she established the appropriate emotional bond with the interlocutors and found inner strength to become a person she wanted herself to be. The process of her transformation corresponds to the three stages (defined by Foucault as investigation, test, and care) that the parrhesiast has to undergo in order to complete the mission of veridiction that is to make a statement in accordance with what he/she believes in. Besides disclosing everything without concealing any facts, the true discourse is not established until the parrhesiast is trialed in terms of truth and confirms that his/her way of life is consistent with what he/she speaks about. In this case, a person achieves the totality of truth when his/her thought, views, or statements correspond to the way of living thus creating a harmonious realm for truth-telling that guarantees the acceptance of the discourse. The ultimate goal of the parrhesiast in society is to preserve this true discourse and encourage people “to take care, not of their wealth, reputation, honors, and offices, but of themselves, that is to say, of their reason, of truth, and of their soul” [7, p. 86]. For him/her truth becomes more important than life or death because through veridiction the parrhesiast establishes him/herself as a person of courage rather than a coward. This type of interpersonal parrhesia serves society as a whole because it teaches people to discriminate between true and false opinions and guides them towards good reasoning.

In the novel, Sam's evasive, self-justifying reasoning falls apart in the face of death that proves to be the most real thing against which the truthfulness or falseness of life can be measured. Theoretically, in this final moment when all past deeds are summed and an individual confronts the totality of his/her own existence, or the pure Dasein (in Heidegger's terms), he/she is left alone in the world as a being. In the instant of dying the corporeal world is left behind and what the departing soul can embrace is the true meaning of its past. Since the influence of the living as well as any opinions of the crowd disappears, one is answerable to him/herself in terms of universal norms of morality. Fear experienced under the possibility of annihilation of the self makes lying or hiding any of the past transgressions impossible, therefore an individual is forced to be true. Lauren Oliver shows the ability of the true discourse to endure, since its power to mend the harm of lying can be brought into play only when individuals are eager to give an account of and fix themselves. The completion of Sam's maturation manifests through her readiness to adhere to the meaningful things in life and accept reality that the time loop was not to give her an opportunity to prolong her own life but let her amend the evil she has done and take care of people she wronged. Since lie corrupts the soul, only truth can purify it; however, as Foucault explains, impure subject is not capable of seeing and speaking the truth, so one must become free from the world as the universe of the impure to

get access to the truth as the eternity of purity [7, p. 125]. Death and subsequent recurrence of the last day make Sam face her existence in totality and weigh all things against it to understand their true value. Separated from the sensory world by dying, Sam perceives it as the realm of error and falsity thus becoming clean of the unimportant and trivial matters.

Purification of Sam's soul via the truth that enables salvation contrasts with the way of life Lindsay chooses. On the sixth day when Sam is finally ready to hear her truth, Juliet Sykes tells her true story about being friends with Lindsay years ago and how Lindsay betrayed her then best friend in the fifth grade. They were on a camping trip and slept in the same camp. At night Lindsay wetted her sleeping bag but she was so terrified and humiliated that accused Juliet instead and gave her the name Mellow Yellow. From that time on Lindsay and others called Juliet various obsolete names, spread disgusting rumors about her, posted pictures of her naked, and invented new and new ways to humiliate her. In her revelation to Sam, Juliet discloses the roots of Lindsay's destructive behavior explaining how young Lindsay was psychologically traumatized during the terrible divorce of her parents. She used to cry a lot at night when she thought no one heard her, had nightmares so bad that she woke up screaming, and started to wet her bed. During one sleepover, Juliet found Lindsay scrubbing and bleaching a pillow with her bare hands so her fingers were almost burnt: “But it's like she couldn't even see it. She just wanted it to be *clean*” (Ch. 6) [12]. However, the novel proves Lindsay's strategy counter-productive because her pretense only creates a distorted illusion of perfection masking but not abolishing her humiliation. Lindsay directs her fear of being exposed against those who knew her secrets (like Juliet) or even those who may cast a wrong look at her. When investigating the events surrounding her death Sam discovers that Lindsay intimidates everyone vulnerable around, mainly Juliet Sykes, in order to hide the imperfections of her life and directs her anger outward to simulate power and control. The secret part of Lindsay's life opposes the true discourse and generates the false, untrue one that poisons and corrupts people who fall under its influence.

Elaborating the theory of truth Foucault [7] states that a true life is always unconcealed, straight life, a life that does not include any shadowy part, imitate or carry any false appearance that conceals its ethos. A true life is the life conducted according to the norms and principles that constitute the law of human behavior (nomos). If the person follows the rules of conduct, he/she remains independent thus avoiding corruption and the fall. By preserving the identity of its being and assuring its happiness, the true life may be understood as self-mastery and self-enjoyment. Bearing this theory in mind, we may explain clearer the origins of serenity felt by Sam in the novel after she establishes the true discourse. Before her soul is purified, Sam obtains knowledge about her self and develops her strong incorruptible identity that

consequently helps her to reconcile with the world and divinity. The problem of bullying is entwined with the goal of establishing the discourse of truth in the novel. On the explicit level, the parrhesiastic game means that the origins of bullying of Juliet Sykes at Thomas Jefferson should be revealed and the bully identified and exposed. On the implicit level, the novel shows that finding out the truth behind the events is not enough to complete the act of parrhesia. Sam has to establish the emotional bond with other participants of the parrhesiastic game, become a person true to herself, find courage to accept the truth and pass it to other people in order to help them save their souls from the corruption of deceit. Once Sam accepts her role of the parrhesiast she becomes unable of lying to avoid unpleasant truth. On the sixth day Sam drives Lindsay home after Juliet kills herself: "She wants me to tell her it's okay. She needs me to tell her that. I can't, though. Instead I say, quietly, 'People would like you anyway, Lindz.' *I don't say, if you stopped pretending so much*, but I know she understands. 'We'd still love you no matter what'" (Ch. 6) [12]. Sam doesn't want any temporal comfort for her friend because she shows her the significance of love and unity and leaves her to learn how to take care of herself on her own without translating anger or frustration into others. Oliver shows us how encounter with death transforms Sam's ideology from "There's always tomorrow" (Ch. 1) to "It's never too late for second chances" (Ch. 7) [12]. Sam learns throughout her journey that only true things can reach above the false matters defying death and annihilation: "[C]ertain moments go on forever. Even after they're over they still go on, even after you're dead and buried, those moments are lasting still, backward and forward, on into infinity. They are everything and everywhere all at once. // They are the meaning" (Epilogue) [12]. That is why after perceiving the life in full and realizing the beauty of human relations Sam accepts the inevitability of her death and chooses to save Juliet instead. On the seventh day Sam reconciles with her family, childhood love Kent and present friends as well as establishes positive attachments with other students including Anna Cartullo who she used to bully. However, even though Sam herself acts against the false opinions of others, she does not find courage to tell her friends the uncomfortable truth about their wrongdoings and test her relationships with them. Instead, she chooses to show them her personal conduct as an example so she creates an atmosphere of love and forgiveness for them and keeps away from triggers of violence. This helps Sam to maintain her calmness and inner strength to escape the time loop by saving Juliet. Unable to amend the damage she caused to everyone, Sam dies hit by a truck when she pushes suicidal Juliet away from the road. The act

of self-sacrifice gives Juliet a second chance to live a better life because by it Sam verifies the importance of Juliet's being and promises her a social bond associated with love and happiness. In the last chapter as well as in the epilogue, alteration of Sam's narration reflects her changed self; it becomes calm and smooth uninterrupted by flashbacks or pauses confirming her harmonious attitude towards the world and the present. She does not sound like a mean girl anymore but becomes more mature and benevolent towards her narratees.

To summarize, the idea of resistance and possibility of change in terms of parrhesia is central in the novel. Parrhesia denotes truth spoken in relation to others that establishes the bond between people and shapes a person with regard to others. In Lauren Oliver's novel "Before I Fall", at the beginning of the quest for her true self and the way of conduct, the narration of Samantha Kingston reveals her beliefs that the only way of doing things is provoking others and objecting the existing norms. During the last seven recurring days of her life, Sam gains courage to acknowledge and confess to her narratees that deep inside she feels unhappy, wretched and damned because she inflicts cruel and insensitive things on people around her. She also discovers her own true meaning of life and a way to live and die according to her convictions. In order to participate in the parrhesiastic game Sam has to change her attitudes, perceive the previously unnoticed things around her as well as gain courage to listen to others and accept the hurtful truth about her personality. The novel shows how parrhesia correlates the domain of individual's soul with the society and emphasizes the ability of the discourse of truth to transform and save souls by guiding people and showing them the right way of conduct. During her journey toward the truth, Sam realizes that salvation demands a person to resist false discourses generated by the opinion of the crowd and, once the seed of evil is identified, change her conduct in relation to the established truth. An idea "it's never too late" delivered in the novel indicates that the truth is omnipresent and it can be reached whenever the person abandons the (self)inflicted lies. When falseness of her life is fully rejected in the instant of dying, the act of Sam's self-sacrifice restores the broken communication and reminds the dearest people she leaves behind that a true life is the highest value. This paper covers only several issues discussed in the novel, we hope that future analysis may involve further investigation of ethics in contemporary fiction. Moreover, the rhetorical approach to narrative may help to reveal how different real-life readers perceive the same stories differently in terms of values and morality delivered by both the narrator and the author.

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