

BARTHES, FOUCAULT, AND THE TEMPORALITY OF THE AUTHOR

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Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault have differing notions of the development of the author because Barthes and Foucault approach the question of the author through different influences that privilege different notions of temporality. The notion of *overturning* versus *overcoming*, as found in Martin Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche, serves to elucidate the differences between Barthes' and Foucault's response to the question of the author and to the extent which Barthes' and Foucault's sense of temporality influences their response to this question. As seen through Heidegger's sense of *overturning* and *overcoming*, Foucault is shown to privilege a historical notion of temporality where the author is afforded a dominant and privileged position, while Barthes is shown to deny the privileging of the author in favor of a system where the reader has a predominant claim on the text.

Roland Barthes, in his essay "The Death of the Author," posits that the traditional way in which the author is viewed – as an "Author-God," an authority, an owner of the text – is no longer adequate because in all ways the traditional view of the author limits the reader's claim to the text: "To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing." If a text has an author then the author is usually thought to have the final say on the text – that reading a text analytically is scratching the text for an author and "when the author is found, the text is 'explained' – victory to the critic." The text, to Barthes, is not, as he says "to be *deciphered*" but to be "*disentangled* ... the structure can be followed, 'run' ... at every point and at every level, but there is nothing beneath: the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced; writing ceaselessly posits meaning to ceaselessly evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning." Without an author, then, there can be no final meaning; a text cannot be 'deciphered', its Truth cannot be exposed because there can be no

single Truth, only multiple truths. Barthes recognizes that there is something very “anti-theological” in this – just as Nietzsche's madman refuses God and His prescribed meaning, so to does Barthes refuse to fix a definite meaning to a text, and, as a result, “to refuse [an Author-] God and his hypostases – reason, science, law” (Death 147).

Part of Barthes' stylistic appeal (and also the source of a great deal of difficulty) is his unorthodox use of language. Strong language permeates Barthes' writing often with unconventional meanings and effects, and meanings are often misconstrued. One must be especially careful with Barthes, then, and keeping this caution in mind, it is easy to see “The Death of the Author” is a literary call to arms of sorts, a prescriptive rather than descriptive essay. While “The Death of the Author” may seem like a literary call to arms, Barthes' careful use of language subtly qualifies his remarks – Barthes does not end his essay prescriptively with the line “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author,” but rather descriptively: “We are now beginning to let ourselves be fooled no longer...the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (Death 148). Through his subtle language Barthes qualifies what can be misconstrued as a prescriptive statement (“must be”) showing it to be a descriptive statement (“we are no longer”). Barthes notion of temporality, as will later be discussed, places Barthes in the descriptive realm of the present rather than in the prescriptive realm of the future. It is important to remember, then, that in “The Death of the Author,” while Barthes' language may be misconstrued as being prescriptive, his overall argument is of a descriptive nature.

While Barthes denies that a text has an author he asserts that a text does have a scriptor. The scriptor, then, is the negation of the author:

Succeeding the Author, the scriptor no longer bears within him passions, humors, feelings, impressions, but rather this immense dictionary from which he draws a writing that can know no halt: life never does more than imitate the book, and the book itself is only a tissue of signs, an imitation that is lost, infinitely deferred. (“Death” 147)

If the text is to be “disentangled” and the structure “run’ (like the thread of a stocking) at every point and at every level” though “there is nothing beneath,” it puts the scriptor in the position of a musical composer who creates a symphony only by putting together notes that are pleasing to his ear at the time, without an undercurrent of thought or intention (because intention seems to acknowledge precedence), and who creates a score with different layers though without intentionally infusing the notes with any deeper meaning than their pitch. The term 'SCRIPTOR' is different from an author because an author practices intentionality and is thought of as preceding the text, while the term 'SCRIPTOR' is free of these connotations – it only refers to the act of writing and is therefore divorced from a presupposition of precedence, intentionality, and authority. Most importantly, in using the term 'SCRIPTOR' Barthes seems to be divorcing himself from a linear notion of time where the author first creates the text that the reader later consumes, favoring, instead, some different notion of temporality.

Michel Foucault's essay, “What is an Author?,” published one year after (and at least partially in response to) Barthes' “The Death of the Author,” Foucault presents another version of the author, which, as the essay's title demonstrates, is far from dead (Pease 118). Foucault, in looking for what an author *is*, uncovers very quickly what it is an author *does*, or rather he uncovers the role that the author has come to play which he terms an “author-function” (125).

Foucault identified four major characteristics of the author-function:

[1.] the “author-function” is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realms of discourse; [2.] it does not operate in a universal manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; [3.] it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; [4.] it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy. (130-1)

An author-function is not an individual, but rather the societal and cultural forces that are at play that require that there be an author. The first characteristic of the author-function maintains that the need for an author arose from “legal and institutional systems;” that is, that there needed to be the name of the author to which a discourse can be attributed, and authors are, as Foucault says, “objects of appropriation” (124). Foucault cites the influence the legal and institutional systems have over the author in order to critique Barthes, claiming that the removal of the author means the end of criticism. Donald Pease explains:

Critical language (its vocabulary of accusation, defense, judgment) depends on the legal system (and the cultural systems associated with it) for its warrant. Without Foucault's name to connect the words in, say, *Les mots et les choses* there would be no one to be held accountable for them and, hence, no way to justify the critique of them (or any other commentary)... The name of the author saturates the entire network of legal relations, thereby empowering the attribution of

discourses to the procedures that result from them.” (113)

Foucault develops the author-function as a listing of historical facts where it seems that the author is a necessary part of criticism and discourse. To do away with the author, in the way that Foucault may believe that Barthes is suggesting, would be the end of all critical discourse because critical discourse depends upon there being a label (the author's name) to group works together. It is this classification of works under the name of an author that makes discourse possible:

[T]he name of the author remains at the contours of texts – separating one from the other, defining their form, and characterizing their modes of existence. It points to the existence of certain groups of discourse and refers to the status of this discourse within a society and culture. The author's name is not a function of man's civil status, nor is it fictional; it is situated in the breach, among the discontinuities, which gives rise to new groups of discourse and their singular mode of existence. (Foucault 123)

In this way the author acts as an object of appropriation.

While it would be impossible to simply remove the author as Foucault may believe Barthes to suggest, Foucault assents that it would not be difficult to “imagine a culture where discourse would circulate without any need for an author” (Foucault 138). That is, while the historical influence of the legal system on discourse requires that we not remove the author, Foucault thinks that discourse could easily be formed where we need not require that the author have an influence. He concludes his essay by formulating questions that certain types of discourse ask. Instead, he says, of the “tiresome repetitions” of “Who is the real author?” and

“Have we proof of his authenticity and originality?”, we could (and should) be asking questions like “What are the modes of existence in this discourse?” and “Where does it come from; how is it circulated; who controls it?” (138). With the advent of these new questions, the author (while still necessary) will be forgotten in favor of the new discourse. Foucault's essay ends with what seems to be an affirmation that we ought to forget the author (though we cannot kill him): “[b]ehind all these questions we would hear little more than a murmur of indifference: 'What matter who's speaking?'" (138).

While Foucault's criticism of Barthes' “The Death of the Author” was well formulated and certainly contained valid points, it seemed inadequate, almost as though he were speaking past Barthes rather than to him. This sense of separation between the two authors and their respective essays comes from the way that each author privileges presence and temporality.

Roland Barthes' sense of temporality is informed by philosophy and theory, preferencing the realm of the present – it is a search for what *is*. Barthes' concept of criticism and analysis, then, certainly reflects his preferencing of the present:

The fact is (or it follows) that *writing* can no longer designate an operation of recording, notation, representation, 'depiction' (as the Classics would say); rather, it designates exactly what linguists, referring to Oxford philosophy, call a performative, a rare verbal form (exclusively given in the first person and present tense) in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered – something like the 'I declare' of kings or the 'I sing' of very ancient poets. (145-6).

Barthes references J. L. Austin, an Oxford scholar, who worked with the concept of a

'performative utterance'. A performative utterance, according to Austin, "is derived, of course, from 'perform', the usual verb with the noun 'action': it indicated that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (6-7). The performative utterance is an action, not a description: "When I say, before the registrar or the alter, &c., 'I do', I am not reporting on a marriage: I am indulging in it" (Austin 6).

For Barthes, then, writing does not refer to the past, to something that has happened, but instead refers always to the present – to the very instance of writing. Barthes sense of writing is like a performative utterance – it is not simply a report but the very act of indulging in it.

When writing is thought of as a performative utterance, it becomes clear why Barthes is so adamant about the author's death – the author is a relic of the past. His very presence calls for a preferencing of the past over the present, whereas the removal of the author, says Barthes, "is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing, it utterly transforms the modern text ... The temporality is different." The author is the very representation of the past, says Barthes: "book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after*...[the author] exists before [the book], thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child." The scriptor, Barthes goes on to say, is born in the same instance of the text and can in no way be separated from it. The scriptor in no way "precede[s] or exceed[s]" the text, "there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written *here and now*" (Death 145).

Temporality is key to Barthes' understanding of the author. It is clear, then, why, for Barthes, the author must be removed completely rather than just forgotten about as Foucault seems to suggest. The very existence of an author challenges the claim the reader has to a text. If



the text “knows no other time than ... the here and now,” then the author must be dead, and the past will not be able to lay any claim on the text.

If Barthes' sense of temporality is informed by philosophy and theory, and always inhabits the realm of the present, then Foucault's sense of temporality is informed by history and inhabits the realm of the past. Francois Dosse, in *History of Structuralism*, says of Foucault, “[i]nstead of thinking about the structure and the sign, Foucault examined the series and the event” (237).

Foucault, when characterizing the 'author-function,' starts by looking at the origin of an author in the penal code. Attributing a work to an actual individual rather than to the saint who inspired it or to some other “mythical or important religious figure,” began, interestingly enough, “only when the author became subject to punishment and to the extent that his discourse was considered transgressive” (124). Foucault also mentions that attributing texts to authors as a form of property of the author (in the sense of ownership) does not occur until the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries when copyright laws were developed (124-5). It is plain to see, then, that Foucault's approach to the question of authorship is rooted in history. In order to develop a definition of the author, then, Foucault does not start by asking “what is an author?”, as his title would suggest, but rather by asking “what are the functions that the author has come to fulfill and what changing conditions led to the creation of these functions?”

Foucault's notion of temporality in this “historizing of structuralism” seems to preference the past in that his preferred preoccupations, the series and the event, are of the past and relegated to it (Dosse 237). Foucault's sense of an author, then, is shown to be a tracing of

historical events:

- Fact<sub>1</sub> “[T]here was a time when those texts which we now call 'literary' (stories, folk tales, epics, and tragedies) were accepted, circulated, and valorized without any question about the identity of their author” (Foucault 125).
- Fact<sub>2</sub> “Speeches and books were assigned real authors, other than mythical or important religious figures, only when the author became subject to punishment” (Foucault 124).
- Fact<sub>3</sub> There is a “singular relationship that holds between an author and a text, the manner in which a text apparently points to this figure who is outside and precedes it” (Foucault 115).
- ...
- Fact<sub>n</sub> “[I]t appears that the form, the complexity, and even the existence of this function [of the author] are far from immutable” (Foucault 138).

Foucault's sense of temporality should not be taken to be a simple linear notion, but a complex genealogical one. To further develop meanings of ideas, Foucault effects what Dosse refers to as a “shift towards history.” Foucault examines concepts genealogically (historically), but not linearly. He manages to avoid the trap of linearity common to history and thinking historically: “Foucault remained a philosopher in a Nietzschean-Heideggerian tradition and he decided to deconstruct the historian's turf. He was interested in the discursive realm and not in the referent, which remained history's privileged object.” Foucault employed history's genealogical approach to his own end - “to open the structures of history up to temporal discontinuity and shifts that determined the endless game of discursive practices” (Dosse 238). History's preoccupation with continuity and linearity did not concern Foucault, rather its concern

with “the series and the event.”

Barthes' theoretically influenced approach and Foucault's historically influenced approach to the question of the author illustrates the subtle way in which Barthes and Foucault are not addressing the same question; they are concerned with two different aspects of the author. That is not to say that Barthes does not address the historical aspect or that Foucault does not address the theoretical aspect of the author, but that Barthes and Foucault do so in such a way that is still heavily influenced by their main preoccupations, theory and history, respectively. For example, while Barthes speaks historically of the author in his essay, he does so only briefly in order to contextualize the term 'author' and in order to show that the author is a relatively new development in the history of writing, “a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'” (142-3)

While this may, on the surface at least, sound similar to Foucault's historical analysis of the author, it is not. Barthes' analysis still exists in the theoretical realm of philosophy; citing the history of the author serves only to elucidate the misinterpretation that the author is somehow inextricably connected with the text. Writing existed before the Reformation, French rationalism, and English empiricism, from which the author is said to have emerged; that the modern author is inextricably linked with the text is a misconception. When Barthes writes that “writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin” and that “[w]riting is that neutral, composite oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing,” the writing being described is like Austin's performative

utterance – temporally it exists in the “now” of the writing (Death 142).

When Barthes engages the subject of writing, he seems to do so at the level of the Platonic forms. For Barthes, writing is an idea more than an act, or, perhaps, it is an idea in addition to an act; the act of writing being in all ways in the present because Barthes' idea of temporality allows only for the present. For Barthes to provide a historical analysis of the author, then, is a demonstration of the 'present now' of writing – the rise and fall of the author is the product of societal preference (the past) and has no real bearing on the form of writing (the present).

When Barthes says that the removal of the author “is not merely an historical fact or an act of writing” it is a caution against thinking of writing in the linear temporal tradition where the author would be thought to exist and then would later be removed. Instead, for Barthes, writing is a combination of a performative and of a Platonic form – it is an action and an ideal, conceived of only in the present, and is in this way set apart from historical analysis. The tools of the past (such as historical documentation) have no influence over it.

As mentioned above, Barthes and Foucault are not addressing the same aspects of the question of the author. Roland Barthes, theoretically influenced, preferences the moment of the present, and his discourse, as a result, exists in the realm of philosophy and the search for what *is*. On the other hand, Michel Foucault, historically influenced, preferences the past, and his discourse, as a result, preferences an historical approach in the quest for what *has been*. Since both Barthes' and Foucault's sense of the author is rooted deeply in their separate notions of temporality, it is impossible for their individual notions of authorship to speak *to* each other rather than *past* each other.

Martin Heidegger, in his essay “The Word of Nietzsche: 'God is Dead',” notes the difference between *overturning* and *overcoming*. When these terms are applied to Michel Foucault's and Roland Barthes' individual notions of the question of the author, their arguments further illustrates that their differing notions of temporality deeply influence their arguments as a whole. Michel Foucault's argument is shown to allow the author-function a privileged position over the text, while Roland Barthes' argument is shown to allow the reader a privileged position, allowing for the reader to take an active rather than passive role in the dissemination of the text.

According to Martin Heidegger, *overturning* occurs when the terms that make up a binary change positions and exchange dominance while *overcoming* breaks free of the binary relationship altogether. While Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche perhaps begins with a misinterpretation – Heidegger seems to think that Nietzsche had intended to destroy all of metaphysics with his claim 'God is dead', while Nietzsche does not seem to be making this claim – Heidegger's overall discussion of *overturning* and *overcoming* is not negatively affected.

Heidegger sees an example of *overturning* in Nietzsche's claim that God is dead. The effect of Nietzsche's claim that 'God is Dead' is that metaphysics is altered. Heidegger says of Nietzsche's statement “the terms 'God' and 'Christian God' in Nietzsche's thinking are used to designate the suprasensory world in general. God is the name for the realm of Ideas and ideals. This realm of the suprasensory since Plato ... [is thought to be] the true and genuinely real world.” According to Heidegger, God, for Nietzsche, is not simply the Judeo-Christian God, but the suprasensory, the metaphysical. Nietzsche, says Heidegger, contrasts the suprasensory world with the sensory, the physical world: “If, as still happens in Kant, we name the sensory world the



According to Heidegger, what Nietzsche seems to have created by overturning the system of metaphysics is a descent into meaninglessness:

The suprasensory is transformed into an unstable product of the sensory. And with such a debasement of its antithesis, the sensory denies its own essence. The deposing of the suprasensory does away with the merely sensory and thus with the difference between the two. The deposing of the suprasensory culminates in a “neither-nor” in relation to the distinction between the sensory and the nonsensory. It culminates in meaninglessness. (53-4)

The 'meaninglessness' in Nietzsche is nihilism, or the spread of Nothing in opposition to “suprasensory obligations” (Heidegger 61). This nihilism, accomplished by the “deposing of the suprasensory,” is freedom from the obligation to the metaphysical world. According to Heidegger, “nihilism in so many words [is] the becoming valueless of the highest values” (66-7).

Heidegger seems to think that Nietzsche believed the effect of deposing the suprasensory in favor of the sensory – by preferencing a subordinate term over the dominant – was to fling metaphysics into a dive from which it could never recover (a descent into meaninglessness), though Heidegger seems to be mistaken in this respect. According to Heidegger:

Nietzsche's countermovement against metaphysics is, as the mere turning upside down of metaphysics, an inextricable entanglement *in* metaphysics, in such a way, indeed, that metaphysics is cut off from its essence and, as metaphysics, is never able to think of its own essence. Therefore, what actually happens in metaphysics and as metaphysics itself remains hidden *by* metaphysics and for metaphysics. (61, emphasis added)

Heidegger's (mistaken) critique of Nietzsche is that Nietzsche does not destroy metaphysics by deposing the suprasensory in favor of the sensory, instead he exchanges terms and roles of dominance. Nietzsche never breaks metaphysics, but remains stuck inside of it (using Heidegger's terminology, he *overturns* the binary but does not *overcome* it). That is to say, regardless of which term holds the dominant position, it is still the same binary of the sensory and the suprasensory.

While Heidegger is correct in recognizing that Nietzsche does not *overcome* metaphysics, his critique needs to be qualified. Nietzsche, in his discussion of nihilism, does not ever claim to overcome metaphysics in the way that Heidegger describes. Nietzsche does not approach metaphysics to overcome it, but to *overturn* it. As he states in *Will to Power* 55:

Extreme positions are not relieved by more moderate ones, but by extreme opposite positions. And thus the belief in the utter immorality of nature, and in the absence of all purpose and sense are psychologically necessary passions when the belief in God in essentially moral order of things is no longer the case. (Nietzsche 47)

Nietzsche, then, does not agree with Heidegger's notion of that a problem such as this can be overcome, rather, according to Nietzsche, it must be radically overturned. Also, it is clear that Nietzsche's sense of nihilism, and, more specifically, his use of the term meaninglessness, is not the absence of value, but rather what Nietzsche terms an "active negation." In a system of binary opposition, to deny the dominance of one term is to assert the dominance to the other. Nietzsche says of nihilism that "one interpretation has been overthrown [that is, the interpretation of existence that has a God inscribed meaning]: but since it was held to be *the* interpretation, it



seems as though there were no meaning at all, as though everything were in vain” (48).

According to Nietzsche, then, it may *seem* as though there were no meaning at all, but this is not the case. Rather than a void where an existence with a God inscribed meaning once stood, there is something else, an “active negation” (52). It seems, then, that an active negation of an existence whose meaning is defined through God would be an existence whose meaning is not defined through God (though this may, perhaps, be an oversimplification, further examination of is beyond the scope of this paper).

Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche would seem to be in Nietzsche's approach to metaphysics. Nietzsche seems to favor a binary approach to metaphysics while Heidegger seems to favor an approach that is not unlike the Socratic dialectic where neither a term (A) nor its contradictory term (B) are adequate so instead a solution is sought outside of the A-B binary, sometimes a synthesis of A and B, altering (or, perhaps, *overcoming*) the original binary.

When applied the Michel Foucault's essay “What is an Author?,” Heidegger's notion of overturning and overcoming helps to elucidate the shifts that Foucault seems to be establishing. In his essay, Foucault engages a binary of author and text. The author holds the dominant place in the system and the text the subordinate because the author precedes the text. Foucault, however, does not take issue with the author's place of dominance, rather, he takes issue with the term 'author' and modifies the term to defend it from those who, like Barthes, seek to replace the author's place of dominance with the reader. This, again, is one of the instances where Barthes' and Foucault's temporality preferences prevent them from directly engaging one another's arguments. Foucault interprets Barthes (rightfully so) as trying to place the reader in a position of dominance over the text, displacing the author. Foucault takes issue with reader dominance

because the movement of the text from the author to the reader seems to be a series of cause and effect relationships. In the Author-Text-Reader relationship the author is thought to be the cause of the text and the text is thought to be the 'cause' of the reader (that is, there would be no reader without the text). In the series of Author-Text-Reader, the reader is preceded (in both the historical sense and in the sense of importance/dominance) by the text, and the text is likewise preceded by the author. For the reader to depose the author would be, for Foucault and his historical/genealogical approach, a case where an effect replaces its cause, which would be temporally (historically) and systematically (genealogically) impossible.

Foucault establishes the 'author-function' illustrating the complexity of the author, perhaps conceding that certain aspects of the author-function can be removed while still allowing the function of the author the dominant position. For Foucault, the author-function replaces the author.



Foucault's replacement of the author with the author-function does not significantly alter the binary of author and text, instead it expands on one term allowing for the disappearance (and also perhaps the emergence) of certain functions without overturning the system of author and text: "The author – or what I have called the 'author-function' – is undoubtedly only one of the possible specifications of the subject and, considering past historical transformations, it appears that the form, the complexity, and even the existence of this function, are far from immutable" (Foucault 138).

While Foucault admits that there may be a time when the author-function disappears, it

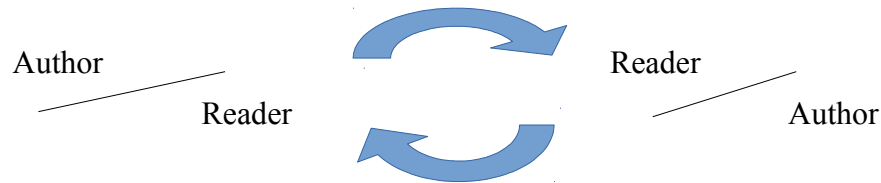
would need to disappear as a result of an “historical transformation” that would change the very nature of discourse on the subject. That is to say that, for Foucault, it would be possible for the Author-Text-Reader relationship to someday disappear as a result of an “historical transformation,” though, given the current culture, the author cannot to removed from (or repositioned in) this series.

Foucault concludes his essay by posing potential questions that do not address the question of authorship and seem to suggest that the text may be engaged without considering the author by forgetting about the author (though without removing him). If this is the case, then Foucault still does not seem to be advocating what Heidegger refers to as an *overturning*; that is Foucault still seems to be arguing for the dominance of the author (or the author-function) in the current Author-Text-Reader series and not for a system where the text can operate freely without being under the shadow of the author. At best, and this does not seem to be the case, Foucault seems to be advocating a system of the author that is only temporarily overturned, where the text, because of the author's imagined absence, inhabits the role of dominance by default.

Foucault, then, neither overturns nor overcomes the binary of author and text, rather he clarifies the role of the author, suggesting that, instead of the an actual author, the role of the author be considered – the author-function.

Heidegger's sense of overturning and overcoming seems to call into question Barthes' argument for the complete removal of the author. The binary that Barthes takes issue with in his essay consists of the author and the reader. Traditionally, the system of authorship privileged the author over the reader – this is what Barthes takes issue with. In removing the author it would seem that Barthes is really demonstrating that he privileges the reader over the author, that he is

slightly altering the binary from favoring the author to favoring the reader: “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author” (Death 148).



If this is the case, then it would seem that Barthes falls into the same systematic trap that Heidegger (mistakenly) thinks Nietzsche falls into when (Heidegger believes) Nietzsche assumes that in placing a derivative over the original he would doom the entire metaphysical system into a descent of meaninglessness, when, in doing so, he does not even manage to break free of the old system but remains a prisoner of it; that his expectations exceeded his results. This, however, is not the case. Barthes, in his definition of terms, is very careful not to place the author and the reader in a position where one may be thought to be the dominant term and the other a subordinate. The term author, remember, operates in the series of Author-Text-Reader, a series that implies that the reader is subordinate to the author in that the author precedes the text and the text precedes the reader. Barthes, however, does not place one term as dominant and the other as subordinate because he actually removes the term 'author' and replaces it with 'scriptor', thus changing the series and avoiding the implied dominance inherent in the series of Author-Text-Reader.

Barthes' notion of the Author-Text-Reader relationship, then, is not a binary of reader dominance over the author (as illustrated in the above diagram) but rather a relationship between a reader and a scriptor with neither reader nor scriptor holding a dominant position because dominance assumes precedence, and both the reader and the scriptor exist in the moment of the text, in the “here and now” (Barthes, Death 145).

Barthes, in privileging neither scriptor nor reader, serves to blend the two terms into one. According to Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche, Nietzsche believed that in deposing the suprasensory he would ultimately remove meaning from the sensory as well, "thus [removing] the difference of between the two" and leaving only the alternative of nihilism [54]. Barthes, however, does away with the difference between the scriptor and the reader not by simply removing one term and waiting for the other to become meaningless, but rather by doing away with the historically privileged temporality of the Author-Text-Reader series in favor of a present "here and now" where the scriptor and the reader exist in the moment of the text. For Barthes, the reader and the scriptor, unhindered by a sense of dominance and precedence, their distinctions blurred, move freely about the system allowing the reader to take an active role and become, as Barthes says in "S/Z," "a producer of the text" (4).

The distinction between scriptor, producer, reader, and consumer are further blurred in Barthes' discussion of the readerly and the writerly text in "S/Z:"

[The goal of the writerly] is to make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text. Our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user, between its owner and its customer, between its author and its reader. (4)

Barthes, whose notion of a privileged present (the "here and now") allows him to operate free of systems of precedence and dominance, in this way achieves what Heidegger terms *overcoming*. Barthes has broken free of the system of author and reader, not by altering the definitions of terms or by reversing the dominant and subordinate terms, but instead by developing a new system privileging the present, circumventing the binary system of domination

and subordination, where the author is removed and the reader is as key producer of the text.

Francois Dosse says of *S/Z*, “[f]or Barthes, the active/author, passive/reader relationship needed to be redefined by readers rewriting the written text, or a plural text allowing for many possible voices and paths” (59). If Dosses is correct in assuming that Barthes, in *S/Z*, accomplished the redefinition of the traditional relationship of an active author (producer) and a passive reader (consumer), then the same should be said of “The Death of the Author.” “The Death of the Author,” like *S/Z*, redefined the traditional roles of the relationship between the author, text, and reader. To a certain extent, it is as though “The Death of the Author” lays the groundwork for *S/Z* in that “The Death of the Author” actively works through the problems of the roles and relationships of the author, text, and reader, while *S/Z* actively demonstrates the “plural text” and the possibility of a reader “writing” the text.

The different notions of temporality held by Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault not only prevent their individual notions of authorship from addressing each other, but they also govern to what extent each responds to the question of the author. Michel Foucault, influenced by his historically/genealogically notion of temporality, conceives of the binary of the author and the text as always allowing the author-function a dominant position because, as Barthes notes, “[t]he author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book: book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a *before* and an *after*. The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say he exists before it...” (Death 145). Thus, the author-function, for Foucault, is allowed the position of dominance because it existed before the text – the author preceded the text – and precedence, genealogically speaking, implies dominance. Roland Barthes, on the other hand, is able to overcome the traditional notion of the author

because Barthes' notion of temporality does not favor precedence, but rather suggests that a text, a reader, and a scriptor are reciprocally constituted in the moment of the here and now. In conclusion, Roland Barthes, in favoring the moment of present, is able to overcome the question of the author, while Michel Foucault, who favors a genealogically/historically influenced notion of temporality, redefines the role of the author into a series of author-functions that operated in the traditional binary of author dominance.

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