The Faint Smiles of Postures: Roland Barthes's Broadcast Interviews

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Introduction: The Literary Interview as Genre

In this article, I focus on the literary interviews given by Roland Barthes as far as they can frame an authentic literary genre within the corpus of the writer and do not just look as an explanatory tool for his literary work. If the interview indubitably constitutes an asset for our critical work, especially in terms of explanation of author's creative intentions, I claim here that it also accords itself a certain literary autonomy as a genre, as a distinct mode of literary discourse within the whole field of literary genres. I contend that the interview conveys a discourse that is not, indeed, entirely reducible to a dialogic interaction. I believe that the discourse of the interview belongs primarily to the dialogue of the author with an external respondent, which is his audience, his public. Consequently, I consider the interview as a literary genre that oversteps the limits of the authority of an author and is shared by him or her with others, hence gaining a new status of authorship.

I will illustrate the latest research on Barthes's interviews and quickly analyse three cases, giving some examples of analysis of his radio and TV interviews using the concept of literary posture. Before this, I would also like to clarify the current view of the literary interview as a genre. I owe this approach to the laudable work carried out by scholars at the Flamand University KU Leuven and francophone Université Catholique de Louvain in Belgium, such as David Martens, Christophe Meurée, Anneleen Masschelein, Stéphanie Vanasten and Myriam Watthee-Delmotte.[1] I especially refer to the monographic issue of the academic review *Poetics Today* which contains a complete dossier on the literary interview in Francophone, German, and Anglo-Saxon literature as well as an attempt to present the interview as a hybrid genre.[2]

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From a terminological point of view, the first known occurrence of the term 'interview' in English dates back to 1514. The term is derived from the Middle French *entre-veue* (from s'entre-veer, to see one another) and is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as 'a meeting of persons face to face, especially one sought or arranged for the purpose of formal conference on some point'. The English word 'interview', to indicate the journalistic genre, was imported early on into French, although the alternative '*entretien*' is also common there.

In its modern media form, however, the interview is an American creation that coincides with the rise of the penny press (boulevard press) in the 1830s. The first known interview in history was given by the former US President (1825-1829) John Quincy Adams and was published in the newspaper *Paul Pry* by Anne Royall in Washington DC in 1831. The term 'interview' in the journalistic sense was first used in 1869, with the first interviews of this kind appearing three decades earlier in the *New York Herald*, founded by James Gordon Bennett. The first documented literary interview was given by Charles Dickens during his North American Tour in 1842.[3] According to Jean Royer, the first literary interview in France appeared in *Le Petit Journa*l in 1884.[4]

By the end of the nineteenth century, the interview typically took the following form: a first-person narrative introduction by the journalist, followed by the report of the dialogue in direct speech in question-answer form. As for broadcasting media, the first radio interviews appeared in the United States in the 1920s, to give voice to ordinary listeners in entertainment programmes. Later on in the second half of the twentieth century the dynamism of the interview through the media must be highlighted. The format of the radio interview develops between 1949 and 1953 in France and, by the time of Roland Barthes, the interview is firmly established as a distinct media genre in both radio and TV.[5]

The interview appears as a genre which encourages a pragmatic study of the social structures of culture, of ideologies, and of its political issues too. This is a study that has to be based on a figure that has undergone a resurgence in literary studies in recent years. After the alleged death of the author in the 1960s, the author experiences a sort of multiple resurrection as both theoretical notion and individual example. For instance, it is not pointless for our current research to remember that Barthes, in his article 'The Death of the Author' (1967), declares, somewhat in contrast with the

title itself, the well-being of the figure of the author:

> The author still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs. The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions.[6]

If, according to Barthes, the 'self' of the author still remains at the heart of literature, then the author who emerges from the interviews, more than the other genres mentioned by him, arises as the product of a multiple construction – that of the author itself together with other voices. In fact, as the Belgian authors claim, the public 'self' of the author mostly emerges from the interviews as a compromise between the writer and the whole socio-literary field in which he/she is acting. Previously Philippe Lejeune, in his pioneering study on the French literary interview on the radio, has tried to work this connection out. Coming with the belief that the radio interview renews the genres of biography, autobiography and essay – and this happens despite the informal tone of the conversation – his research engages in an analysis of textual and non-textual features of some French interviews at the time (1949-1953), in order to show how the interview develops right before the radio audience.[7]

On Barthes's Interviews' Corpus: Summary of a *Catalogue Raisoné* of his Interviews

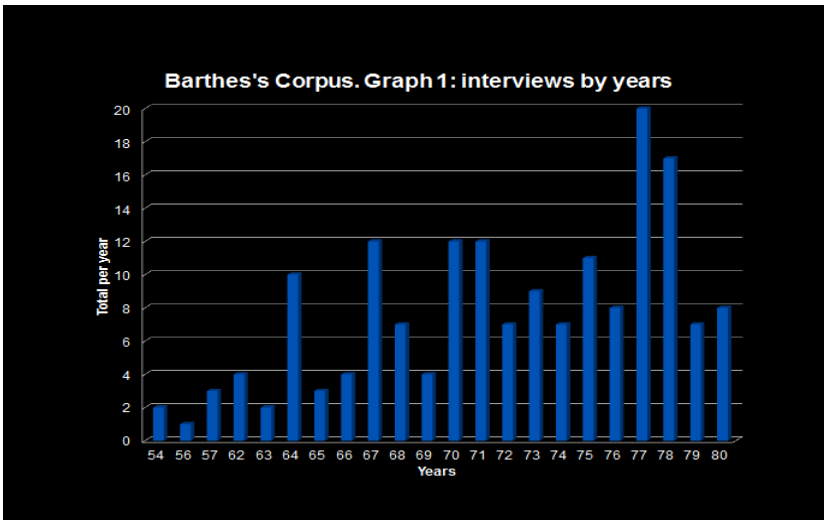
A large body of Roland Barthes's interviews is documented. A 1981 publication entitled *The Grain of the Voice (Interviews 1962-1980)* is a collection of some of the print interviews (39) given by Barthes.[8] The following year, Thierry Leguay listed a table of interviews which Barthes had given not only in print publications (57), but also on radio and TV (respectively 62 and 5 in his counting).[9] Many years later, a large number of both print and transcribed interviews (from TV and radio) was edited in the *Œuvres complètes* by Éric Marty in 1995 and partially completed (72) in the

new edition in 2002.[10] Nevertheless, the complete list of interviews found by Leguay was not included and the entirety of the interviews was not transcribed.

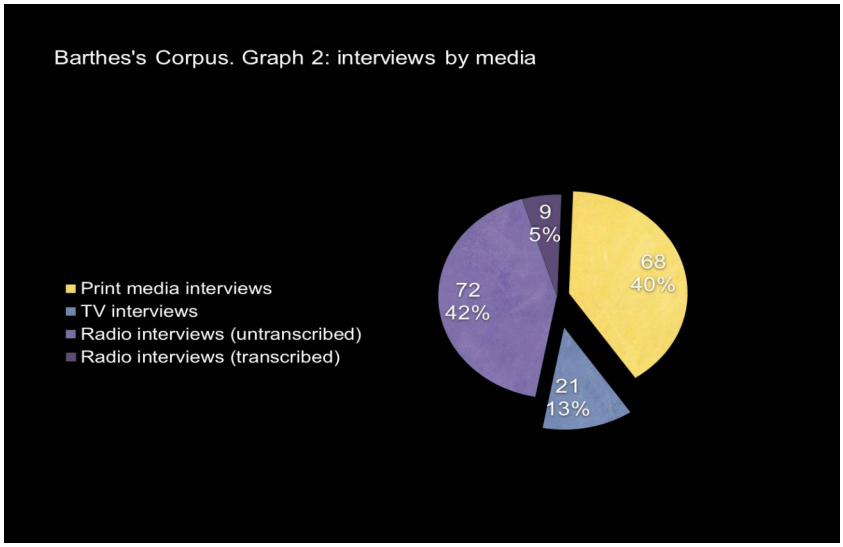
In total, by cross-referencing both the catalogues of Leguay and Marty and adding my own research – at the French Institut National de l'Audiovisuel and into non-French archives – the current count of interviews stands at 170.[11] The main achievement of this research is to update a list including all the interviews (print, radio, and filmed) given by Barthes as the investigation within different archives has more than doubled the total amount of his interviews listed before, in *Œuvres complètes* or elsewhere.[12]

The interest of this list is plural. First of all, the list can give back to each interview the sense of its generic autonomy throughout the entirety of Barthes's work. In other words, the sequence of the interviews is not subordinate to Barthes's published texts and does not appear as integration, according to an auxiliary function, of these published texts, as a typical result of the inclusion of interviews in *Œuvres complètes* of writers.[13] In addition, by looking at this list, the frequent switching of Barthes's interviews from one kind of media to another one appears clear. This highlights the diversity of modes of interviewing at this time, particularly in the case of Barthes.

The first diagram I propose is a simple distribution of Barthes's interviews by year:



The interviews given by Barthes increase in number up to the peak of 20 in 1977 and, in general, the average of interviews is higher during late 1970s. Nevertheless, among the radio interviews, consequent transcriptions from the radio media appear only after year 1971, that is, the year of the first radio interview which has been transcribed. This result allows us to start a second exploration of the list in order to investigate the rate of transcriptions of radio and TV interviews within Barthes's work. According to the present investigation of Barthes's broadcast interviews, I would like to focus on this diagram, which is more interesting:



Barthes gave interviews almost equally between radio and print media. In fact, there are 81 radio and 68 print interviews. If we consider the transcription within the *Œuvres Complètes*, of 68 examples of print media, 61 have been transcribed (88%). Of the twenty-one TV interviews, just four have been transcribed somewhere into text, even partially (19%). Of the 81 radio interviews, just nine have been transcribed within the *Œuvres Complètes* or published elsewhere (11%). The main task for the near future of Barthes Studies, at least concerning his interviews, consists in the transcription of his recorded interviews and consequent publication, as the broadcast interviews are only available through the French Institut national de l'Audiovisuel's archives and other sites abroad.[14]

Towards a Complementary Methodology for the Interview: Epitext, Media, Literary Posture

At this stage I will summarize research that has been done on the interview to define its boundaries as a genre in order to approach an analysis of the whole corpus of Barthes's interviews, both in print and broadcast media. I start from Gérard Genette's interpretation of the interview and conclude with the method proposed by Jérôme Meizoz as a possible application to this genre, that of the literary posture.

Genette ascribes the interview to the paratext as it 'provides a kind of canal lock between the ideal and relatively immutable identity of the text and the empirical (socio-historical) reality of the text's public'.[15] As paratext, the interview constitutes an asset to the text for meeting its audience; in other words, the paratext assists the audience when it is confronted with the text. The paratext adapts texts to the public and accounts for the transformation of such a public over space and time. Moreover, Genette places the genre of the interview into a specific para-textual category, that of the public epitext. He defines the public epitext as all that comes with the exterior of the text, which surrounds the text, but is still projected on the encounter with the audience.

At this point of intersection between the text and the external world, it also appears evident how the interview interlaces within the complex state of the modern media. The interview certainly participates in the age of the 'second orality' as Walter Ong called it.[16] As a public performance, the interview renews in the era of broadcasting media the relationship between literature and orality. In the case of Barthes, for instance, we find the typical functions of orality as developed by Ong.[17] They concern the addition and aggregation of different subjects within the author's replies, the quantity of repetitions (as used in oral discourse), an emphatic attitude circulating between the author and the presenter, and some immediate references – both spontaneous and non-spontaneous – to the background in which the oral communication is placed, such as linguistic elements related to the deixis. Ong additionally remarks upon the way in which a writer tries to

develop an individual style in oral communication by the reproduction of his own writing style:

> Persons who have interiorized writing not only write but also speak literately, which is to say that they organize, to varying degrees, even their oral expression in thought patterns and verbal patterns that they would not know of unless they could write.[18]

This quote introduces the main problem of the evaluation of oral transcription from the interview and warns us that different components are at stake in the interview. They relate to textual patterns as well as oral or corporal performance as typical for a writer, and we have to approach each of these elements through a complementary perspective in order to study one writer's posture. Concurrently, we must be aware that even a radio interview is often the result of a transcription of its audio recording. In the early days of the radio interview, for example, many interviewed writers came prepared with pre-written replies to pre-agreed questions. The archive of the manuscripts by Barthes conserved at the Bibliothèque National de France contains numerous interview transcripts, complete with handwritten corrections by the author himself.[19] This shows that sometimes even Barthes used to prepare with the questions before the interview.[20]

In addition to the huge number of interviews he granted, Barthes is a fascinating example because he has also reflected on the problem of interview transcription. I recall his article, 'De la parole à l'écriture' ('From Word to Writing'), which acts as a preface to the publication of some of the *Dialogues* broadcast by France Culture, where one of his interviews is also included. Barthes calls 'scripting' the transcription of an interview recorded in oral form and insists that the corporal elements, such as the voice, are lost in the transfer from one mode to another.[21] Behind the voice of the presenter, there is a person: a subject with its own biography is placed on one side and the other of the communication chain. For this reason, a conservation of the interviews capable of retaining also voices, images, and speeches is indispensable. We claim that both textual elements and performative issues appear to be 'readable' or interpretable thanks to a mode of analysis that has risen recently in the field of media and literary study.

Assuming that the genre of the interview contains some issues connected with the public performance of a discourse, we can interpret the public performance of an author in the interview through the concept of the literary posture. The achievements of this concept in the field seem to follow the renewed importance of the notion of the author in recent times. Also, this could appear as a direct reaction to the claim of the 'death of the author' in the 1960s, as many scholars have worked on the status of the author in the media industry (from the nineteenth to the twentieth century) in recent years. Notably, the work of José-Luis Diaz on the author's imaginary makes a distinction between the *auteur réel* (the civil person), *auteur textuel* (the writer) and the *écrivain imaginaire* (the totality of authorship's representations). According to this difference in degrees, the analysis of the mediatisation of writers has followed different issues, which actually complete each other into the big picture of the notion of the author of today. They consider the engagement of the author in socio-literary extents in a different way, such as celebrity, visibility, reputation and personal exhibition.[22]

Jérôme Meizoz of the University of Lausanne has especially re-elaborated the notion of literary posture borrowing partly from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and above all from Alain Viala's meaning of literary posture, as outlined in *Eléments de sociopoétique* (*Elements of Socio-Poetics*).[23] As Meizoz explains, the best equivalent of the concept would be the Latin notion of *persona*, which originally referred to the masks worn by actors on stage and is etymologically derived from the notion 'from / through what one speaks' (*personare*), which establishes both the idea of voice and that of the social situation making it intelligible. On the scene of literary enunciation, the author presents as well as expresses himself equipped with his posture. Meizoz convincingly argues that literary posture refers to the public presentations of a writer. On the one hand, that is, the circumstances which create the public success of an author such as debates, awards, public readings, and interviews. On the other hand, Meizoz adds that literary posture corresponds to the self-image of an author as expressed through its own writing and style, which is what classic rhetoric defines as *ethos*.

Literary posture accounts for the resolution of several methodological problems I have introduced. First of all, posture appears not to be uniquely an author's own construction, but an interactive process: the image is co-constructed by the author and by various mediators (journalists, critics,

biographers) serving the reading public. As far as the interview is concerned, both the interviewer and the interviewee adopt a posture, dependent in terms of interaction and upon each other at once.[24] We can say that facing a literary interview means encountering a 'shared authorship', but it should be clarified that the dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee is often marked by an asymmetrical relationship. The two participants occupy different institutional and discursive positions and are motivated by different goals.[25] For these reasons, Philippe Lejeune points out that the dialogue between the writer and the interviewer is more than just a co-construction of a message addressed to the audience. More precisely, the interviewer acts not only on his own, but also as a proxy for the public, as the interviewer should be aware of the questions that the public would want to be posed.

In addition, literary posture as Meizoz sees it presupposes a dual observation track, because it involves both non-verbal behaviour and discourse.[26] Even in this case, literary posture and the interview share the same requirements. The simplest example stemmed from Meizoz concerns Louis-Ferdinand Céline and his renowned white coat, his medical uniform, which he chose for presenting himself to the press at the launch of his *Voyage au bout de la nuit* (*Journey to the End of the Night*) in 1932. The writer consciously adopted the posture of a poor doctor, who also treated poor people and was a stranger to the bourgeois world of other writers, as he was condemned to doing a real job for a living. But his dress code finds an equivalent rhetorical instrument within the novel through his enunciative posture which was characterized by an unrefined speaking style that intensified the populist issues that form the basis of the novel.[27] In conclusion, as Meizoz explains at the end of his study, the literary posture represents the opportunity to study the author's social conduct as a modulation and evolution of strategies within the literary field and throughout his/her career: 'If the author has a social role and holds a position […] the postures have shown the margin of self-creation at its disposal, with its inventive remedies, its hybridizations, its borrowings, without forgetting a lot of diversions and parodies'.[28]

Analysis of Some of Barthes's Literary Postures in Broadcast Interviews

The posture is often anchored in a historical image of the writer which has already been accepted by the public unconscious and develops throughout the history of literature, the self-presentation of writers, their biographies and literary studies. The tradition of literary postures, perhaps invisible to writers themselves, informs the background that enables authors to perform publicly.

I have decided to focus on traditional literary postures of French intellectuals which can also be found in Barthes's broadcast interviews. My short itinerary follows three steps:

> 1) the engaged intellectual (along the lines of Jean-Paul Sartre);
> 2) the intellectual as *amateur*, through the public exposure of Barthes as an amateur painter;
> 3) the *génie malheureux*, which leads to the posture of the original writer, that emerges in Barthes from an opposition between the posture of Castorp within the community life of *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann and the posture adopted by the model of André Gide.

A short text written for a Parisian exhibition entitled 'L'Affiche anglaise, 1890' becomes particularly intriguing for thematising the evolution of the literary posture in Barthes. Here, Barthes points out a brief examination of the postures of English people on some posters from the Victorian Age:

> Posture is not only a way of holding one's body; it is an emphatic, spectacular, motionless gesture (related to the living picture rather than to the theatre); it is a role (one can usurp it: hence the opposite of posture: the imposture).[29]

Barthes acknowledges the posture as a performance as well as a public role. In addition, his conception of *imposture* appears as a negation (*I am not…*)

of the mask – of the veritable posture like *persona*, the one of the actors on stage. However, the fifth chapter of *Camera Lucida* points out that the 'sensation of imposture' is based on the divergence of the posture itself from the authentic essence of the individual, that is, his private and personal image concealed in front of the camera and from any photographic portrait:

> I decide to 'let drift' over my lips and in my eyes a faint smile which I mean to be 'indefinable', in which I might suggest, along with the qualities of my nature, my amused consciousness of the whole photographic ritual: I lend myself to the social game, I pose, I know I am posing, I want you to know that I am posing, but (to square the circle) this additional message must in no way alter the precious essence of my individuality: what I am, apart from any effigy. […] I do not stop imitating myself, and because of this, each time I am (or let myself be) photographed, I invariably suffer from a sensation of no authenticity, sometimes of imposture.[30]

The writer reshapes his public image by the combination of both aspects – posture and *imposture* – in order to 'fluctuate' into the field, above all to modifying his positioning in front of the public. This fluctuation evolves along with previous postures progressively overcome, and the new wearing of masks allows Barthes to trace his own itinerary from the 1950s to the 1970s by postures which appear to be incompatible with each other. Actually, all of them describe a register of his attempts to control his public image before the audience. If the literary posture can be read by Barthes as enforcement and imposition, as the reduction of the writer into a previously established role, he also seems to keep the idea that the writer can always carry out a renovation of his public image by the same means. The relationship of Barthes with his own public posture swings between a balance of both aspects, posture and *imposture*, because they do not have to bend together to a self-mythologization of himself as an author.[31] Barthes's postures show him performing a negotiation of his public image in compliance with his public role, but somehow in contrast with the focus on the author's privacy condemned in the article 'The Death of the Author'. In this respect, the posture means a double benefit for Barthes. It assists the writer in performing publicly, but at the same time preserves his/her secret and private personality from the eyes of the public and subsequent complete disclosure.

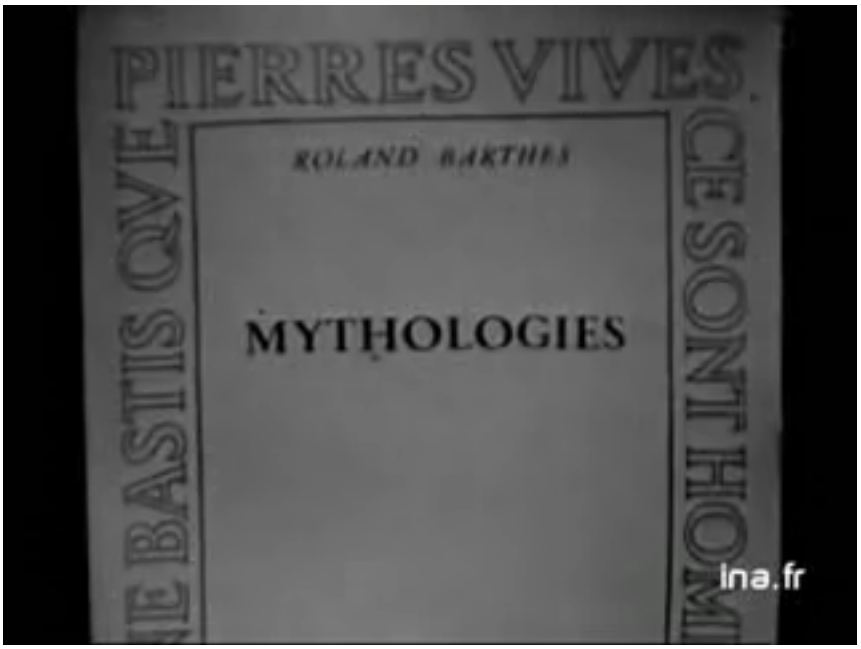
It is also clear that his personal feeling about his postures turns into a realistic strategy as a writer and an intellectual who has to perform an increasing number of public appearances, especially during the 1970s. Among a number of interviews where Barthes reasons about his participation in this media game, it may be useful to transcribe an extract from the interview broadcast on France-Culture on 22 February 1977, the second in a series of five interviews given that year for the network. The subject of the interview is the profession of the writer. On this occasion, Barthes confirms that the interview is part of the work of a writer and that this work is not independent from the culture of his time. On the contrary, refusing to be interviewed would mean a return to the mythology of the writer or even, as it was claimed, a self-mythologization of himself as a writer:

> The writer feels very well that when he writes, when he publishes, he revolves around the work of other people, the people who interrogate him, the people who record him. He is part of an economy and therefore – I would say – he does not have the right to refuse this type of exchange.[32]

1. *Mythologies* Facing the TV-Studio Timing

As any other intellectual working in the 1950s, at the beginning Barthes finds himself in the pre-composed posture of the intellectual *engagé*, the intellectual engaged in society, which follows the model imposed by Jean-Paul Sartre. The posture of the intellectual *engagé* obviously means less a filiation with the methodologies and purposes of Sartre (although Barthes adopts a personal semiology to undertake similar critical tasks) than a common expectation of what an intellectual must be according to the public domain.

In this respect, I want to comment on an extract from one of the first video-interviews given by Barthes at the TV network RTF on the occasion of the publication of *Mythologies* in 1957, the book that makes him a reference point for anyone who aspires to critically analyse the French bourgeois culture of the time.[33] The beginning of the interview is marked by a sort of advertisement for the book, and even its cover appears on the screen:



First of all, the advertisement acts as an institutional framework for the interview. The cover announces that the TV audience is going to watch an interview and listen to a dialogue focusing on the presentation of a recent book by a young and not yet famous author. The advertisement acts as a strict protocol in TV interviews and, as such, is often included within them even though they show and consider different aspects of writers' personalities, due to the specific purpose or kind of the interview.

Afterwards, we are introduced by the camera to the background of the interview: the television studio. It is apparently a room, a place without any specific connotations, because the set is just a shape functional to the filming and to the movements of the cameras. Both the interviewer and the interviewee sit at diagonals from each other in order to be framed in a single shot sequence. The shots in this way can alternate between Barthes and Pierre Desgraupes, the interviewer, from right to left and inversely:

Although the spectators focus their attention from the interviewer to the interviewee and back, the audience nevertheless seems excluded from this theatre. In order to allow the transition between the cameras for different TV programmes, the studio is located in a virtual space similar to a theatre stage, above all concerning the size (20x20 metres), which is more similar to the theatre than to a familiar space facilitating informal communication.[34] Not only are the TV viewers the public of a theatre, but also both the interviewee and the interviewer are captured in a fictive and stereotyped dialogue, in which questions and answers follow a screenplay of presentation, focusing on the book, its main subject and some specific topics which, according to the interviewer, may be more interesting to the audience.

In the discourse of the interview, the dialogue is not a real one because it is marked by an asymmetrical relation: to be effective in the interview, according to the network's policy for Desgraupes, and to take the opportunity of promoting his public figure (for the first time) in a successful TV programme for Barthes. The main constraint appears to be the timing of TV interview (less than 10 minutes), which demands quick replies from

Barthes and does not give any opportunity for personal digressions. What becomes one of Barthes chief characteristics in written and oral conversation (such as the second interview we will analyse), that is, the ability to intertwine social analysis with subjective statements (not highly personal, but at least concrete enough to act as *exemplum* for argumentation), does not have any room in this type of TV interview.

This filming shows how the interview and the interviewer are interrelated by conversional exchanges, while they construct together this posture of Barthes. Neither the interviewer nor the interviewee seems to impose himself on the other by means of discourse, but the structure of the live TV imposes on both Barthes and Desgraupes a space (a stage) and a timing which seem to be incompatible with the conversational genre to which also the interview can refer, at least during its early days in print. If the TV interview stems from the dialogic mode of the interview, the medium of television modifies the speed of the interview's dialogic form, accelerates the frequency of exchanges (questions and replies) and delimits the expansion of details (restricting at the same time the possible entropy of information towards the author) to the more objective and commercial communications (cover, title, popular topics of the book).

2. Discovering the Pleasure of Posture on TV

Among other postures, Barthes comes to be portrayed as *maître*, as a schoolmaster, from 1964 until this death. At the time of the publication of *The Pleasure of Text* and increasingly after, throughout the 1970s, Barthes's posture is already stable in this role. However, especially from his 1971 *romanesque* interview published on *Tel Quel*, which can be considered as a sort of turning point, Barthes sometimes takes on the posture of the *amateur*, that is, someone who flirts with the (representations of) pleasures of his own hobbies and within his everyday life at home.[35] Barthes appears as an amateur painter in a TV interview of the same year. Let us have a look at a frame taken from a second TV interview, dedicated to *The Pleasure of Text*.[36]

We are immersed in the space of the writer's home. It might be said that 'an interview in a writer's home not only serves as a shrine for the author's art, but also represents the interviewer's penetration of the celebrity's intimate surroundings for the benefit of the public'.[37] Even though the writer's home appears habitually as a magic temple to the audience in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the spectators of TV interviews enter Barthes's home and find a familiar atmosphere. Barthes isn't seated at his writing desk, at his *bureau*, but he occupies his amateur room, the one he uses for his painting activity as an amateur once a week.

At the beginning of the interview, Barthes even turns his face towards the camera suddenly and starts the conversation as if he were distracted from his painting. If his paintings are not a topic for the conversation that follows, they are included in the filmic dialogue by Barthes's gesture. Personal affairs have found a way to enter into the format of broadcast interviews and they change the nature of that interview. For example, the cover of *The Pleasure of Text* briefly appears only when Barthes stops painting on his desk and looks at the camera – one minute has elapsed while the interviewer's voice presents

the author. But more importantly, Barthes presents himself in a more relaxed attitude than he did in the previous interview. He smokes cigarettes (two at the same time).

The smoking intellectual is a nod to the established iconography within the French literary tradition of the writer who smokes, notably following Sartre and his Gitanes, but also Blaise Cendrars, wearing an open shirt and smoking a cigarette, as he is photographed by Robert Doisneau.[38] In contrast to what happens in the TV studio interview,[39] here Barthes pays great attention to how he performs his figure or, in other words, he carefully controls the appearance of his posture by using personal objects and places. For instance, the time spent smoking a cigarette partially acts as a sort of measuring record for the timing of the interview. Here the author negotiates his position within the interview, comfortably dressed in his room, among his paint brushes and sketches. Even the timing of the dialogue, through the gradual burning of the cigarette, follows his personal pleasure of smoking it. By doing this, he would control his own private time in contrast with the TV interview timeframe.

The camera angle is also different in relation to the first interview.[40] The interviewer does not appear. The figure of the interviewer, André Bourin, becomes transparent. When Barthes responds to him, he addresses the hypothetical audience behind the interviewer. Through this positioning, it seems that this time Barthes is speaking directly into the camera. The audience is given to identify with the voice asking questions to the interviewee and this emphasises the feeling of being engaged in a conversation with Barthes at his own home. In short, Barthes performs what might be called a new posture of an amateur in order to deconstruct his previous, and perhaps more contrived, public postures. An amateur posture can be said as the performance of a writer as he could not be a writer, a posture insisting on the liberation of another life, the one that does not write. In fact, it only happens through a non-textual mode (as allowed by TV interviews), such as dress, objects, places. This posture is useful to Barthes in order to integrate his established public posture as an intellectual – especially on the occasion of a dialogue which would be starting from an essay entitled *The Pleasure of Text* – into a more complex reconsideration of his own posture as an original writer.

Finally, the myth of the room where the writer retires, in a monastic life of solitude to work, denotes a decadent and romantic vision of the

writer, who is still 'visited' as a sacred figure in a remote place.[41] Nevertheless, this is also opposed to the posture of the bourgeois writer, a worker and a craftsman, a concrete figure of a utilitarian idea of literature. In short, the relationship with the audience passes through a use of the iconography of the French intellectual which recovers anti-bourgeois aspects of it, focusing instead on the author's pleasures and vices.[42]

3. The *Génie Malheureux* Sitting Down at the Table

Pascal Brisette stresses how the disease of tuberculosis is a *topos* within the work of Romantic writers.[43] In Barthes's work, his tuberculosis features as a particular turning point in his young life. Barthes gives his tuberculosis the role of the *kairos*, the culminating moment that changes everything in a personal itinerary, that marks his youth and his relationships with others, but also the experience that opens the door for him to literature and writing.

Barthes himself focuses on this claim during his interview on the Radio-France programme *Radioscopie* ('X-ray Interviews') with Jacques Chancel in 1975. Here, Barthes publicly narrates his evolution from tuberculosis to literature:

> *Were the health problems you had in 1934, when you were only nineteen years old, the beginning of reflection for you?*
> [...] I started in this disease at a time when it hit the subject who was suffering from a very strong taboo, the taboo of contagion. [...] I then spent many years in the sanatorium of the students of Saint-Hilaire-du-Touvet in Isère. I was also in a Swiss sanatorium. I had two experiences there. It must not be believed that when one isolates oneself in a sanatorium, one becomes a sort of solemn thinker; it is not at all what happens.
> The first experience is that of friendship: you live with people of your age for years and often two or three in the same room: you see each other every day and the profound affectivity that develops in this context, with its joys, its problems, and even with all its novelistic aspect, supports you enormously.
> The second experience is that of reading. What else is there to do if not read? It was at this time that I read a lot, especially the classics, French or foreign, and this is where I began writing for the magazine of the sanatorium, *Existences*.[44]

Through this interview, Barthes develops an oral synthesis of his own *Bildungsroman,* the same he will offer two years later in the final passage of his significant inaugural lecture given on his admission to the Collège de France. If we consider that this element was also introduced during his first course at Collège in the academic year 1977-1978, *Comment vivre ensemble* (*How to Live Together*), we can discern that a construction of a public posture based on the tuberculosis as a turning point in life is of utmost importance in his last years. However, in contrast with the *topos* of *genie malheureux* opening to the experience of literature, in Barthes the tuberculosis seems to be linked just to two experiences: friendship and reading.

The original frame of that posture can be easily traced back to the novel by Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*). This book is a failed *Bildungsroman* about the apprenticeship of a young bourgeois individual, Hans Castorp, before World War I. It is evident that Barthes will try to derive a postural model from this book (or novel). I quote from the ending of his inaugural lecture:

> The other day, I reread Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain*. This book deals with a disease I know well, tuberculosis. […] Now, the tuberculosis I experienced is, down to virtually the last detail, the tuberculosis of *The Magic Mountain* […] my body is the contemporary of Hans Castorp, the novel's hero; my body, still unborn, was already twenty years old in 1907, the year when Hans entered and took up residence in 'the country up there'.[45]

The identification of bodies between Barthes and Castorp under the aegis of tuberculosis does not conclude the process of posture, but more importantly the recovery of the experience of illness within Barthes's public discourse. In fact, the tuberculosis becomes the first term from which Barthes tries to find his own original posture as a writer, which is clearly not the figure of a simple patient, but something that can evolve to the posture of the infirm and frail writer or, as Pascal Brissette named it, the *génie malheureux*, the troubled writer.

More precisely, Barthes uses the tuberculosis as a term of a new paradigm, which opposes the experience of friendship and reading in the sanatorium, framed by the model of the hotel in *The Magic Mountain*, to the posture assumed by another individual, a writer whom Barthes counts among his inspirational models, André Gide:

> Gide was reading Bossuet while going down the Congo. This posture sums up rather well the ideal of our writers 'on holiday', as photographed by *Le Figaro*: to add to banal leisure the prestige of a vocation which nothing can stop or degrade.[46]

Barthes finds in Gide another element of pleasure, eating, which can be linked with his posture as an amateur. Also, the image of the writer as he is not writing possibly sends Barthes back to the posture which emerged in the second TV interview: Barthes occasionally imagines the narcissistic pleasure of eating alone while reading (he expressly makes reference to 'Gide at the Lutetia' in *How to Live Together*).[47] On the contrary, something as basic as a meal in the sanatorium-hotel of Mann's novel is characterised by hyperbole and overstatement: 'The patients in the sanatorium of *The Magic Mountain*: they're there to save their lives, to be born into a new life. They are served monstrously stodgy foods, and are stuffed with food in the hope that it will turn them into new human beings'.[48] Gide, who used to eat alone, reveals the posture of the writer in romantic solitude. Gide's *La Sequestrée de Poitiers* is taken as a model for one of the fictional spaces analysed repeatedly throughout the course, the *chambre*: 'The Room (single, non-comfortable), *cella*'.[49] Now an opposition between the isolation of the *chambre* and the communal life at the hotel is framed by the topic of food: reclusion in bedrooms versus *repas-ensemble* as moment of friendship.[50]

The food completes the paradigm of tuberculosis as a revealing experience for the writer. If the space of the common meal is related to the life in the sanatorium, and consequently to the discovery of friendship, the space of the bedroom represents the stage where the young *génie malheureux* can explore another pleasure. He is able to identify this pleasure, the writing and the consequent access to literature, only when he compares his solitude with Gide's, with the addition of the experience of eating and working alone as Gide did. It is not by chance that Barthes links together writing, eating alone and his youth in the chapter of *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*

entitled 'L'écrivain comme fantasme', translated by Richard Howard as 'The Writer as Fantasy'. Here he even develops an entire *scenario* from his memory:

> Surely there is no longer a single adolescent who has this fantasy: *to be a writer!* Imagine wanting to copy not the works but the practices of any contemporary – his way of strolling through the world, a notebook in his pocket and a phrase in his head (the way I imagined Gide traveling from Russia to the Congo, reading his classics and writing his notebooks in the dining car, waiting for the meals to be served; the way I actually saw him, one day in 1939, in the gloom of the Brasserie Lutetia, eating a pear and reading a book)![51]

In short, Gide exhibits a posture that Barthes himself appropriates by a direct imitation and consequently assumes as his own shaped literary posture. We can retrace the origin and the development of this derived posture back throughout Barthes's references, but it might also be said that Barthes borrows from Gide the original literary posture of a solitary writer in order to be a distinct author according to his model. Gide disappears from Barthes's references, his traces are erased and he leaves place to a collective posture, derived from a great tradition of the *genie malheureux* who accesses to literature through his illness.[52] Barthes searches for a utopian example within Gide's isolation.

In conclusion, Gide can be the model that allows Barthes to perform publicly his pleasures by means of the amateur posture. However, the movement between the two postures – Gide's original one and Barthes's reproduction which is originally framed – reveals Barthes's intention. The author aims at surpassing his own model in order not just to be another Gide, but rather the real *Autre*, the original and individual *other* writer. Barthes claims this hope referring to himself in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*:

> Can one – or at least could one ever – begin to write without taking oneself for another? For the history of sources we should substitute the history of figures: the origin of the work is not the first influence, it is the first posture: one copies a role, then,

by metonymy, an art: I begin producing by reproducing the person I want to be. […]
Gide occupied a great place in his early reading: a diagonal cross-breed of Alsace and Gascony, as Gide was of Normandy and Languedoc, Protestant, having a taste for 'letters' and fond of playing the piano, without counting the rest – how could he have failed to recognize himself, to desire himself in this writer? The Gidean *Abgrund*, the Gidean core, unchanging, still forms in my head a stubborn swarm. Gide is my original language, my *Ursuppe*, my literary soup.[53]

Notes

[1] By Myriam Watthée-Delmotte, see *Littérature et ritualité: enjeux du rite dans la littérature française contemporaine* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2010).

[2] Anneleen Masschelein, Christophe Meurée, David Martens, and Stéphanie Vanasten, 'The Literary Interview: Toward a Poetics of a Hybrid Genre', *Poetics Today*, 35 (2014), 1-49.

[3] Sarah Fay, 'The Precarious State of the Literary Interview', *The Atlantic*, 23 May 2012.

[4] Jean Royer, 'De l'entretien', *Études Françaises*, 12 (1987), 119.

[5] See Philippe Lejeune, 'La voix de son maître: l'entretien radiophonique', in *Je est un autre. L'autobiographie, de la littérature aux médias* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1980), pp. 103-60.

[6] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), p. 143.

[7] Lejeune, 'La voix de son maître', pp. 120-28.

[8] Roland Barthes, *Le grain de la voix: entretiens, 1962-1980* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1981); *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980*, trans. by Linda Coverdale (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009).

[9] Thierry Leguay, 'Roland Barthes: Bibliographie générale (textes et voix), 1942-1981', *Communications*, 36 (1982), 131-73.

[10] Roland Barthes, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Éric Marty, rev. ed., 5 vols. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2002). References to the *Œuvres complètes* will henceforth be in the form of OC, followed by volume and page number.

[11] See Guido Mattia Gallerani, '« Je ne suis pas... » : les entretiens de Barthes dans la presse petite-bourgeoise', annex 'Liste des entretiens transcrits, radiophoniques et visuels donnés par Roland Barthes', *Revue Roland Barthes*, 3 (2017). URL: http://www.roland-barthes.org/article_gallerani_2.html. Accessed on 18 April 2017. The provisional count of this first list comes to 147.

[12] The current list is updated in relation to broadcast interviews given by Barthes and not included in the previous lists. This final list is reproduced as an annex to the present article.

[13] 'The function of *Oeuvres complètes* (in France) is to act as a kind of capstone to this work of compilation and editing. One unique effect is that interviews are "elevated" somewhat to the status of essays, and they are also removed from the original context of their publication (thus becoming unmoored from a sense of historical "timeliness": either the time of the recent publication of a book or the time of historical events and debates).' Nicholas De Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 161-62.

[14] A few of them are available today through the website <www.roland-barthes.org>.
[15] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 408.
[16] Walter Jackson Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982), p. 3. Incidentally, the interview allows the overcoming of the *préjugé littéraire* (literary prejudice) that consists in identifying literature with the writing versus the performance of the text. See Paul Zumthor, *Performance, réception, lecture* (Longueuil, Québec: Le Préambule, 1990), p. 12.
[17] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 37-56.
[18] Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, pp. 56-57.
[19] Bibliothèque National de France, dossier BRT2.A28.01.
[20] This is the case for the 'Archives du XXe siècle' by Jean José Marchand, which consists of the recording of 150 interviews with authors made between 1969 and 1974, such as Barthes's interview in 1970-71, and therefore published in *Tel Quel*. (See Gallerani, '« Je ne suis pas... »: les entretiens de Barthes'.) On André Breton's well-known demand to arrange questions and answers before the interview took place, see Lejeune, 'La voix de son maître', pp. 155-60 and Masschelein *et al.*, 'The Literary Interview', 22.
[21] Barthes, 'De la parole à l'écriture', in OC IV, pp. 537-41. Originally published in *La Quinzaine littéraire* in March 1974.
[22] See Jérome Meizoz, *La littérature 'en personne'. Scène médiatique et formes d'incarnation* (Geneva: Slatkine, 2016).
[23] 'By comparing [the] trajectory [of an author] with the various postures [...] which an author displays, one will deduce the logic of a literary strategy'. My translation from Alain Viala, 'Sociopoétique', in Alain Viala and Georges Molinié, *Approches de la reception. Sociopoétique et sémiostylistique de Le Clézio* (Paris: PUF, 1993), p. 216. See also Alain Viala, 'Posture', in *Lexique Socius*. URL: http://ressources-socius.info/index.php/lexique/21-lexique/69-posture. Accessed on 18 April 2017; Jérôme Meizoz, *Postures littéraires. Mises en scène modernes de l'auteur* (Geneva: Slatkine, 2007); Denis Saint-Amand and David Vrydaghs, eds., *La Posture. Genèse, usages et limites d'un concept*, *COnTEXTES*, 8 (2011). URL: http://contextes.revues.org/4692. Accessed on 18 April 2017.
[24] If the interviewee's posture is a more frequent subject of analysis as far as he or she coincides with the writer, there are also studies on the postures of interviewers. See David Martens and Christophe Meurée, 'L'intervieweur face au discours littéraire: stratégies de positionnement chez Madeleine Chapsal, Jacques Chancel et Bernard Pivot', *Argumentation et Analyse du Discours*, 12 (2014). URL: https://aad.revues.org/1639. Accessed on 18 April 2017.

[25] Cf. Masschelein *et al.*, 'The Literary Interview', 20-23.
[26] Jérôme Meizoz, 'Modern Posterities of Posture: Jean-Jacques Rousseau', in *Authorship Revisited: Conceptions of Authorship around 1900 and 2000*, ed. by Gillis Jan Dorleijn and Ralf Grüttemeier (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), pp. 84-85.
[27] See Jérôme Meizoz, 'Ce que l'on fait dire au silence: posture, ethos, image d'auteur', *Argumentation et Analyse du Discours*, 3 (2009). URL: http://aad.revues.org/667. Accessed on 18 April 2017.
[28] My translation from Meizoz, *Postures littéraires*, p. 187.
[29] 'La posture n'est pas seulement une manière de tenir son corps; c'est un geste emphatique, spectaculaire, immobile (apparenté au tableau vivant, plus qu'au théâtre) ; c'est un rôle (on peut l'usurper : d'où le contraire de la posture : l'imposture).' Roland Barthes, 'L'affiche anglaise', in OC IV, p. 184. My translation.
[30] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida. Reflections on Photography*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), pp. 11-13.
[31] Lucy O'Meara, 'Killing Joke: Authorship from Barthes to Nothomb', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 55.4 (2015), 106. O'Meara proposes an interesting comparison between Barthes and Amélie Nothomb's postures. Hers appear as too much concertedly constructed, in both a biographical and performative sense, to set up just an authorial posture. Thus she claims for a self-mythologization of the author in Nothomb's posture that is also accepted in some critical works about her novels.
[32] 'L'écrivain sent très bien que, quand il écrit, quand il publie, il s'articule sur le travail d'autres personnes : les personnes qui l'interrogent, les personnes qui l'enregistrent. Il fait partie d'une économie et par conséquent je dirai qu'il n'a pas – en principe – le droit de se refuser à ce type d'échange.' Barthes, 'Le métier', interview with Jean-Marie Benoist and Bernard-Henri Lévy, France-Culture, 22 February 1977. (Paris, Institut national de l'audiovisuel.) My translation.
[33] Barthes, interview with Pierre Desgraupes, *Lectures pour tous*, Radiodiffusion télévision française, 29 May 1957. (Paris, Institut national de l'audiovisuel.)
[34] As the famous French interviewer Pierre Dumayet recognises in relation to the TV studio, 'the [...] shock possible is the discovery of the studio, whose space (20 meters high, 20 meters wide) does not encourage dialogue'. Pierre Dumayet, 'L'interview télévisuelle', *Communications*, 7 (1966), 56. My translation.
[35] See the discussion above in note 20.
[36] Roland Barthes, interview with André Bourin. *Le Fond et la forme*, Radiodiffusion télévision française, 19 March 1973. (Paris, INA.)
[37] Masschelein *et al.*, 'The Literary Interview', 26.
[38] 'Barthes' trademark cigar was the Punch Culbras (beloved of Brecht and Lacan)'. Andy Stafford, *Roland Barthes* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), p. 57. On

photographic portraits, see Jérôme Meizoz, 'Cendrars, Houellebecq: Portrait photographique et présentation de soi', *COnTEXTES*, 14 (2014). URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.4000/contextes.5908. Accessed on 18 April 2017. Concerning the photographic portrait of Blaise Cendrars by Robert Doisneau, see the reportage published in 1945 by Éditions Denoël. Concerning the photographic portrait of Barthes, for instance his images in the interior of Parisian club *Palace* which appeared in *Playboy* and *Vogue Hommes* between 1977 and 1980, see Suk-Hee Joo, 'La parole de Roland Barthes dans la presse masculine: de la figure subjective au "mythe contemporain"', *Revue Roland Barthes*, 3 (2017). URL: http://roland-barthes.org/article_joo.html. Accessed on 22 April 2017.

[39] 'The preparation of the television interview consists essentially in preparing the interviewee, that is to say, making him forget his face, inviting him to put what he wants to say before how spontaneously he wants to appear.' Dumayet, 'L'interview fictionnelle', 53. My translation.

[40] 'In any interview, the image is the face of the interviewee and, from time to time, of the interviewer. Naturally, things mean that the interviewee is first in medium shot then very quickly in close-up. There is therefore an approach to the character. For example, in an interview-reportage, we first discover the house where the interviewee lives and then his office, and then himself. The medium shot is kept whether the interviewee moves very much, or speaks by using his hands. Some clothing details are also important […].' Dumayet, 'L'interview fictionnelle', 57. My translation.

[41] Olivier Nora, 'La visite au grand écrivain', in *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. II, ed. by Pierre Nora (Paris, Gallimard, 1997), pp. 2131-55. We can also mention the notion of *Werkstattgespräch*, which indicates in the German context the visit-interview to the author's work place. See Volkmar Hansen, 'Das literarische Interview', in *'In Spuren gehen…' Festschrift für Helmut Koopmann*, ed. by Andrea Bartl (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1998), pp. 461-73.

[42] Another TV interview broadly focusing on Barthes while he paints, plays the piano and smokes cigars is given to Philippe Jacques, for the programme *En toutes lettres* at the Radiodiffusion télévision françaises, 7 January 1972. (Paris, Institut national de l'audiovisuel.) Barthes's home is filmed and shown in greater detail here.

[43] Pascal Brissette, *La Malédiction littéraire. Du poète crotté au génie malheureux* (Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2005) and 'Poète malheureux, poète maudit, malédiction littéraire', *COnTEXTES. Revue de sociologie de la littérature*, (2008). URL: http://contextes.revues.org/1392. Accessed on 17 March 2015. See also the 'Romantic scenography' of the author as *poète mourant* (Lamartine) in José-Luis

Diaz, *L'Écrivain imaginaire. Scénographies auctoriales à l'époque romantique* (Paris: Champion, 2007), and cf. Meizoz, *La littérature en personne*, p. 84.

[44] '*Les ennuis de santé que vous avez eus en 1934, alors que vous n'aviez que dix-neuf ans – ont-ils été pour vous le commencement de la réflexion ?* […] J'ai débarqué dans cette maladie à un moment où elle frappait le sujet qui en était atteint d'un tabou très fort qui était le tabou de la contagion. […] J'ai alors passé beaucoup d'années au sanatorium des étudiants de Saint-Hilaire-du-Touvet dans l'Isère. J'ai également été dans un sanatorium suisse. J'ai connu là deux expériences. Il ne faut tout de même pas croire que lorsqu'on s'isole dans un sanatorium on devient une sorte de penseur solennel, ce n'est pas du tout ce qui se passe. La première expérience est celle de l'amitié : on vit avec des gens de votre âge pendant des années et souvent on cohabite à deux ou trois dans une même chambre : on se voit tous les jours et l'affectivité profonde qui se développe dans ce milieu-là, avec ses joies, ses problèmes, et même avec tout son aspect romanesque, vous soutient énormément. La seconde expérience est celle de la lecture. Que faire d'autre sinon lire. C'est à cette époque que j'ai beaucoup lu, particulièrement les classiques, français ou étrangers, et où j'ai commencé à écrire pour la revue des étudiants du sanatorium, *Existences*.' Roland Barthes, 'Radioscopie de Jacques Chancel', 15 February 1975 (35 min 30 sec - 38 min 19 sec), Radio France. (Paris, INA.) My translation from the transcription published in Barthes, OC IV, pp. 899-900.

[45] Roland Barthes, 'Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, Collège de France, January 7, 1977', trans. by Richard Howard, *October*, 8 (1979), 15-16.

[46] Roland Barthes, 'The Writer on Holiday', in *Mythologies*, ed. and trans. by Annette Lavers (New York: Noonday Press, 1991), p. 27. It is evident that a relation between the posture of the writer as amateur and the bourgeois myth of 'the writer on holiday' may deserve a specific reflection.

[47] Roland Barthes, *How to Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. by Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 109.

[48] Barthes, *How to Live Together*, p. 110.

[49] Barthes, *How to Live Together*, p. 13.

[50] Cf. concerning the hotel of Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*: 'bedrooms + a room for socializing' [*chambres séparées + lieu de convivalité*]. Barthes, *How to Live Together*, p. 16.

[51] Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 77-79.

[52] A complete exploration of André Gide's references within Barthes's work can be found in an article by Sam Ferguson, 'Forgetting Gide: A Study of Barthes's "Ursuppe"', *Barthes Studies*, 1 (2015), 17-34. URL:

http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/barthes/files/2015/11/FERGUSON-Forgetting-Gide.pdf. Accessed on 22 April 2017. Ferguson shows how Gide progressively disappears from Barthes's writing and finally serves a more intricate relationship with him as a 'model'. This conclusion should be considered for bringing a sort of Gidean posture into Barthes's *ethos* on all counts. See also Tiphaine Samoyault, 'Barthes et Gide', in *Roland Barthes: biographie* (Paris: Seuil, 2015), pp. 125-43.
[53] Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, p. 99.

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