

‘The antithesis of *inner* and *outer*: abolished’: Roland Barthes and the Politics of the Closet

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It is exceedingly easy to present a study of Roland Barthes’ texts in a similar manner as Barthes presents his own work to his readers. Barthes’ work can be considered fragmentary; each fragment can be thought of as a sort of expanded haiku. Barthes considers how haiku produce an ‘effect of truth’: he appears unconcerned about what that truth is in particular. This is important to consider for those who are interested in Barthes himself: he suggests that his ‘voice’, his own unique identity, is impossible to articulate, and he speaks instead of a ‘fascicule’, a bundle of ideas.¹ Herein is the same, hopefully possessing an ‘effect of truth’, a bundle of fragments that, together, reveals certain threads that will be followed, with a desire for revelation. Barthes writes:

Ultimately it is unimportant whether the text’s dispersion is rich here and poor there; there are nodes, blanks, many figures break off short. [...] But he who utters this discourse and shapes its episodes does not yet know that as a good cultural subject he should neither repeat nor contradict himself, nor take the whole for the part; all he knows is that what passes through his mind at a certain moment is *marked*, like the printout of a code.²

Even Barthes himself allows those that write about him to be inconsistent and to ‘break off short’. Hopefully the *mark* remains, though. What exactly is the mark in Barthes’ own writing? What sorts of ‘episodes’ are being shaped by Barthes in his writings?

‘Plural Beings’

In his study of Honoré de Balzac’s short story, *Sarrasine*, in his book *S/Z*, Barthes considers the narrative to be like the ‘gradual order of melody’ in a *fugue*, polyphonic, with various ‘voices’ occurring at the same time.³ Barthes goes so far as setting up a kind of musical table, with rows of music notes indicating ‘events’ which occur throughout the narrative, divided temporally into columns. Narrative as music, and the idea of multiple voices as part of a musical whole or texture, can align with Barthes’ own conception of the self, the conception of ‘plural beings’, multivalence in self-actualization.

In an interview with Japanese cultural critic Shigehiko Hasumi from 1972, Barthes is asked about being referred to as a ‘plural being’; he answers, ‘I’ve often spoken of the plural myself. In *S/Z*, for example.’ He continues to even question the possibility and desirability of a clear, single conception of self: ‘Clearly, it’s always a little tricky to speak of oneself as though one were oneself, isn’t it – as though one existed as a person, as a self.’⁴ What he means ultimately and what is key to understanding Barthes’ strategies and intellectual project as a whole, is that he finds the idea of the fixity of language intolerable. And a precise example of this is the stereotype. He states, ‘as soon as language acquires a certain consistency, [...] I feel stifled and I strive (this is the sense of my work) to try and go elsewhere. [...] *I want to move elsewhere* – that is to say, I become a bit unfaithful to my own language.’⁵ In *S/Z*, Barthes explores the statement, ‘*I read the text*.’ He states, ‘This ‘I’ which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite or, more precisely, lost.’⁶

Mirroring Barthes’ own question of ‘I read the text’, Nicholas de Villiers explores the phrase, ‘I would prefer not to.’ He does so in the preface of his book on Barthes and the notion of the ‘closet’, that is, the place of repressed and private sexuality from which one is often encouraged to escape. The phrase, ‘I would prefer not to’, is a ‘formula’ that he quotes from the character, Bartleby in a short story by Herman Melville. He draws from Deleuze in identifying the “‘queer’ effects’ of such a formula: the phrase ‘hollows out a zone of indetermination [...] that creates a vacuum within language [...] [and, for Bartleby,] no social position can be attributed.’⁷ de Villiers states that society has a controlling and classifying (or categorizing)

impulse that demands that people's sexuality be known (de Villiers insists that it is homophobia that demands to know the sexuality of homosexuals, and that demands 'outing' of those whose sexuality is not publicly observed).⁸ Thus, Barthes (along with Foucault and Warhol, in de Villiers' study) uses the strategy of 'opacity' against the impulse of 'confession' in order to work against this societal sense of control. He goes on, though, to suggest (through Foucault) that opacity *points to* homosexuality.⁹ D.A. Miller, in his book *Bringing Out Roland Barthes*, suggests that Barthes is 'closeted', and his silence in terms of his sexuality should be read as him being complicit or colluded with homophobia (de Villiers cites Leo Bersani who calls what Barthes does – or, more accurately, does *not*, do as 'The Gay Absence'.¹⁰ Miller writes, 'silence [...] would leave him [that is, the subject] all the more destitute of resources for resisting them [that is, homophobia]'.¹¹

Opacity and Enigma

Another way to conceive of opacity is in the notion of enigma, a central analytical hook in Barthes' exploration of *Sarrasine* in *S/Z*. As a part of the study, Barthes lays out the idea of a basic 'hermeneutic sentence', the method or model of the construction and eliciting of enigma in literature. With Balzac's *Sarrasine*, Barthes is exploring what is basically a story of a man's desiring for a woman. Barthes identifies the narrative's initial question and thus the presentation of the enigma, which involves a beautiful character referred to as La Zambinella: 'Who is she?' A part of this question has to do with the source of the de Lanty fortune. This initial question is followed by a number of 'delays' to the question's answer, which pull the reader along to turn the pages of the narrative in anticipation of the answer (Barthes outlines many of the delaying strategies: promise of an answer; snare; ambiguity; suspended answer; partial answer; and jammed answer). The thread of the enigma ends when there is revelation or disclosure: in the story, La Zambinella is revealed to be a (male) *castrato* presenting themselves as a woman. Even when La Zambinella is revealed to be a male and not the beautiful woman as presented, the protagonist Sarrasine chooses not to believe it: 'a snare can remain set after the truth has been revealed (Sarrasine continues to ignore La Zambinella's true sex even though it has been revealed to him)'.¹² The truth

of their identity, and the freedom that comes from that, serves to stir Sarrasine's anger, but does not provide any relief to La Zambinella. In fact, their life is in danger once their true identity is revealed.

de Villiers states that 'coming out of the closet' helps in 'understanding the connection between homosexuality, identity, and speech (usually conceived as authentic, true, and free expression of a formerly repressed sexuality)'.¹³ It is presumed that if one is in the closet, one is experiencing repression (and maybe even repressing others). Those out of the closet are able to express themselves truthfully. He defines 'coming out of the closet' as an almost universal metaphor in which society is able to articulate and understand the difference between expressed sexualities. And one position (usually 'out') is considered more authentic than the other. de Villiers states that he wants 'to move 'beyond' the closet as metaphor.' He considers how Barthes rejects the closet's privileges and how Barthes rejects what de Villiers calls a 'modern homosexual identity.' And, so, de Villiers calls Barthes (along with Foucault and Warhol) '*untimely*'.¹⁴

Barthes does not only *reject* the closet; rather, he moves *beyond* it. In *S/Z*, Barthes writes, 'The antithesis of *inner* and *outer*: abolished.'¹⁵ In other words, instead of the dichotomy of 'in' and 'out', there is *nothing*, as these conceptions are ended or destroyed. And it is unclear that anything remains to replace the dichotomy; beyond it, there is *nothing*. This is a utopian idea for Barthes, linked to his notion of tact, or what Kate Briggs calls '*délicatesse*':

where the neutral is imagined as a utopia (in grammar, the neutral or neuter is neither masculine nor feminine, neither active nor passive; in politics, Barthes sees it as a refusal to take sides on complex conflictual questions phrased in such a way as to permit only yes/no answers), *délicatesse* is the name given to the small-scale, everyday practice of values such as goodwill and attentiveness, what Barthes also calls 'sweetness' (*la douceur*).¹⁶

Briggs then clarifies the sorts of ways of being that Barthes is trying to espouse, quoting Tiphaine Samoyault; Barthes is adopting, in *délicatesse*, 'values in the form of behaviours that parry the already decided, the apparent self-evidence, the all-purpose explanation – and attend instead to those small, fleeting and fragile moments in life where, as Samoyault puts it, "individualities truly express themselves in their truth"'.¹⁷ In *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, Barthes

reiterates this idea in terms of compassion, in suffering with another person and without any pressure. He suggests this be called '*delicacy*', a healthy form of compassion: 'it touches lightly.'¹⁸

Politics

Barthes' multivalent nature, as well as this sense of 'touching lightly', is evident in his engagement with his academic colleagues and with French society. For instance, there has been some discussion of Barthes' position as being on the political left or on the political right, a discussion that evokes the two extremes of the 'closet' discourse, being 'in' or 'out.' In the case of the political stance one is either 'in' or 'out' of a particular political group or ideology: Barthes was not comfortably situated in either the left or the right camps. Barthes' political stance mirrors his own strategies around his sexuality (though made somewhat problematic in how he would express his own sense of 'morality' in the form of positions that work towards a greater societal good).

In 'Myth Today' (included in his *Mythologies*), Barthes explores the idea of 'myth on the right'. He states, 'The oppressed is nothing, he has only one language, that of his emancipation. [...] The oppressed *makes* the world, he has only an active, transitive (political) language.'¹⁹ Here, political language on the left is 'spoken to transform reality'. Charles Stivale suggest that 'to emphasize a strong position against language that could spawn myths, [...] Barthes maintains that revolutionary language cannot be mythical since it is a language of action [...] and not to preserve it [that is, reality] as an image.'²⁰ Stivale asks whether Barthes abandons his social critique with *Mythologies*; in particular, did his move to semiotics mean that Barthes abandoned the Marxist 'spin' of his earlier work (to use Stivale's word)?²¹ Stivale describes Barthes early on in his career as one writing in a 'rather rhizomatic manner, that is, shooting off laterally in various literary, theatrical and political fields'.²² Barthes was well-situated on the left: pieces of his writings were found in leftist publications (like *Combat* and *Les Lettres nouvelles*). He was also a proponent of progressive arts and the *avant-garde* in the 1950s. Even so, he was considered both *bourgeois* – an intellectual with cultural capital – and leftist, seemingly 'playing both sides.'²³ Stivale continues, 'This would mean to act (speak, write) in a way that itself does not create new masks, myths or meta-

languages, but rather that can furnish tools for concrete action on the left by the left.²⁴ In other words, though ‘playing both sides’, Barthes continues to try to transform the world.

Stivale suggests (drawing from Lawrence Grossberg) that, in *S/Z*, ‘in “re-writing” while also analysing Balzac’s short story, *Sarrasine*, Barthes develops a complex, multi-voiced and destabilizing mode of reading that “implicates the text as an event within a context of power, desire, and truth-effects”’. Thus, Barthes ‘deliberately [...] pursued the development of his status “in-between”, a position that holds out considerable promise for cultural as well as literary critique’.²⁵ Is Barthes’ ‘in-between’ (certainly reflected in his problematic position as *bourgeois* intellectual on the left) a sort of liminal position or something beyond dichotomies? Is it an attempt to bring this *délicatesse* into his societal context?

The Closet

Consider again Barthes’ words regarding ‘myth on the left’ and language: if the closet is the place of the oppressed, with the closeted possessing only the language of their emancipation, Barthes wants instead to possess a language ‘beyond’ the closet. Maurice Berger describes Barthes in a childhood picture in the arms of his mother (as seen in *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*) as ‘at once effeminate and boyish, graceful and gawky, a little man and a childish sissy’.²⁶ In his autobiography, Barthes creates a self-portrait that Berger then describes as ‘atomized into ever contingent identities and associations: middle class, desocialized, plump, slender, male, female, French, left-handed, intellectual, tubercular. [...] This resulted in a more pluralistic view of sexuality.’ He states that Barthes represents himself ‘between identities.’²⁷ Berger is suggesting, as is common with Barthes, that he is resisting being easily identified, categorized or characterized; instead, he is wishing to embody a ‘degree zero’, free from all sorts of constraints. This calls to mind Barthes’ notion of ‘the Neutral’, ‘a ‘suspension’ of the arrogant conflicts of meaning’.²⁸ This also recalls Briggs’ description of *délicatesse*: de Villiers’ use of the term ‘arrogant’ is appropriate in light of Barthes’ oppositional use of ‘tact’. This ‘degree zero’, a Barthesian non-language, is what exists beyond the language of the closet; it is here that Barthes is situated.

Barthes does not possess a clear 'coming out' story that would make him fit into the paradigm of the closet. The closest analog to this would be the posthumous publication of *Incidents* in 1987. Even so, *Incidents* does not acknowledge Barthes' 'closet'; rather, it invites the reader to experience the 'incidents' that Barthes provides, to immerse themselves in them. de Villiers comments that 'Barthes's critics manage to reduce his writing to the implicit confessions of a closeted homosexual.'²⁹ Barthes would also insert into his lectures what de Villiers calls 'racy' anecdotes from his personal correspondences, which no one in the room would know: these would not serve to 'out' him either.³⁰

Barthes is not embodying his own personal narrative of being 'in' or 'out.' Rather, he is attempting to do something more *beyond* the closet: he is not rejecting the metaphor so much as embracing the *nothingness* that exists both within it and beyond it (again, this utopian, Barthesian, ideal). In *S/Z*, Barthes writes about three routes through which one can enter the 'symbolic field', none of which should be held in higher regard than any of the others.³¹ Consider inserting 'in' and 'out' as two such routes, and 'beyond' as a third. Anyone is 'free' to choose any of these routes, and Barthes chooses 'beyond.' But his 'beyond' looks different; while it constitutes a place of nothingness, it is also a place of *not being*, that is, not being that which is expected, and of not being 'nailed down' (and, in turn, of being, then, 'degree zero').

Stivale cites Umberto Eco, suggesting that Barthes was not attempting to 'celebrate the ungraspability and perpetual slippage of meaning', but rather that he was using the *lexias* (that is, the divisions and categories) in *S/Z* in order to regulate and verify (to use Eco's words) the 'dialectic of pleasure'.³² And Barthes places himself in a kind of 'in-between' (as is indicated even in his problematic position as '*bourgeois* intellectual'), dealing with what Stivale calls the 'political real', politics in the context of 'life-as-language' with Barthes *living* in society.³³

S/Z

In the book, Barthes explores the idea of 'antithesis', which he suggests functions to 'consecrate (and domesticate) [...] the division between opposites'.³⁴ He suggests that the antithesis is a battle with the joining of

antithetical terms constituting what he calls a 'passage through the wall of the Antithesis', that is, a transgression. And a figure is then introduced into the story (it must be remembered that Barthes is exploring *Sarrasine* here). Here, then, is the compelling part: 'Hidden in the *recess*, between outside and inside, installed in the interior limit of adversation, spanning the wall of the Antithesis, the narrator brings this figure into play: he induces or supports a transgression.'³⁵ The narrator is then thrust into that wall, which then upsets the harmony of the antithesis; Barthes calls this 'mediation.' He writes,

As supplement, the body [of the narrator] is the site of the transgression effected by the narrative: it is at the level of the body that the two *inconciliables* of the Antithesis (outside and inside, cold and heat, death and life) are brought together, are made to touch, to mingle in the most amazing of figures in a composite substance (without *holding together*).³⁶

Consider, then, Barthes as 'narrator' in the narrative of his own life and writings. He is the mediation that enters into the wall of the antithesis, which upsets that harmony. And instead of having the clear opposites of inside and outside (in fact, in *S/Z*, Barthes here is talking about the dichotomy of 'salon', or inside, versus 'garden', or outside), one is left with the transgression, of the two sides together, an excess that is difficult to deal with. The result is a 'composite substance' but it does not *hold together*.

Nicholas de Villiers come to an interesting conclusion: 'But Barthes's desire for Neutral [...] need not be a symptom of the closet.' Instead, de Villiers suggests it is part of a 'queer desire' to be imprecise and thus remove the power of questioning.³⁷ de Villiers makes another enlightening comment (here criticizing the English translation of *The Neutral*, the collection of lectures Barthes presented at the *Collège de France* in 1977 and 1978, in which the translators use the term 'pickup'): 'It is not out of lack of feeling (the common idea that the Neutral is affectless) but out of a strong affect: the desire for the new, the unexpected, for difference – thus not "picking" or "choosing" but "cruising".'³⁸

Barthes' own life narrative can be seen as an example of jamming, an 'acknowledgment of insolubility'.³⁹ The enigma of Barthes' own sexuality might be 'proposed to be unresolved.'⁴⁰ The enigma fascinates and spellbinds; Barthes formulates these elements as seduction on the part of the enigma

which is transformed into pleasure for his reading audience. The enigma moves against the oppressive power of a society that demands answers to questions, or demands the revelation of 'truth', as well as the oppressive power of being concealed. The enigma repositions the power away from itself and subjects that power onto the reading audience. In the narrative that he uses as a case study, Barthes observes Sarrasine as being both freed and captured when he hears music, *in anticipation of* the entrance of La Zambinella, the object of his desire. Barthes states, 'The first (sensual) pleasure is initiatory: it serves as a basis for memory, repetition, ritual: afterwards, everything is organized to recapture this *first time*.'⁴¹ This statement suggests that there is a certain power at work, which demands that Sarrasine continue to be exposed to the enigma; the audience is seduced by the enigma, compelling the audience to repeat the experience. The pleasure of such an experience is evident in the returning of the audience to experience it again, that is, to continue to read the text, to turn the page and continually experience the enigma with the hope or desire of having the enigma revealed (this can include Barthes as well as his works). Barthes suggests that the pleasure can even come from simple proximity to the desired object: 'Proximity to the stage, and thus to the desired object, serves as a (fortuitous) point of departure for a series of hallucinatory feelings which will lead Sarrasine to solitary pleasure.'⁴² So, a reading of Barthes' texts functions in the same way. But revelation of the enigma ends this pull of desire.

Regarding removing the power of the question, Barthes' strategy could be that of a 'scrap of an answer', in the form of *Incidents*. In *S/Z*, he identifies a point in the narrative where a character provides a partial answer to a central question, but the character holds back the truth. In *Incidents*, the truth is 'submerged in a list', and it is swept along with Barthes' descriptions of travelling and of people that he comes across. Could Barthes' narrative be a form of 'ineffective solving', or, as he finally calls it, an 'equivocation'?⁴³ The terms suggest concealing truth or avoiding commitment; the equivocation is a 'mixture of truth and snare which frequently, while focusing on the enigma, helps to thicken it.'⁴⁴

Inside and Outside

Consider Barthes' discussion of a moment in the story when La Zambinella is confronted by Sarrasine who has constructed a statue of them. Barthes writes, 'the statue invites the plenitude and truth of the *inside* (which is why it is a tragedy that this inside is empty, castrated)'.⁴⁵ Following this, Barthes explores how de Balzac constructs the text: 'What grammatical gender to apply to the castrato? The neuter, probably, but French has none; thus this alternative he/she, the oscillation of which, as in physics, produces a kind of average sex, equidistant from masculine and feminine.'⁴⁶ Here, Barthes is particularly dissatisfied with the dichotomies presented to him, whether it is the 'oscillation' between masculine and feminine (he feels the term 'neuter' would be better for La Zambinella) or the notion of inside and outside. What would Barthes suggest, then, when confronted with the 'oscillation' between inside (that is, closeted) and outside (out of the closet)? What is the equidistant (or 'neutral') option? Andy Stafford suggests that the text performs an emancipative action: '*S/Z* can be seen as Barthes' "Houdini" act, in which the passage from the seminar to the essay involves a "locking" of Balzac's story into a relatively small number of codes, only then for a liberated and polysemic reading-rewriting of the text to emerge.'⁴⁷ The 'locked closet' is that from which Barthes is attempting to escape.

Barthes continues to suggest that, for the protagonist of the story, the statue should have contained a real woman; in the story, referring to the statue, Sarrasine exclaims, 'And it's an illusion', before he attempts to destroy the statue with a hammer, and La Zambinella with his sword.⁴⁸ Barthes ends the section by stating, 'writing extenuates still further the hallucination of the *inside*, for it has no other substance than the interstice'.⁴⁹

This need not only be a reference to some sort of void or lack. On the one hand, Barthes suggests the 'castration' of the inside, the deceptive and destructive nature of what is (ultimately not) at the core of the statuesque image (that is, the wrongly conceived idea of La Zambinella as a woman, as the locus of all of Sarrasine's desires). This 'inside' is empty. On the other hand, Barthes' reference to the act of writing, that of creation (perhaps not unlike sculpture?), also seems to support what he calls the hallucination of something there on the inside. It makes sense that, just as he refers to the neuter in his analysis of de Balzac's referencing of La Zambinella, the inside is

a *space* 'equidistant' on all sides from what someone from the outside might think. If, for Barthes, the inside of the closet (also, using La Zambinella and the story as an analogue) is a construction that is made up through expression (be that sculpting or writing), then Barthes would be comfortable with the inside being empty. This emptiness, though, is not a space of nothingness, but rather a space of infinite possibility. It is a sort of liminal space, not devoid of meaning but pregnant with infinite possibilities. And Barthes points also that the 'outside', that emancipation, is empty as well.

Barthes describes the dramatic narrative of a story as a game with two actors, the snare – that is, 'a kind of deliberate evasion of the truth' (an enigmatic strategy) – and the truth itself (Barthes states that, in *Sarrasine*, the truth is 'Zambinella is a castrato').⁵⁰ Of these two players, he writes,

At first a tremendous indetermination rules their encounters, the wandering is wide of the mark; gradually, however, the two networks move closer together, co-penetrate, determination is completed and with it the subject; disclosure is then the final stroke by which the initial 'probable' shifts to the 'necessary': the game is ended, the drama has its dénouement, the subject correctly 'predicated' (fixed): the discourse can do nothing more than fall silent.⁵¹

Here, Barthes is saying that, once the truth is revealed, the story ends: for *Sarrasine*, once he and the readers realize that 'Zambinella is a castrato', there is nothing more to tell. The subject is fixed. If Barthes' life is also a dramatic game, then, also, the snare of Barthes is the opaque treatment of his sexuality. The truth is 'Barthes is a homosexual' and the snare is that Barthes is opaque. These move closer together, with determination coming with the publication of *Incidents*. But this is after Barthes' death, and so, at least according to *S/Z*, the discourse must continue to speak; it cannot fall silent as the subject remains unfixed. This is reminiscent of Barthes' use of the term 'sport' as opposed to 'strategy', as pointed out by de Villiers.⁵² Barthes writes that he 'makes sure that language does not thicken, that it doesn't *stick*' (even though he also mentions, in *S/Z*, that the equivocation serves to 'thicken' the enigma).⁵³

Barthes' enigmatic strategies (or 'sports') find their manifestation even in the present. For instance, historically, Janelle Monáe has mobilized

performativity as a way to problematize her gender, pushing against a conventional female image in popular music. Monáe would wear loose-fitting pants and full suits, including completely buttoned dress shirts and often bowties, concealing all parts of her body. Even her hair was styled into a tight bouffant style, more akin to Elvis Presley or Morrissey; she would release her hair (or ‘let her hair down’) only in rare live performance moments (when she would take the liberty to reveal her ‘manic’ femininity). With the album *Dirty Computer* (from 2018), Monáe sheds (literally) the masculine dress of her previous persona(e). Any enigma that surrounded her in the era of androids and ‘jookin’ dancing is suddenly seen as commonplace, open and revealed in both the album’s music and video material. Here, Monáe bares her body (almost to the point of nudity), and openly expresses her bisexuality, including her relationship (at least on the *Dirty Computer* film) with actor Tessa Thompson. Like Barthes, she seems here not to refuse the closet, but to suspend it (to use Heather Love’s description of Barthes’ strategies), going beyond the categories, declaring her extraordinary self as commonplace.⁵⁴ And such a presentation calls for egalitarianism.

A Haze

Remember the description of a young Barthes in his mother’s arms, effeminate and boyish at the same time, embodying what he would continue to embody in his life: the space at the conflation of different identities. The dichotomies of identity become, then, a sort of space that does not possess any one identity particularly well. Sarrasine, himself, states (of the emptiness of the core of the statue of the figure he thought was a woman), ‘For me, you have wiped women from the earth.’⁵⁵ And, so, Barthes also wipes the dichotomy of the closet from the earth – both inside and outside, and all ‘routes’ leading to *nothing*. Along with this, Barthes wipes out, at the least, conventional conceptions of homosexuality from *his* earth as well. The result is not necessarily tragic, but rather, emancipating.

de Villiers suggests that Barthes’ opacity points to his homosexuality, a kind of haiku that presents the ‘effect of truth’ while being a fascicles, an enigma, a haze (de Villiers calls it ‘a *non-savoir*, a non-knowledge’) in which nothing is easily defined.⁵⁶ And that is where Barthes is truly free.

Notes

- ¹ Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, trans. by Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 28.
- ² Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), p. 4.
- ³ Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (New York: Hill and Wang, 1974), pp. 29-30.
- ⁴ Roland Barthes, 'For the Liberation of a Pluralist Thinking', in *'Simply a Particular Contemporary': Interviews, 1970-79*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Seagull Books, 2015), p. 89.
- ⁵ Barthes, 'For the Liberation of a Pluralist Thinking', pp. 90-91. Emphasis added.
- ⁶ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 10.
- ⁷ Nicholas de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet: Queer Tactics in Foucault, Barthes, and Warhol* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. ix-xi. de Villiers is quoting Gilles Deleuze, 'Bartleby; or, The Formula', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, trans. by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), p. 73.
- ⁸ de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet*, p. 3.
- ⁹ de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet*, p. 12.
- ¹⁰ Leo Bersani, 'The Gay Absence', in *Homos* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 31-76.
- ¹¹ D.A. Miller, *Bringing Out Roland Barthes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 25.
- ¹² Barthes, *S/Z*, pp. 84-85. The de Lanty fortune comes from La Zambinella's career as a *castrato*.
- ¹³ de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet*, p. 2.
- ¹⁴ de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet*, p. 9.
- ¹⁵ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 215.
- ¹⁶ Kate Briggs, *This Little Art* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2017), p. 324.
- ¹⁷ Briggs is translating an entry on 'Délicatesse' in Tiphaine Samoyault, 'Lexique Roland Barthes', in *Roland Barthes: L'inattendu, Le Monde Hors-Série 26* (Paris: Société éditrice du Monde, 2015), p. 113.
- ¹⁸ Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, p. 58.
- ¹⁹ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Richard Howard and Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), 262.
- ²⁰ Charles J. Stivale, 'Mythologies Revisited: Roland Barthes and the Left', *Cultural Studies*, 16.3 (2002), 464.
- ²¹ Stivale, 'Mythologies Revisited', 459.
- ²² Stivale, 'Mythologies Revisited', 460.

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- ²³ Stivale, 'Mythologies Revisited', 460-62.
- ²⁴ Stivale, 'Mythologies Revisited', 466.
- ²⁵ Stivale, 'Mythologies Revisited', 471.
- ²⁶ Maurice Berger, 'A Clown's Coat', *Artforum*, (April 1994), 81.
- ²⁷ Berger, 'A Clown's Coat', 82.
- ²⁸ Nicholas de Villiers, 'A Great Pedagogy of Nuance: Roland Barthes's The Neutral', *Theory & Event*, 8.4 (2005), available online at <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/192272> (accessed on 17 May 2020).
- ²⁹ Nicholas de Villiers, 'The Amicable Return of Roland Barthes', *University of Minnesota Press Blog* (18 July 2012), available online at <http://uminnpressblog.com/2012/07/18/the-amicable-return-of-roland-barthes/> (accessed 12 August 2020).
- ³⁰ de Villiers, 'The Amicable Return of Roland Barthes'.
- ³¹ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 215.
- ³² Stivale, 'Mythologies Revisited', 472.
- ³³ Stivale, 'Mythologies Revisited', 473.
- ³⁴ Barthes, *S/Z*, pp. 26-27.
- ³⁵ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 27.
- ³⁶ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 28.
- ³⁷ de Villiers, 'A Great Pedagogy'.
- ³⁸ de Villiers, 'A Great Pedagogy'.
- ³⁹ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 76.
- ⁴⁰ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 47.
- ⁴¹ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 108.
- ⁴² Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 108.
- ⁴³ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 38.
- ⁴⁴ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 75.
- ⁴⁵ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 208.
- ⁴⁶ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 209.
- ⁴⁷ Andy Stafford, 'Barthes's Menippean Moment: Creative Criticism 1966-70', in *Interdisciplinary Barthes*, ed. by Diana Knight (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), p. 240. Clearly, Stafford is not engaging with Barthes' sexuality in his own essay, but, among other topics, with how Balzac is approached by French critics and society, and how Barthes was pushing against that.
- ⁴⁸ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 252.
- ⁴⁹ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 252.
- ⁵⁰ Barthes, *S/Z*, pp. 187-88. Barthes defines the snare earlier on p. 75.
- ⁵¹ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 188.
- ⁵² de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet*, p. 20.

⁵³ Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), p. 162.

⁵⁴ Love describes the figures that de Villiers discusses in his book on opacity, including Barthes, as ‘shy, matte, neutral figures who did not so much refuse the closet as suspend it’ in a review that appears at the end of de Villiers’ blog post, ‘The Amicable Return of Roland Barthes.’

⁵⁵ Barthes, *S/Z*, p. 252.

⁵⁶ de Villiers, *Opacity and the Closet*, p. 80.

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