

# The Rhetorical Apprenticeship of Roland Barthes<sup>1</sup>

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Can we still speak of an *apprentissage rhétorique*, however quaint and curious its ring? Although Roland Barthes once expressed hopes that ‘literary historians would reconstruct [...] the rhetorical apprenticeship of writers’, Barthes’ own lifelong apprenticeship in rhetoric – as ancient, classic, and modern art, and as science, theory, practice, and monumental social institution – remains underestimated by rhetoric scholars for largely understandable reasons.<sup>2</sup> These include specific issues such as Barthes’ structuralist epithet and its terminological baggage, a capricious and patchy translation history, and long-unpublished rhetoric texts (notably ‘The Future of Rhetoric’).<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the Anglophone reception of Barthes favoured his most radical offerings, stunting his emergence as a genuine rhetorician (an ostensibly bygone vocation). After recent scholarship in *Barthes Studies* boosting his rhetorical dimensions – perhaps a rhetorical ‘bone structure’, as John McKeane hints – a bolder claim becomes possible to formulate.<sup>4</sup> Rather than a structuralist who merely adopted rhetorical interests in the 1960s, Barthes can be understood as a lifelong rhetorician, rhetor, and thinker of rhetoric’s institutional nature, who dove into structuralism and other philosophical currents, although often rebuffed by the ‘high’ or ‘core’ structuralists for his syncretism and alleged lack of rigor.<sup>5</sup> Identifying him with rhetoric – from the 1940s and onward – not only clarifies certain nagging uncertainties about his methods and movements, but illuminates the origins of key Barthesian innovations and fixations that linguistics-centered approaches have explained rather awkwardly.

Although Barthes’ *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *actio* would each generate a worthy article, here I am most interested in his *inventio*: rhetoric as profound *basso continuo* upon which he improvised while his other interests changed. Much can be gained by observing that rhetoric formed a dear, constant, and insatiable *topos* for his thought, enduring amidst his mutable judgements of *l’empire rhétorique*.<sup>6</sup> Charting this creative enterprise ultimately

outweighs the interminable taxonomic game of classifying Barthes into rhetorical, structuralist, or other vocations.

Confounded by the term ‘structuralist’ (and its whole eccentric family), rhetoric scholars inadvertently miss things. The significant rhetoric-structuralism rapprochement of the 1960s (Barthes, Gérard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov and others) made it seem that structuralism engendered a (re)discovery of rhetoric.<sup>7</sup> Yet as we will see, this directionality also runs in the opposite direction for Barthes (who was fascinated by the totality of rhetoric, not just the *elocutio* in vogue). As virtually every synoptic account of Barthes makes clear, he became deeply caught up in the 1960s boom of structuralism, although his journalistic promotion of structuralism gets readily conflated with being a prototypical structuralist. Captured by Barthes’ strictest definition, structuralism means ‘systematic research that has a semantic frame of reference and is inspired by the linguistic model’.<sup>8</sup> In practice, however, sometimes Barthes’ structuralism simply entailed bracketing the pursuit of fixed meanings to listen to the ‘shudder of an enormous machine’ that produces meanings, a flexible characterisation Barthes develops from Hegel’s take on Greek divination practices.<sup>9</sup>

This relaxed sense of structuralism readily blurs into rhetorical analysis for good reason. An early admirer of the rhetoric-loving Paul Valéry, Barthes remained interested in rhetoric for almost four decades – a lifelong apprenticeship predating and supporting his structuralist passions. Underneath the bewildering variety of modern ‘theoretical’ reference points, Barthes maintained a classical concern for the ethical stakes of oratory and pedagogy (with modern criticisms), a sprawling ‘Greek network’<sup>10</sup> of terms (threading through his whole career), and an eloquence that positioned him in the ‘rearguard of the avant-garde’ (as he once characterized his writing).<sup>11</sup> From a key rhetorical manifesto of 1946 up to his Collège de France lectures in 1980, the question of how to relate the ‘former’ (*ancienne*) rhetoric to modern intellectual currents beguiled Barthes, generating a slew of novel ideas without settling into the definitive judgement that his aide-mémoire seemingly reaches in its final paragraph.<sup>12</sup>

## New Evidence and the Old Barthes

Before pointing out previous scholarship's inadequate grasp of Barthes' roots in rhetoric and their spread through his subsequent career, we should remember that scholars writing between the 1970s and 1990s could not access certain crucial pieces of evidence. First, the *Œuvres complètes* (1993–95, enhanced in 2002), which I examined in full for rhetorical concepts and terminology. Second, the collection of letters and two key rhetoric texts contained in *Album* (2015). Third, the traces of his *diplôme d'études supérieures* (DES) on Aeschylus, items that did not make it into the *OC* such as untranscribed interviews, and details emerging in the latest biography by Tiphaine Samoyault. Fourth, a general attentiveness to the classical-rhetorical Barthes in this journal (particularly vol. 5). Finally, Barthes' seminars of 1964–69, which will soon be published by Claudia Amigo Pino.<sup>13</sup> I cannot exhaust his explicit and implicit rhetorical and related classical references within this article (see appended chronology), so I will highlight a selection of pressing areas, particularly those that draw upon rhetoric as *topos*.

Among scholars based in the Anglosphere, perhaps Peter France presented the earliest and most tidy summary of the overall Barthes-rhetoric relationship, which he divides into three dimensions.<sup>14</sup> 'Rhetoric as Model' situates rhetoric as a generally worthy proto-structuralist discipline that 'privileged the impersonal system against the notions of personal expression or creativity'. 'Rhetoric as Enemy' concerns three Barthesian objections: rhetoric's aristo-bourgeois power and status, rhetoric's all-too-tidy separation of form and content, and the 'monological' domination inherent in oratory and pedagogy. Finally, 'Rhetoric as Springboard' concerns Barthes own rhetorical-writerly practice: France contends that Barthes is more Montaigne than Cicero, 'making original use of an old art, indulging himself quite consciously in classical forms, but never in a simple-minded way. The old rhetoric is subverted and renovated, but it retains its power to affect the reader'.<sup>15</sup> France's intuitions proved largely correct as they extend to newer materials, but more needs to be done, including putting some distance between Barthes and the '-isms' with which he has been associated. In particular, I will be showing that the 'structuralist' label partly conceals some of his unique intellectual characteristics that are better associated with his rhetorical apprenticeship.

In Paris, scholars were more aware of Barthes' rhetorical passions than their counterparts abroad. Before Marc Fumaroli pushed French rhetorical studies toward history, he occasionally attended Barthes' theory-heavy rhetoric seminar, deeming it 'brilliant, mais agaçant'.<sup>16</sup> 'Barthes spent his life', according to his student Antoine Compagnon, 'endeavouring to revive rhetoric, until the moment when he realized what he was doing and expressly devoted a seminar to it'; he 'missed rhetoric, just as [Jean] Paulhan missed it in *Les Fleurs de Tarbes*, but he did not know what it was'.<sup>17</sup> Indeed 'The art of a writer like Roland', as Compagnon recalls, is one of 'seizing the occasion, *kairos*, a notion we often discussed'.<sup>18</sup> Alongside Compagnon, perhaps the most celebratory treatment of rhetoric emerges in Phillipe Rogers' *Roland Barthes, roman*; Michel Beaujour's *Miroirs d'encre* treats the rhetorical Barthes more harshly. In sum, French critics were well aware of Barthes' rhetorical excavations despite certain qualms as to his methods and purposes.

Yet the most genuine invitations to understand Barthes as a rhetorician come from the man himself. Like his friend Foucault, Barthes hinted at his affinity with the sophists in his Collège de France lectures.<sup>19</sup> Across his works, Barthes' often-allusive orientation towards rhetoric hints, frustratingly, that we are seeing a mere introduction to the real work yet to come. He indeed mocks himself for his habit of 'providing "introductions", "sketches", "elements", postponing the "real" book till later'. One of these books he imagined or flirted with was 'A History of Rhetoric', and he notes that this 'foible', this habit of anticipation, 'has a rhetorical name: *prolepsis*'. Yet these books – 'a History of Rhetoric, A History of Etymology, a new Stylistics, an Aesthetics of textual pleasure' and so on – are 'never abandoned [...] they fulfil themselves, partially, indirectly, *as gestures*, through themes, fragments, articles'.<sup>20</sup> Proleptic as Barthes was, hundreds of fragments on rhetoric await the inclined reader despite his failure to deliver a dedicated monograph.

### Initiation: 1940s

The *doxa* holds that Barthes' initiation into 'theory' happens in late 1940s, when he takes the term 'degree zero' from Viggo Brøndal circa 1947, and after meeting the savvy Algirdas Julien Greimas in Alexandria in 1949, begins

reading Saussure, Hjelmslev, and linguistics in general.<sup>21</sup> But in 1946, Barthes penned a remarkable text called ‘The Future of Rhetoric’, a manifesto for why rhetoric should *have* a future: the first smoking gun for a ‘rhetorical Barthes’. Long before Barthes spars with the legacy of Gustave Lanson as upheld by Raymond Picard, ‘The Future of Rhetoric’ argues for an atavistic form of what would be later called *nouvelle critique*. Though vague and promissory, this text intimates a remarkable idea: rhetoric as a basis for ‘theory’, as a potential *science* – in the relaxed French sense – of the human sciences.

At first glance, the ‘The Future of Rhetoric’ mainly expounds a critique of Lansonism, the pedagogical climate of the later Third Republic. Lansonism promoted the historical, philological study of literature as a positivist, democratic, and republican-compatible replacement for rhetorical composition methods associated with Jesuit humanism and its aristocratic baggage.<sup>22</sup> Having recently traversed the Lansonian Sorbonne, Barthes writes:

Within the framework of Lansonism ... the traditional distinction between *le fond* and *la forme* – content and form – blossomed. [...] Form is always the poor cousin; it prompts only a short, vague commentary, a kind of false window for symmetry. Philology, which nevertheless has the merit of rigor and of historic spirit, restricts itself to the chronology of forms and does not try to penetrate the verbal automatism belonging to a writer.<sup>23</sup>

In this early manifesto, Barthes seeks to part ways with the ‘scientific spirit’ of Lanson’s historical method: its claim of scientificity represents its ‘most debatable feature’, ‘authoriz[ing] [...] the triumph of the letter over the spirit, the secondary over the essential, collation over organized explanation’.<sup>24</sup> Barthes wants to retain Lanson’s approach as an ‘available’ option, but fundamentally, it is ‘unsatisf[ying]’ and risks a ‘tyranny of *influence, milieu, rapprochement*’.<sup>25</sup> He perceives a new methodology in the convergence between a statistics-heavy rhetorical criticism (tallying up figures) and experimental psychology.<sup>26</sup> Although his later work never pursues this proto-computational and empiricist approach, his scientific urges very much endure and evolve in the coming decades.

What incited Barthes’ long rhetorical ‘voyage’?<sup>27</sup> When he wrote ‘The Future of Rhetoric’ in the spring of 1946, he proposed rhetoric’s rehabilitation after his own rehabilitation in the Leysin sanatorium. He had not yet read

Jean Paulhan, the often-hidden hegemon of French letters at *La NRF*. Barthes would have likely first encountered classical rhetoric in reading primary texts during his education from the *lycée* onwards.<sup>28</sup> Yet Paul Valéry not only exposed Barthes to rhetoric, but treated it quite favourably, and thus likely represents the main *éminence grise* backing the young Barthes' interests. As far back as 1932, the teenage Barthes excitedly referred to Valéry as a poetic 'go[d]'.<sup>29</sup> Other important classical influences include André Gide, his 'original language' as he reflects in *Roland Barthes*,<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche (circa *Birth of Tragedy*), and the Hellenist Paul Mazon, translator of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Homer, and Hesiod, and according to Barthes, was 'the only teacher I loved and admired' as a student.<sup>31</sup> Extrapolating from his early life, we might envision Barthes on the path to becoming a Hellenist or a more conventional professor of French literature. Yet after contracting tuberculosis, what Barthes could not become was a *normalien*: mandatory medical testing at the ENS meant that Barthes need not bother preparing himself with its entrance exams. Instead he studied classics at the Sorbonne, putting him on a trajectory of training, expertise, and legitimation distinct from those of Sartre, Derrida, Foucault and the other travelers of the *voie royale*.<sup>32</sup>

The mature Barthes seems to confirm Valéry's tutelage for young Barthes. 'Literature', he claims, 'didn't need Roman Jakobson to tell it it was language – the whole of classical Rhetoric, up to the work of Paul Valéry, attests to the fact.'<sup>33</sup> In particular, the seminar session 'Valéry and Rhetoric' (1965 or 1966) demonstrates that Valéry and his 'profound, serious' conception of rhetoric meant much to Barthes overall.<sup>34</sup> These later reflections, however, cannot prove a 1940s relationship. More significantly, Valéry embedded himself in some of Barthes' earliest intellectual experiences – he met him as a boy and attended his inaugural lecture at the Collège de France in December 1937.<sup>35</sup> According to Valéry, 'Literature is, and cannot be anything but, a kind of extension and application of certain properties of language', which became a consequential and familiar dictum for the rhetoric-structuralism rapprochement.<sup>36</sup>

Valéry lamented the disappearance of rhetoric from teaching, a complaint that Barthes seemingly internalized at a young age. The poet-critic explains how the figures of classical rhetoric reveal the 'nascent state' of language: 'The formation of figures is inseparable from that of language itself, all of whose "abstract" words are obtained by some misuse or shift in signification, followed by forgetting the primitive sense. The poet who

multiplies the figures thus only finds language in its *nascent state*.<sup>37</sup> The young Barthes had wanted to see ‘literature [...] restored to the practice of a language’,<sup>38</sup> true to Valéry’s conception: ‘Language [...] is a creation of practice’.<sup>39</sup> Gide perhaps did more for Barthes’ overall style, but Valéry largely set the terms of the linguistic and critical problems. Barthes drew an epigram for his DES from Valéry’s *Tel Quel I*: ‘Ancient rhetoric considered as ornaments and artifices those figures and relations which successive refinements by poetry have come to call essential; and which the future progress in analysis will one day designate as effects of deep properties of what we might call *formal sensibility*.’<sup>40</sup> Barthes not only dedicated himself to this ‘future progress’, but continued certain Valéryean vendettas. For example, the poet dubbed historians of literature ‘prolix mutes’, a grudge that Barthes will sometimes continue against the Lansonian legacy.

Though Valéryean poetics represented a vital ‘synchronic’ dimension of rhetoric, the young Barthes also began considering rhetoric’s historical, political, and institutional status, associated with *l’écriture classique*. For a time during the 1940s, Barthes came close to an uncritical relationship to ‘the classics’. His ‘Plaisir aux classiques’ (1944) for instance, explains rhetoric’s glory in the seventeenth century, the ‘key to every excellence’: ‘The multiform and methodical investigations of classical rhetoric towards the maxim, eloquence, the treatise and the dialogue, I read as an essential attempt of the mind to renew the myth of Orpheus and tie objects and unruly men to speech.’<sup>41</sup> Such is the very first reference to rhetoric in Barthes’ *Œuvres complètes*: affirmative, backward-looking, and embedded in an essay with enough clichés to render it rather foreign to the typical Barthes reader who might begin with *Writing Degree Zero* (1953) or later works. Whereas ‘Plaisir aux classiques’ displays little political awareness, a mere three years later he mounts a political critique of *clarté française* in ‘Should Grammar Be Killed Off?’ (1947), culminating in *Writing Degree Zero*’s claim that ‘classical writing is, needless to say, a class writing’.<sup>42</sup> Henceforth Barthes will often associate periods of rhetoric with sociopolitical configurations.

### Rhetoric in *Writing Degree Zero* (1950s)

Brash and peculiar, the Barthes of *Writing Degree Zero* resembles, we could say, a Sartre intrigued by rhetoric and language – a ‘committed’ Sartre with a dash of Paulhan, who perceived French letters as a struggle between ‘Rhetoricians’ (who trust or love words) and ‘Terrorists’ (who distrust or hate words).<sup>43</sup> *Writing Degree Zero*’s anxieties about engaged literature play out over *langue*, *style*, *écriture* and a napkin-sketch history of rhetoric.<sup>44</sup> Barthes elaborates, for the first time, an important hypothesis linking the death of rhetoric to the birth of modern literature: ‘It was at the very moment when treatises on rhetoric aroused no more interest, towards the middle of the nineteenth century, that classical writing ceased to be universal and that modern modes of writing came into being’; for ‘classical writers [...] the only thing in question was rhetoric, namely the ordering of discourse in such a way as to persuade’.<sup>45</sup> But over the last century, Barthes claims, writers from Mallarmé to the Surrealists are not undertaking ‘rhetorical achievement or some bold use of vocabulary’ but rather the ‘call[ing] into question’ of ‘the existence of Literature itself’.<sup>46</sup> He describes an effectively Terrorist sect who has ‘undermined literary language’: ‘for some writers, language, the first and last way out of the literary myth, finally restores what it had hoped to avoid’.<sup>47</sup> This same logic permeates Paulhan’s *The Flowers of Tarbes*. To this quasi-terrorism, Barthes opposes the rhetoric of ‘craftsmanlike writing’ (*écriture artisanale*).<sup>48</sup> Barthes’ tastes leaned much more toward Rhetoricians such as Gide and Valéry and away from the Terrorists, who fuelled and were fuelled by a bundle of linguistic anxieties between the wars.<sup>49</sup>

### *Mythologies* (1950s)

After this grounding in the relatively obscure pre-*Mythologies* era, we can now turn to his better-known 1950s work. Even a book as famous as *Mythologies* – published in 1957, with parts appearing as early as 1952 – has not been particularly well connected to his earlier thinking, partly because of his troublesome essay ‘Myth Today’ appended to the myth analyses themselves.<sup>50</sup>



This famous essay, a retroactive theorization, cannot be deemed a trustworthy guide to the myth analyses that Barthes undertook earlier: as he later put it, ‘the method is not very scientific and did not pretend to be so; that’s why the methodological introduction only came later, after reading Saussure’.<sup>51</sup> Yet reading *Mythologies* in light of his letters, his dissertation on Aeschylus, and especially his affinity towards rhetorical analysis, the analytic art practiced by Barthes appears much more intuitive and arguably more elegant than the heavy-handed semiotic framework developed in ‘Myth Today’.

Why *myth* in the first place, we might ask? Why did Barthes take this as his unit or object instead of, for instance, an update on Flaubert’s *idée reçue*, or a more Marxist notion of ideology? At first, one would imagine that Barthes’ myths have nothing to do with Greek myths. He indeed takes pains in ‘Myth Today’ to strip the terms *myth* and *mythology* of their classical connotations; anything can be a myth; no magical, divine, or supernatural senses are implied. Yet Barthes began considering various mythological and magical forms of thinking at the time of his DES in a deeply classical context, making this era crucial to investigate.

In his DES entitled ‘Evocations and Incantations in Greek Tragedy’ (1941), Barthes becomes fixated upon the ‘magic’ power of the word: the ‘intrinsic power of the word is enormous, once used it has incalculable consequences’:

The origin of this dissertation is the aim to study a number of aspects of the problem of musical catharsis in Greek tragedy. [...] This meant returning to the study of those incantations and evocations in which, by word, gesture, sound and thought, the man-actor tries to have an effect upon the gods or the dead.<sup>52</sup>

A few years later, in a letter to his closest friend Philippe Rebeyrol, Barthes shifts from pursuing ‘the word’ in the context of Greek tragedy to understanding the whole of literature using the ‘mythological value of the word’, moving from ‘magic to art, to poetry, and to rhetoric’.<sup>53</sup> Barthes begins transforming the Hellenic context of magic, myth, and rhetoric to a modern one.

When it comes to the myth analyses that would be published in the early to mid 1950s, we should note that myth analysis works largely without semiotics and can instead function via rhetorical analysis.<sup>54</sup> In a sense, Barthes

tries to ascertain the forms of an argument within a myth. In some cases, this is quite literally an argument made by certain individuals. In 'Blind and Dumb Criticism', Barthes maps out the common argumentation of critics: 'I don't understand [Marxism or existentialism], therefore you are idiots.'<sup>55</sup> More commonly, however, Barthes works with a dispersed, collective discourse, whose 'rhetor' is the (*petite*) *bourgeoisie*. As he later put it, 'What defines *Mythologies* is a systematic and tireless assault on a type of monster I called *la petite bourgeoisie* (to the point of turning it into a myth).'<sup>56</sup> This is not, in essence, a 'semiotic' assault. The loosely Marxist perspective combined with sage rhetorical insights perhaps resembles Kenneth Burke (for instance, his 'Journalistic Language: Reading While You Run') more than applied semiotics.<sup>57</sup>

In *Mythologies*' first and perhaps most famous example, 'The World of Wrestling', the wrestlers' physique 'constitutes a basic sign'; but there is no rigorous semiotic notion of a sign here.<sup>58</sup> However, Barthes deploys concepts emerging from the dramatic and rhetorical material of the DES era: the 'natural meaning' of wrestling's rhythm 'is that of rhetorical amplification'; 'Wrestling presents man's suffering with all the amplification of tragic masks.'<sup>59</sup> Though of course he radically shifted towards petit-bourgeois society rather than Greek tragedy and French literature, he did not simply jettison his rhetorical and classical disposition from the 1940s. Here emerged the nexus of myth, mythology, and mythical/magical words/signifiers, suggesting that *Mythologies*, at least in its title and key terms, would not exist without these formative Greek years.

'Myth Today' embraces Saussure and speaks incessantly of signs, signifiers, signifieds, and signification. Perhaps the most quotable and influential insight of 'Myth Today' is its discovery of 'the very principle of myth', which is that myth 'transforms history into nature'.<sup>60</sup> However, in one of the least quoted passages, Barthes claims that 'it is through their rhetoric that bourgeois myths outline the general prospect of this pseudo-physis which defines the dream of the contemporary bourgeois world'.<sup>61</sup> We might thus modify his famous decree: myth *rhetorically* transforms history into nature or 'pseudo-physis'. Furthermore, Barthes admits that the 'rhetorical forms' of bourgeois myth are always accessible even though 'we cannot yet draw up the list of the dialectical forms'. These rhetorical forms correspond to the forms of 'mythical signifier'.<sup>62</sup> Thus the linkage between myth or magic and rhetoric

again returns, but unlike the letter of 1945 and the DES, Barthes speaks of the (mythical) 'signifier' in place of the (magic or mythological) 'word'.

Barthes then elaborates seven heterogenous 'figures' of myth, although they should not be called 'figures' strictly speaking: they are essentially macroscopic argumentative or logical patterns rather than microscopic syntactic-semantic twists.<sup>63</sup> Some have analogues in traditional logical fallacies; for instance, neither-norism (*ninisme*) resembles the *argument to moderation*. Soon after presenting these, Barthes concludes that 'the very end of myths is to immobilize the world: they must suggest and mimic a universal order which has fixated once and for all the hierarchy of possessions'. He effectively outlines an argumentation of stagnation, the means by which bourgeois myth 'stifles' subjects 'in the manner of a huge internal parasite'.<sup>64</sup>

Remarkably, this kind of political-rhetorical analysis has nothing to do with semiotics and instead springs from traditional deliberative rhetoric: how are opponents asserting their position? By which persuasive means? How ought one refute them? For although Barthes pens a section called 'Myth on the Left' – in which myth is ephemeral and 'inessential' – it is in 'Myth on the Right' where he deploys heavy rhetorical analysis to disarm bourgeois ideology. Though eager to prove the value of semiology in the first part of 'Myth Today', its terminology wanes towards the end as he sharpens his rhetorical and ideological critique, foregrounding the Aristotelian vector of rhetoric as a way of observing the available means of persuasion. Barthes wields, at times like these, a structuralism-without-signs, an analytical approach that decomposes objects into rhetorical functions. After the liminal text 'Myth Today', Barthes would increasingly use Saussurean terms and mix them with other linguists, but it is not clear that he ever entirely displaced rhetorical analysis as a critical *habitus*.

### **'The Structuralist Activity' and the Rustle of Greece (early 1960s)**

Moving from the 1950s into the booming years of French structuralism in the 1960s, Barthes becomes the chief impresario of a kind of flexible structuralism as ancient as it is modern. Consider the 'The Structuralist Activity' (1963).

What Barthes calls the ‘activity’ of the structuralist mirrors a long tradition of rhetoric that analyzed the genres, occasions, and especially the Aristotelian means of persuasion. In this essay one can indeed replace the many instances of the words ‘structural’ and ‘structuralist activity’ with ‘rhetorical’ and ‘rhetorical analysis’ and end up with a cogent text.<sup>65</sup> Portions seem almost interchangeable with I. A. Richards’ call for a ‘revived Rhetoric’.<sup>66</sup> Barthes’ sense of structuralism here seeks, instead of the ‘the *content* of meanings’, ‘the act by which these meanings, historical and contingent variables, are produced’.<sup>67</sup> Twentieth-century allusions pepper but do not exactly propel his central points.

Towards the end of ‘The Structuralist Activity’, Barthes channels Hegel’s understanding of signification among the ancient Greeks. In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel tackles the oracle at Dodona:

The rustling of the leaves of the sacred oaks was the form of prognostication there. Bowls of metal were also suspended in the grove. But the sounds of the bowls dashing against each other were quite indefinite, and had no objective sense; the sense – the signification – was imparted to the sounds only by the human beings who heard them.<sup>68</sup>

This is indeed the ultimate source of the ‘rustle of language’ (*bruissement*) term so fond to Barthes. ‘Hegel gave a better definition of the ancient Greeks’, Barthes claims elsewhere, ‘by outlining the manner in which they made nature signify than by describing the totality of their ‘feelings and beliefs’ on the subject’.<sup>69</sup> In ‘The Structuralist Activity’, Barthes reflects:

According to Hegel, the ancient Greek was amazed by the natural in nature; he constantly listened to it, questioned the meaning of mountains, springs, forests, storms. ... Subsequently, nature has changed, has become social: everything given to man is already human, down to the forest and the river which we cross when we travel. But confronted with this social nature, which is quite simply culture, structural man is no different from the ancient Greek: he too listens for the natural in culture, and constantly perceives in it not so much stable, finite, ‘true’ meanings as the shudder of an enormous machine which is humanity tirelessly undertaking to create meaning.<sup>70</sup>

Hegel speaks of a 'shuddering awe', 'an instinctive dread' in the Greeks 'when a signification is perceived in a form' that is at once attractive and repulsive.<sup>71</sup> In Barthes' account of *l'homme structural* from 1963, who is 'no different from the ancient Greek', the function of the artist and analyst is ultimately that of the *'manteia'*; like the ancient soothsayer, he speaks the locus of meaning but does not name it'.<sup>72</sup> Barthes' understanding of literature as a particularly 'mantic activity' is thus indebted to Hegel via the curious alignment of the ancient Greek and *l'homme structural*.

This text will lead naturally to Barthes' investigations into proto-structuralist rhetoricians such as Aristotle, whose rhetorical analysis is very much a 'structuralist activity'. Barthes mentions Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, and Dumézil, yet remains remarkably open to a portable, transhistorical structuralism. Barthes does say that structuralists reveal themselves through the lexicon of signifier and signified, *langue* and *parole*. And yet he pushes beyond Saussure to a very broad 'structuralist activity' whose 'goal [...] is to reconstruct an "object" in such a way as to manifest thereby the rules of functioning (the "functions") of this object'.<sup>73</sup> Saussure yields the structuralist insignia, but the 'activity' may as well be Greek. Barthes savoured Hegel's imagery of 'rustling' Greek winds long after the mid-1960s structuralist boom, and even in 1975, pictured himself 'like the ancient Greek as Hegel describes him'. Whereas the Greek listened to the 'rustle of branches, of springs, of winds, in short, the shudder of Nature', Barthes listens to 'the rustle of language, that language which for me, modern man, is my Nature'.<sup>74</sup>

## Problems with Structuralism

Despite the accumulating evidence presented thus far toward a more classical-rhetorical Barthes, one might rightly point out the mountain of secondary scholarship addressing Barthes as a cutting-edge 'structuralist', as well as Barthes' role as chief impresario of linguistic methods within criticism during the 1960s. I will begin my light *refutatio* with a seemingly innocuous comment he made a few months before his death: '*stricto sensu*, only Dumézil, Benveniste, and Lévi-Strauss are structuralists'.<sup>75</sup> A remarkable list: no literary figures, no one in Barthes' inner circle, and no attempt to tactfully reference his own 1960s structuralist apogee. Precisely this same 'triad' of 'masters' was

recognized, for instance, by Jean-Pierre Vernant.<sup>76</sup> Dumézil, Benveniste, and Lévi-Strauss, are, we might say, the structuralist's structuralists (and all consecrated by the Collège de France). Though Barthes barely ever mentions Dumézil, he effusively praises Benveniste (in 'Why I Love Benveniste') and Lévi-Strauss (in various unreciprocated tributes). Barthes clarifies here that the literary criticism that one is inclined to call 'structuralist' should properly be called 'semiological', and that it has two branches: 'Narratology and the analysis of Figures', seemingly referring to critics like Genette, Todorov, and himself.<sup>77</sup> It might make sense to understand the theoretical orientation of Barthes as a tree with rhetorical roots and trunk, onto which has been grafted certain fruiting branches from twentieth-century linguistics.

Anglophone critics have often misunderstood Barthes' rank in the structuralist hierarchy: what appeared high from the outside was in fact low on the inside. As Samoyault claims in her biography,<sup>78</sup> Lévi-Strauss' 'fully fledged science' of structuralism could only hold the 'field for methodological experimentation' that Barthes explored in a certain amount of contempt.<sup>79</sup> Whereas Lévi-Strauss' structuralism sought to 'uncover laws' as a 'general theory of relations', 'structural semiology continues to harbour a demystifying ambition as it attacks dominant opinions, the doxa, and ultimately language itself'.<sup>80</sup> Thanks to texts such as 'Myth Today', the old political vectors of classical rhetoric again resurfaced via Barthes, fortified yet arguably obscured by semiology. Yet Barthes' experimental avenues appeared messy and impure for the highest-ranking structuralists and linguists, who often perceived him as a journalist (or a *non-agrégé*) who fell short of true science.

From linguists such as Georges Mounin and Roy Harris to literary critics such as Paul de Man and the eccentric Marxist philologist Sebastiano Timpanaro, accusations of sloppy linguistics sometimes beset Barthes. His syncretic mixture of various linguists – Saussure, Hjelmslev, Greimas, Martinet, and Jakobson, plus assorted Marxist and psychoanalytic jargon – supposedly tainted any allegiance he could claim to Saussure's scientific legacy. Harris mounts particularly brutal attacks on Barthes' scare-quoted 'structuralism' from *Elements of Semiology*, expounding his failure to reconcile the contradictory concepts he appropriates from linguists like Saussure and Hjelmslev; he indeed becomes a "theorist" wielding intellectual scissors, who supposes that ideas can be cut up and pasted together again in any collage that he or his public find attractive'.<sup>81</sup> Such heavy-handed linguistic pastiches often belonged to what Barthes called his '(euphoric) dream of scientificity',<sup>82</sup> a

euphoria that did not always transfer to his readers. Perhaps *The Fashion System*, as one critic wrote, offers ‘living proof that semiotics, dutifully applied, is capable of anything, even of turning such a witty essayist as Barthes into a perfect bore’.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, Barthes organically appropriated rhetorical concepts as means of invention and deployed them in creative bursts rather than attempting to assemble them into ‘theories of everything’. Whereas he drew upon rhetoric *ad libitum*, his linguistics terminology had to follow the yearly patterns of Parisian intellectualism, yielding puzzle pieces that did not always fit together.

If Barthes can be pruned away from strict structuralism, perhaps he can be *a fortiori* distanced from post-structuralism, an exonymic term that Johannes Angermüller productively questioned in *Why There Is No Poststructuralism in France*, following François Cusset’s ground-breaking *French Theory* and its contrastive reception history. Certainly, Barthes’ interest in totalizing linguistic models waned into the 1970s. Yet despite the retreat of his systematizing libido, it seems odd to position him as ‘beyond’ a structuralism that did not accept him into its internal hierarchy. Thanks to prolific explicit references to rhetoric and implicit derived concepts, a more internal reconstruction of Barthes’ trajectory becomes possible. Such a reconstruction cannot avoid the proliferating appropriations from linguistics, but would reconsider the extent to which modern linguistics actually performs the heavy lifting within his thought.

## Structuralism and/or/of Rhetoric

After Barthes became interested in structuralism, he relentlessly tried to bring it into a historical and theoretical relation to the *ancien régime* of rhetoric. The exact nature of this relationship – ancestry, *Aufhebung*, or rebirth? – eluded and bewitched him. One particular day offers a microcosm of this enterprise of relating old and new.<sup>84</sup> On the 16<sup>th</sup> of August, 1964, Barthes finds himself in his familial village of Urt. ‘Lost among Greek and Latin words’, Barthes writes to his friend Philippe Sollers as he prepares to run his rhetoric seminar at EPHE in the coming school year.<sup>85</sup> On the same day, he addresses Michel Butor and Georges Perros. ‘My heart is heavy’, he writes to Perros, ‘my overly sensitive “soul” is troubled, but Quintilian sets many things right.’<sup>86</sup> As if

reincarnating Poggio Bracciolini's discovery of Quintilian's *institutio oratoria* in a forlorn monastery, Barthes appears awestruck by the ancients, conveying this epiphany to Butor. Whereas Cicero and Plato irritate him, it is Quintilian and Aristotle who prove delightful as proto-structuralists:

I'm reading the Ancients, and am so fascinated by the coherence of their system that I really don't know anymore how I'm going to connect that to our literature – and yet that was my great idea at the beginning. I'd like to talk with you about this – if we haven't already, because I know, I feel that you would share my interest. Some of them get on my nerves, like Cicero and even Plato; others delight me, like Aristotle and Quintilian: an [expected] division for a structuralist! The 'heart' and 'soul' are more powerless, more agitated than ever, 'understanding nothing', but fortunately there's Quintilian and the classification of the *status causae*.<sup>87</sup>

Although Barthes would go on to position rhetoric as the 'glamorous ancestor' of 'literary structuralism', the rhetoric-structuralism relation greatly exceeds and confounds mere ancestry.<sup>88</sup> In the seminar manuscript entitled 'Avant-propos: L'Empire Rhétorique', Barthes suggests that his 'method' will be structuralist analysis, but it will be applied to *two* research objects: rhetoric and structuralism itself. Or as he jotted down:

- Research : never on upon a subject, but also, always, on itself. The gaze of the observer is part of the thing observed. (Physics, Phenomenology, Semiology)
- Now our method, declared: structural analysis.
- Seminar: 1 subject but 2 objects : rhetoric, structuralism.
- This structuralism, thanks to rhetoric, will itself encounter a new, sizable object: history.<sup>89</sup>

In looking in on itself, the structuralist *regard* or gaze necessarily finds the history of rhetoric. Barthes will thus scour the vast remains of what he calls *l'ancienne rhétorique*, realizing its literary, political, and sociological importance, for new glimmerings of textual and linguistic science – while urging an 'indispensable critical distance' from this 'ideological object' in 'The Old Rhetoric'.<sup>90</sup> As Peter France and other commentators have noted, a 'love-



hate' turmoil seemingly engulfs Barthes' feelings towards rhetoric, and other hues – nostalgia, respect, curiosity, suspicion – complicate his attitudes.<sup>91</sup>

Barthes' seminar on the history of rhetoric (1964-65), at least as distilled into 'L'ancienne rhétorique. Aide-mémoire' (1970), offers many idiosyncratic interpretations of and within rhetoric's synchronic and diachronic expanses. These include an influential six part characterization (rhetoric as *technique, enseignement, science, morale, pratique sociale, pratique ludique*),<sup>92</sup> and a grand prolegomena that evokes a rhetorical 'super-civilization' of the *longue durée*, as if channeling Fernand Braudel (who shared the sixth section of EPHE with Barthes). The vision of Rhetoric 'watching immutable, impassive, and virtually immortal' over 'regimes, religions, civilizations' as they 'come to life, pass, and vanish without itself being moved or changed'<sup>93</sup> – a vision shaped by anthropology, sociology, and the *Annales* – was both unprecedented and indebted to the disciplinary makeup of EPHE. After this rousing and oft-quoted introduction, he divides the totality of rhetoric into its diachronic aspect, *le voyage*, and its synchronic aspect, *le réseau*, thereby summoning the taxonomic zeal of ancient rhetoricians for his own exegesis. He strangely maintains that he is not writing a history of rhetoric, but only a 'long diachrony' of 'seven moments, seven "days" whose value will be essentially didactic'. The synchronic aspect, on the other hand, represents rhetoric's 'subtly articulated machine, a tree of operations, a "program" designed to produce discourse'.<sup>94</sup> The encompassing issue of *Communications* 16 even features one diachronic appendix, a chronology of rhetoric, and a synchronic appendix, a taxonomic chart of rhetoric, plus an index that references technical terms (such as *adunata*) to a point on *le voyage* or *le réseau* (such as B.1.21). In this way, 'l'ancienne rhétorique' becomes a fittingly structuralist monument for a deeply structural discipline. While geographically reductive and sketch-like by its own admission, the text expanded rhetoric into a transhistorical social fact amenable to study across the humanities and social sciences.

## Rhetorical Definitions and Critiques

Strewn across his writings, numerous novel (re)definitions or treatments of rhetoric present themselves. One flavor of characterization harnesses

linguistics to describe rhetorics of textual, verbal, and visual media.<sup>95</sup> For instance, Barthes asks, 'What is it that makes a verbal message a work of art?' Whereas the formalists focused on *Literaurnost*, and Jakobson on *poetics*, Barthes responds with '*rhetoric*, so as to avoid any restriction of poetics to poetry and in order to mark our concern with a general level of language common to all genres'.<sup>96</sup> Yet Barthes also considers rhetoric in one of its most classical formulations from Plato's *Phaedrus*. Rhetoric's erotic-amorous dimension seems to bridge the young Hellenist to the mature author of *A Lover's Discourse*.<sup>97</sup> Whereas many scholars envision Barthes' interest in desire as a poststructuralist or psychoanalytic move, it is arguably a Platonic one, latent in his earlier work. An expansive definition of rhetoric from 1963 concludes with 'rhetoric is the amorous dimension of writing'<sup>98</sup> and his seminars and *A Lover's Discourse* will take up *Phaedrus*. Many of the tensions in his mid to late career – the taxonomist and scientist versus the more playful, 'loving' Barthes – indeed mirror the difference between Aristotle and Plato's treatment of rhetoric.

Barthes' forays into the history of rhetoric inform his contemporary critiques of oratorical intellectualism and pedagogy. He paid scrupulous attention to the mediation and ends of discourse, and toward the end of his life worried about the logic of spoken exchanges. These represented a dangerous domain, especially since someone must get the 'last word':

In the space of speech, the one who comes last occupies a sovereign position, held, according to an established privilege, by professors, presidents, judges, confessors: every language combat (the *machia* of the Sophists, the *disputatio* of the Scholastics) seeks to gain possession of this position; by the last word, I will disorganize, 'liquidate' the adversary, inflicting upon him a (narcissistically) mortal wound, cornering him in silence, castrating him of all speech.<sup>99</sup>

Partly owing to these dangers, Barthes refuses 'the *machè*, the Law of verbal combat, of jousting instituted centuries ago in the West'.<sup>100</sup> Despite his famous conflict with Raymond Picard, Barthes tended to be more pacific than his peers, and it is not easy to separate his personality from his criticisms of dysfunctional agonism.

The late Barthes indeed distrusted the agonistic 'games' of French intellectual culture, again taking up Greek comparisons:

One should also look at the situation in France today (I speak of conflicts of speech): visible taste of the French people for the (verbal) *agôn*: heirs of the Greeks, without their genius: rugby, football, antagonistic sports → one-to-one debates, confrontations, debates between adversaries, etc. Equivocal regime: it's coded (in fact), but one pretends to be natural, spontaneous, truthful, to oppose referents as if speech were purely transparent, instrumental → always this great naturalizing drive, this refusal to take responsibility for the codes, for the games.<sup>101</sup>

Barthes paired the mythologies of agonistic speech with pervasive codes of intellectual discourse. Any academic can relate to the experience of the question and answer period after a lecture, wherein non-questioning 'questions' get posed. These questions, as Barthes puts it, are the 'assertion of a plenitude' rather than a genuine 'expression of a "want"'. Yet in this 'game' of pseudo-questions and pseudo-answers, one is only allowed to respond to the content, and not the manner of asking: 'What I receive is the connotation; what I must give back is the denotation.'<sup>102</sup> Barthes then compares these games, somewhat unfavorably, to the *disputatio* of medieval rhetoric and pedagogy:

Our intellectual discussions are as encoded as the old scholastic disputes; we still have the stock roles (the 'sociologist', the 'Goldmannian', the 'Telquelian', etc.) but contrary to the *disputatio*, where these roles would have been ceremonial and have displayed the artifice of their function, our intellectual 'intercourse' always gives itself 'natural' airs: it claims to exchange only signifieds, not signifiers.<sup>103</sup>

Whereas a medieval *disputatio* would stage its interlocutors on either side of the *quaestio* – *respondens* and *opponens* – adjudicated by a master, the modern discursive codes politely hide themselves despite their sometimes-brutal 'airs' of the natural or neutral. Based on his lectures and dispersed comments in the late 1970s, Barthes remained interested in critiquing the rhetoric of pedagogy and intellectual exchange as he moved beyond the 'rhetoric of literature' framework from his earlier years, and seemingly had much more to say than his shortened life allowed.

## The Eloquence of Barthes

No discussion of Barthes' interests in rhetoric, however brief, should neglect the well-practiced eloquence of Barthes himself. His *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *memoria* drew on thousands of index cards, which were used as 'an organisational device, a kind of "creativity machine" that served a crucial function in the very construction of his written texts'.<sup>104</sup> His *actio* proved to be a point of insecurity: gifted with a famously beautiful voice, he nonetheless distrusted the spoken word, its agonistic potential, and the perils of seizing the 'last word': 'I greatly prefer writing to speech. [...] I'm always afraid of theatricalizing myself when I speak [...] [and of] hysteria, of finding myself drawn into collusive nods and winks'.<sup>105</sup> As for his *elocutio*, no facile summary does it justice. He has at least one highly technical register, a kind of treatise tone that emulates linguists; another Gidean, autobiographical voice he occasionally takes up, and perhaps another 'somewhat euphoric, slightly manic' style, 'tempered by considerable irony and discretion but unmistakably braced by the feeling of being on the threshold of making discoveries'.<sup>106</sup> These, in my estimation, fall short of his most rhetorically savvy. Near the end of his life, Barthes writes:

Little by little I recognize in myself a growing desire for readability. I want the texts I receive to be 'readable', I want the texts I write to be 'readable', too. [...] A 'well-made' sentence (according to a classical mode) is clear; it can tend towards a certain obscurity by a certain use of ellipsis: ellipses must be restrained; metaphors too; a continuously metaphorical writing exhausts me. A preposterous notion occurs to me (preposterous by dint of humanism): 'We shall never be able to say how much love (for the other, the reader) there is in work on the sentence.'<sup>107</sup>

Barthes certainly worked his sentences. Ultimately, he internalized the values of the not-so-old-rhetoric more than he knew. Despite a fair number of clinical writings, his rhetorical apprenticeship did not stray too far from the Platonic path he articulated in 1963: rhetoric is 'linked not only to all literature but even to all communication, once it seeks to make others understand that we acknowledge them: rhetoric is the amorous dimension of writing'.<sup>108</sup>

## Conclusion

Although scholars have sketched many conceptual linkages between rhetoric and structuralism, little has been done to acknowledge two more atomic propositions. The most vigorous eventual promoter of literary structuralism, Roland Barthes, began an unabating fascination with rhetoric in the 1940s. And he never exactly settled the problem of rigorously importing linguistic models into new domains – the closest thing to an essence of structuralism – in a way that fully satisfied linguists. Although achieving a consensus on his identity as a theorist might be impossible or undesirable, his rhetorical apprenticeship deeply informs some of his best-loved attributes, including the ability to perceive ‘texts’ (or rhetorical situations and codes) in unprecedented domains outside of literature (visual, cultural, pedagogical, ideological). By engaging in a long game of compare-and-contrast between the ‘former’ rhetoric (as *technique, enseignement, science, morale, pratique sociale* or *pratique ludique*) and the nascent rhetorics, theories, and trends within French intellectualism, Barthes generated original insights askew with any given model or ‘-ism’. Moreover, his theoretical and historical passions for rhetoric spill over into his essayistic eloquence, which cannot easily be shoehorned into one of his theoretical concepts because it precedes and outlasts them, dissolving into classical notions such as a ‘well-made sentence’ and the Platonic obligations of *pathos*.

A few months before his death, Barthes complained that ‘rhetoric has been degraded, technocratized’ into mere “‘techniques of expression’ (what ideology!)’. This lecture claimed not to ‘dwell on the institutional Death of Rhetoric’ since he had already addressed this back in his 1965-66 seminar.<sup>109</sup> If his refusal to produce further rhetorical ruminations seems disappointing, then we should remember that he had been dwelling on the fortunes, legacies, and intrigues of rhetoric’s *ancien régime* for much of his life, scavenging glimmering ideas, passing occasional judgements, and sometimes purveying a presentism that Fumaroli would turn on its head. Ultimately, Barthes’ well-known aide-mémoire and his supple styles perhaps distract us from a greater and largely hidden rhetorical achievement: turning the entire institution of rhetoric into a *topos* for theoretical invention over a lifetime of peregrine yet productive apprenticeship.

## A Chronology of Texts, Events, Courses, and Interviews with Rhetorical Import

I have given these in French to avoid dating issues. Note that the two main rhetoric seminars (1964–65 and 1965–66) will be followed further seminars at EPHE that move away from rhetoric in their titles and main objects (history, *Sarrasine*) but still might feature some relevant material (see Claudia Amigo Pino's book).

- 1933 « En marge de Criton »
- 1935–39 Licence de lettres classiques (Sorbonne), groupe de théâtre antique (Sorbonne)
- 1941 « Évocations et incantations dans la tragédie grecque » (DES)
- 1942 « Culture et tragédie »
- 1944 « Plaisir aux classiques »
- 1946 « L'avenir de la rhétorique »
- 1949–50 Lecteur à l'université d'Alexandrie
- 1952 « Le monde où l'on catche »
- 1953 *Le degré zéro de l'écriture*
- 1956 « Le mythe aujourd'hui »
- 1957 *Mythologies*
- 1963 « L'activité structuraliste »
- 1963 « Le message publicitaire »
- 1963 « Œuvre de masse et explication de texte »
- 1964 Lettres aux Sollers, Butor, et Perros
- 1964 « Rhétorique de l'image »
- 1964–65 « Recherches sur la rhétorique » (séminaire, EPHE)
- 1965–66 « Recherches sur la rhétorique (suite) » (séminaire, EPHE)
- 1965 « Réponse à une enquête sur le structuralisme »
- 1965 « Le théâtre grec »
- 1965 « Dante et la rhétorique » (entretien avec François Wahl, France Culture)
- 1965 ou 1966 « Valéry et la rhétorique »
- 1966 « Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits »

- 1966 « Écrire, verbe intransitif » (Johns Hopkins, “The Languages of Criticism and the Sciences of Man”)
- 1966 « Le classement structural des figures de rhétorique » (compte rendu de la séance de la SELF, 1964)
- 1967 « L'analyse rhétorique » (colloque, 1964)
- 1967 « Flaubert et la phrase »
- 1967 *Système de la mode*
- 1967 ‘The Death of the Author’ (curiously this was first published in English)<sup>110</sup>
- 1968 « L'effet de réel »
- 1970 « La linguistique du discours »
- 1970 « L'ancienne rhétorique. Aide-mémoire »
- 1970 *Communications* 16, *Recherches rhétoriques* (avec Genette et al.)
- 1970–71 « La rhétorique : esquisse historique et structurale » (cours, Université de Genève)
- 1971 *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*
- 1971 « Écrivains, intellectuels, professeurs »
- 1971 « De l'œuvre au texte »
- 1971 « Réflexions sur un manuel »
- 1971 « Le style et son image »
- 1971 « Par où commencer ? »
- 1972 « Le retour du poéticien »
- 1975 *Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes*
- 1976 « Un grand rhétoricien des figures érotiques »
- 1977 *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*
- 1977 Fragments de voix (entretiens avec Jean-Marie Benoist et Bernard-Henri Lévy, Radio France)
- 1977–78 *Le neutre* (cours, Collège de France)
- 1978 « Arcimboldo ou Rhétoricien et magicien »
- 1978–79 *La préparation du roman* (cours, Collège de France)
- 1979–80 *La préparation du roman* (cours, Collège de France)

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my gratitude for Claudia Amigo Pino's insights, Michael MacDonald's encouragements, Neil Badmington's accommodations, and the reviewer's wisdom. Their efforts helped save this research from obscurity.

<sup>2</sup> Roland Barthes, 'A Great Rhetorician of Erotic Figures', in *The Grain of the Voice: Interviews 1962-1980*, trans. by Linda Coverdale (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), p. 255.

<sup>3</sup> Rhetoric scholars have typically been impressed by the 'Aide-mémoire' (which is how I became interested in Barthes) but rarely venture into the *Œuvres complètes* or the recent *Album*.

<sup>4</sup> John McKeane, 'Barthes: Rhetoric, Style, Society', *Barthes Studies*, 5 (2019), 73.

<sup>5</sup> Whereas 'rhetorician' and 'rhetor' simply refer to analyzing and wielding rhetoric, the third term suggests Barthes' original rethinking of rhetoric as a *longue durée* institution interconnected with letters, thought, and pedagogy for two and half millennia (a duration he fondly mentions again and again).

<sup>6</sup> A term often associated with Barthes, but 'l'Empire de la RHÉTORIQUE' appears in Furetière's *Nouvelle Allégorique* (1658), framing an extravagant struggle between Princess Rhetoric and Captain Galimatias. See Antoine Furetière, *Nouvelle allégorique ou Histoire des derniers troubles arrivés au royaume d'éloquence*, ed. by Mathilde Bompard and Nicolas Schapira (Toulouse: Société des Littératures classiques, 2004), p. 6.

<sup>7</sup> See François Dosse, 'Oxymore, le soleil noir du structuralisme', *Espaces Temps*, 47-48 (1991): 129-43; Tzvetan Todorov, 'Language and Literature', in *The Structuralist Controversy*, ed. by Richard Macksey and Eugenio Donato (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), pp. 125-33; Gérard Genette, *Figures I* (Paris: Seuil, 1966). Also see the issue *Communications* 16 (1970).

<sup>8</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Response to a Survey on Structuralism', in *'A Very Fine Gift' and Other Writings on Theory*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Seagull Books, 2015), p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Structuralist Activity', in *Critical Essays*, trans. by Richard Howard (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. 219.

<sup>10</sup> For his reflections on this network see Roland Barthes, *How To Live Together: Novelistic Simulations of Some Everyday Spaces*, trans. by Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 18.

<sup>11</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Answers', in *'Simply a Particular Contemporary': Interviews, 1970-79*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Seagull Books, 2015), p. 32.

<sup>12</sup> Roland Barthes, 'L'ancienne rhétorique. Aide-mémoire', *Communications*, 16 (1970), 223.



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<sup>13</sup> The seminars will be published by l'Harmattan in 2022. For a preview, see Claudia Amigo Pino, 'The Rhetorical Mission: Barthes's Seminars from 1964 to 1969', *Barthes Studies*, 5 (2019): 53-71.

<sup>14</sup> See also Robert Scholes, *Structuralism in Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974); Patrick O'Donovan, 'The Place of Rhetoric', *Paragraph*, 11 (1988): 227-48; Andrew Brown, *Roland Barthes: The Figures of Writing* (Oxford: Oxford, 1992); Michael Moriarty, 'Rhetoric, Doxa, and Experience in Barthes', *French Studies*, LI (1997): 169-82; Nicolas Pagan, 'Roland Barthes and the Syllogisms of Literary Criticism', *Mosaic*, 33 (2000): 95-111.

<sup>15</sup> Peter France, 'Roland Barthes, A Rhetoric of Modernity', *Proceedings of the Canadian Society for the History of Rhetoric*, 2 (1989), 71, 76, 79.

<sup>16</sup> Marc Fumaroli, 'La rhétorique humaniste', *Commentaire*, 99 (2002/3), 706.

<sup>17</sup> Antoine Compagnon, *Literature, Theory, and Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 131, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Antoine Compagnon, *L'Âge des lettres* (Paris: Gallimard, 2015), p. 117. My translation.

<sup>19</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977-1978)*, ed. by Thomas Clerc, trans. by Rosalind E. Krauss and Denis Hollier (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 11.

<sup>20</sup> Roland Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), pp. 172-73.

<sup>21</sup> See Roland Barthes, 'Responses: Interview with *Tel Quel*', in *The Tel Quel Reader*, ed. by Patrick French and Roland-François Lack (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 249-68. As well as Tiphaine Samoyault, *Barthes: A Biography*, trans. by Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity, 2017), pp. 162-63.

<sup>22</sup> In English, see M. Martin Guiney, *Teaching the Cult of Literature in the French Third Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). In French, see the many writings of Violaine Houdart-Merot, Martine Jey, and Antoine Compagnon on literary pedagogy, rhetoric's fate, Lanson, and the Third Republic.

<sup>23</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Future of Rhetoric', in *Album: Unpublished Correspondence and Texts*, ed. by Éric Marty, trans. by Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), p. 106.

<sup>24</sup> Barthes, 'The Future of Rhetoric', p. 103.

<sup>25</sup> Barthes, 'The Future of Rhetoric', pp. 103, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Barthes, 'The Future of Rhetoric', p. 113.

<sup>27</sup> One of his structuring devices in the aide-mémoire.

<sup>28</sup> Since a humorous pastiche of *Crito* was the first 'serious' text he wrote as a schoolboy he might have conceivably encountered *Phaedrus*, *Gorgias*, or *Sophist* alongside it.

<sup>29</sup> Barthes, *Album*, p. 5.

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<sup>30</sup> Barthes, *Roland Barthes*, p. 99.

<sup>31</sup> Roland Barthes, 'To the Seminar', in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 338.

<sup>32</sup> For biographical context, see Samoyault, *Barthes: A Biography*, p. 72 and Andy Stafford, *Roland Barthes* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), p. 23. For additional 1940s coverage, see Francesca Mambelli, 'Un engagement rhétorique', in *Roland Barthes : Continuités*, ed. by Jean-Pierre Bertrand (Paris: Christian Bourgois, 2017), pp. 67-90.

<sup>33</sup> Roland Barthes, 'A Very Fine Gift', in 'A Very Fine Gift', p. 148.

<sup>34</sup> Barthes, 'Valéry and Rhetoric', in *Album*, p. 181. Valéry also reverberates more subtly within "The Death of the Author" (1967). Late in his life, Barthes was still touting Valéry as an underappreciated visionary. Roland Barthes, 'Entre le plaisir du texte et l'utopie de la pensée', in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Éric Marty, 5 vols (Paris: Seuil, 2002), vol. V, p. 536. Further references to the *Œuvres complètes* will be given in the form of OC, followed by the volume and page numbers.

<sup>35</sup> Samoyault, *Barthes: A Biography*, pp. 40-41. In Barthes' inaugural lecture of January 1977, he would hearken back four decades to Valéry, 'whose lectures I attended in this very hall'. Roland Barthes, 'Lecture in Inauguration of the Chair of Literary Semiology, Collège de France, January 7, 1977', trans. by Richard Howard, *October*, 8 (1979), 3.

<sup>36</sup> Paul Valéry, 'De l'enseignement de la poétique au Collège de France', in *Variété V* (Paris: Gallimard, 1944), p. 289. My translation.

<sup>37</sup> Valéry, 'De l'enseignement de la poétique', p. 290. My translation.

<sup>38</sup> Barthes, 'The Future of Rhetoric', p. 107.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Valéry, 'Poétique et pensée abstraite', in *Variété V*, p. 142. My translation.

<sup>40</sup> Barthes quoted in Claude Coste, 'Roland Barthes: Terror in Poetry', *Barthes Studies*, 2 (2016), 90 n. 13.

<sup>41</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Plasir aux classiques', in OC I, p. 61. My translation.

<sup>42</sup> Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Hill and Wang, 2012), p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> For more on Paulhan, see the work of Michael Syrotinski and Anne Milne. For a historical exploration of Terror, see my forthcoming article 'The Linguistic "Terror" According to Jean Paulhan and Jean-Paul Sartre' in *Journal of the History of Ideas*.

<sup>44</sup> See McKean's 'Barthes: Rhetoric, Style, Society' for Barthes' relation to rhetoric's nineteenth-century fortunes.

<sup>45</sup> Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, p. 57.

<sup>46</sup> Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, p. 61.

<sup>47</sup> Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>48</sup> Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, p. 74.

<sup>49</sup> For a sampling of these tastes, see Barthes, *The Grain of the Voice*.

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- <sup>50</sup> Sometimes offered as an inflexion point between the immature and mature Barthes. Stafford, *Roland Barthes*, p. 68.
- <sup>51</sup> Barthes, 'Responses: Interview with *Tel Quel*', p. 256.
- <sup>52</sup> Barthes quoted in Coste, 'Roland Barthes: Terror in Poetry', p. 75.
- <sup>53</sup> Barthes, *Album*, p. 23.
- <sup>54</sup> I am not the first to notice the rhetorical status of the book: a 'persuasive discourse of forms of persuasion'; its rhetorical procedures 'giv[e] the text a certain exemplary status'. Michael Moriarty, *Roland Barthes* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 20.
- <sup>55</sup> Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, ed. and trans. by Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 35.
- <sup>56</sup> Barthes, 'Responses: Interview with *Tel Quel*', p. 256.
- <sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, Burke-Barthes was a missed connection. Edward Said wistfully recalls recommending Burke to Barthes, only to have Barthes forget who Burke was some years later and wonder 'Kenneth Burke? Mais qui est-il?' Edward Said, 'The Franco-American Dialogue: A Late-Twentieth-Century Reassessment', in *Traveling Theory: France and the United States*, ed. by Ieme Van der Poel, Sophie Bertho, and Ton Hoenselaars (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), p. 140.
- <sup>58</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, p. 18. See the criticisms in Georges Mounin, *Introduction à la sémiologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1970), pp. 190-91.
- <sup>59</sup> Barthes, *Mythologies*, pp. 23, 19.
- <sup>60</sup> Barthes, 'Myth Today', in *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 129.
- <sup>61</sup> Barthes, 'Myth Today', p. 50.
- <sup>62</sup> Barthes, 'Myth Today', p. 50.
- <sup>63</sup> These are: 1. The inoculation 2. The privation of History 3. Identification 4. Tautology 5. Neither-Norism 6. The quantification of quality 7. The statement of fact. Barthes, 'Myth Today', pp. 150-55.
- <sup>64</sup> Barthes, 'Myth Today', p. 155.
- <sup>65</sup> Barthes, 'The Structuralist Activity', p. 218.
- <sup>66</sup> I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 23-24.
- <sup>67</sup> Barthes, 'The Structuralist Activity', p. 218.
- <sup>68</sup> G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1857), p. 246.
- <sup>69</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Photographic Message', in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Heath (London: Fontana, 1977), p. 31.
- <sup>70</sup> Barthes, 'The Structuralist Activity', pp. 218-19.
- <sup>71</sup> Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, pp. 257-58.
- <sup>72</sup> Barthes, 'The Structuralist Activity', p. 219.
- <sup>73</sup> Barthes, 'The Structuralist Activity', p. 214.
- <sup>74</sup> Barthes, 'The Rustle of Language', in *The Rustle of Language*, p. 79.

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<sup>75</sup> Roland Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978-1979 and 1979-1980)*, ed. by Nathalie Léger, trans. by Kate Briggs (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 130.

<sup>76</sup> François Dosse, *The History of Structuralism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), vol. 1, p. 183.

<sup>77</sup> Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 130.

<sup>78</sup> For Samoyault, Barthes' 'disappointment' in his relationship with Lévi-Strauss – the anthropologist rejected Barthes' request for supervision – was 'biographically decisive' (p. 250). In 1960, Lévi-Strauss declined to supervise Barthes' work on fashion, while suggesting that Barthes shift from the semiology of clothing to analyzing the discourse of fashion in magazines (p. 251). *Criticism and Truth*, said Lévi-Strauss, displayed an 'excessive liking [...] for subjectivity, for feelings, a certain mysticism vis-à-vis literature' (quoted on p. 254); Lévi-Strauss built a joke out of *S/Z* by performing a structural kinship analysis of *Sarrasine*: this was all rather 'cruel' as Samoyault captures it, though Lévi-Strauss sincerely appreciated *Empire of Signs* (p. 256) and voted, despite certain qualms, for Barthes to enter the Collège de France.

<sup>79</sup> Samoyault, *Barthes: A Biography*, p. 256.

<sup>80</sup> Samoyault, *Barthes: A Biography*, p. 237.

<sup>81</sup> Roy Harris, *Saussure and his Interpreters* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 148.

<sup>82</sup> Barthes, 'Responses: Interview with *Tel Quel*', p. 257.

<sup>83</sup> J. G. Merquior, *From Prague to Paris: A Critique of Structuralist and Post-Structuralist Thought* (London: Verso, 1986), p. 125.

<sup>84</sup> He already hints at a desire for new work on *la rhétorique classique* in 'Dire Racine' (1958).

<sup>85</sup> Barthes quoted in Philippe Sollers, *The Friendship of Roland Barthes*, trans. by Andrew Brown (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p. 55.

<sup>86</sup> Barthes, *Album*, p. 255.

<sup>87</sup> Barthes, *Album*, p. 151. My brackets indicate a correction to a probable translation error.

<sup>88</sup> Barthes, 'From Science to Literature', in *The Rustle of Language*, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> My translation of the manuscript image in Samoyault, *Barthes: A Biography*, p. 305.

<sup>90</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Old Rhetoric: an aide-mémoire', in *The Semiotic Challenge*, trans. by Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 47.

<sup>91</sup> France, 'Roland Barthes, A Rhetoric of Modernity', 82.

<sup>92</sup> Barthes, 'L'ancienne rhétorique', pp. 173-74.

<sup>93</sup> Barthes, 'The Old Rhetoric', p. 15.

<sup>94</sup> Barthes, 'The Old Rhetoric', p. 16.

<sup>95</sup> Barthes, 'Rhetoric of the Image', in *Image, Music, Text*, p. 49; *Elements of Semiology*, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), p. 92;

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'Rhetorical Analysis', in *The Rustle of Language*, p. 83; 'Responses', in *A Very Fine Gift*, p. 172.

<sup>96</sup> Barthes, 'Rhetorical Analysis', p. 83.

<sup>97</sup> On the relation between rhetoric and love in Barthes' later work, see Moriarty, 'Rhetoric, Doxa, and Experience in Barthes'. Barthes, 'From Science to Literature', p. 9.

<sup>98</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Preface', in *Critical Essays*, p. xvi.

<sup>99</sup> Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Penguin, 1990), pp. 207-08.

<sup>100</sup> Barthes, *The Neutral*, p. 79.

<sup>101</sup> Barthes, *The Neutral*, p. 127.

<sup>102</sup> Roland Barthes, 'Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers', in *The Rustle of Language*, p. 319.

<sup>103</sup> Barthes, 'Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers', p. 320.

<sup>104</sup> Rowan Wilken, 'The Card Index as Creativity Machine', *Culture Machine*, 11 (2010), 9.

<sup>105</sup> Barthes, 'An Interview with Jacques Chancel', in *Simply a Particular Contemporary*, p. 72.

<sup>106</sup> Paul de Man, 'Roland Barthes and the Limits of Structuralism', *Yale French Studies*, 77 (1990), 179-80.

<sup>107</sup> Roland Barthes, 'The Image', in *The Rustle of Language*, p. 352.

<sup>108</sup> Barthes, 'Preface', in *Critical Essays*, p. xvi.

<sup>109</sup> Barthes, *The Preparation of the Novel*, p. 279.

<sup>110</sup> John Logie, 'The Birth of "The Death of the Author"', *College English*, 75 (2013): 493-512.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jonathan Doering works on the history and theory of rhetoric in connection to various other disciplines. After completing his dissertation 'The Weak Survival of French Rhetoric' at the University of Western Ontario, he is writing a book about rhetoric's institutional fortunes in Paris.

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