

The Temporality of Text: Starting from Roland Barthes' *La préparation du roman*

Julia Ponzio

Abstract: This paper is focused on the last two courses given by Roland Barthes at the Collège de France between 1978 and 1980 on “The Preparation of Novel”. In these courses he outlines a new perspective on the novel as elaborated during the last years of his work. To look at the novel from the viewpoint of its preparation means to consider it from a perspective that is totally different from that of the literary critic and of traditional analyses of the literary text in general. Traditional text analyses a novel as an already written text in which everything has already happened; from this point of view, the novel is a “fact”, a “matter of fact”. As such it is analysed and classified in terms of a historical or structural schema and interpreted in response to the question: “what does the author mean?” That is, “which is the true signified of these signifiers which compose the text?” Barthes’ perspective is completely different and opens to the possibility of a new relation to the text, where the core of the problem of the novel is no longer the “author”, but the subject of writing desire.

Key words: desire, event, finitude, novel, subject

论文本的时间性：从罗兰·巴尔特《小说的准备》谈起

朱丽娅·庞齐奥

摘要：本文对罗兰·巴爾特的著作《小说的准备》进行了讨论，该书是他1978—1980年间任教于法兰西学院时两门课程的讲义集。这两门课程为作者在这部最后的文集中提出的小说的新视角勾勒出了

大致的轮廓，这种视角和以往的文学批评，以及传统文本分析的视角都不同。传统的文本分析将小说视为既定的、已经写成的文本：从这一视角而言，小说是已成的“事实”；它也因此被置放在历史或结构的框架下加以检视和分类，并且被认为是旨在回答这样的问题：“作者的意图是什么？”也就是“什么是构成文本的能指的真正所指”？与此不同的是，巴尔特的看法为文本的新关系打开了可能：文本的核心问题不再是“作者”，而是书写欲望的主体。

关键词：欲望，事件，界限，小说，主体

I. A New Perspective on the Novel

The last two courses Roland Barthes gave at the Collège de France between 1978 and 1980 were focused on the theme of the “Preparation of Novel”. To look at the novel from the viewpoint of its preparation means to consider it from the perspective—which is totally different from that of the literary critic—of the traditional analysis of the literary text in general. Traditional text analyses a novel as an already written text, as a text in which everything has already happened: for this reason, from the viewpoint of traditional text analysis the novel is a “fact”, a “matter of fact”, which has to be analysed: such analysis of a literary text as an accomplished fact is an “autopsy”. This approach consists in classifying the text in terms of a historical or structural schema and interpreting it through the construction of a comment that answers the question: “what does the author mean?” That is to say, “which is the true signified of these signifiers which compose the text?” The perspective on the literary text invented by Barthes in the two years of his 1978 – 1980 courses on “The Preparation of the Novel” is completely different and opens to the possibility of a new relation to text.

The novel Barthes discussed in his two courses is not an already written novel, but rather a projected novel, a desired one. Barthes entitled this novel *Vita Nova* and only wrote some preparatory outlines. We don't really know whether Barthes did not write it because of his unexpected death, in 1980, just a few days after the conclusion of the courses, or because to write this novel as Barthes desired was structurally impossible.

II. Phantasm of Writing and Subject as Singularity

At the beginning of the course, Barthes said that this novel, the novel he wanted to write, titled *Vita Nova*, is the “Phantasm” (*Fantasme*) from which the course originated (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 3). In the English translations of the course the French word *Fantasme* is translated as “Phantasy”. In the present text, we have chosen to use the term Phantasm because what Barthes called a *Fantasme* is an imaginary object instead of simply a phantasy.

Phantasm is a desired object which is not already present, but nevertheless has a strongly concrete repercussion on my present life, because I desire it so strongly that all I do is oriented to its realization. In this Phantasm I imagine a situation which I want to realize; I imagine how everything will be once the desired object is realized; I imagine myself walking towards this realization; how I will become after this realization; how other people will consider me after this realization, etc.. In this sense, the phantasm is an object which does not still exist, but acts on my present, and which changes my days, and my relation with the world, with others and even with myself. In this sense “*vita nova*”, the desired novel, the novel which has not yet be written, the novel at the level of its preparation, that is to say, of its planning and of its patient elaboration, represents, in the last years of Barthes’ life, his Phantasm.

This analysis of the novel in its preparatory phase, starting from someone’s writing desire, radically changes the questions posed to the text. Looking at the text from the viewpoint of its preparation, the main question is no longer that of classical text analysis— “What does the author mean?” “What is the meaning of this text?” —as if the text were a game which consists in the deciphering and decryption of a code hidden by the author. Looking at the text from the viewpoint of its preparation, the main question becomes: “who is the subject which is about to write?” That is to say, “who is the subject of what Barthes calls the ‘to-want-to write’” (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 8), and “why does this subject desire to write”, and “what need does this desire of writing respond to”. For these reasons, the

course of 1979 began with what Barthes called “a declaration of the subject”. “Subject” is a word full of history and which, therefore, can have very different meanings. The subject that makes its declaration in the opening pages of *Preparation of the Novel* is a very different one—it is not a transcendental subject; it is not an abstract subject, a subject without a body. The first thing this “subject” declares in *The Preparation of Novel* does is its age, and this declaration is not only the definition of a personal datum but the description of a mood.

Let’s read the beginning of the declaration made by this subject:

Dante: “Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita.” Dante was thirty-five. I’m much older and have gone far beyond the mathematical “middle” of my life’s journey [...]. Now, for my part, although I’ve gone far beyond the arithmetical middle of my life, it’s today that I’m experiencing the sensation—certainty of living out the middle—of the journey, of finding myself at that kind of juncture [...] beyond which the waters divide, taking two divergent ways. (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans. , 2010, p. 3)

This declaration is more than a definition of self, the “confession” of a mood. After the confession of a mood this subject tries to explain it. This sensation is due, he says, to two states of “consciousness” and to one “event”.

The first evidence is that of irreversibility and finitude of life’s time. This irreversibility, this sense of finitude, as Barthes says, is not “natural” but becomes stronger with age: “having reached a certain age our days are numbered.” (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans. , 2010, p. 4) The feeling is that there is no more time to live all the desired lives, and that for this reason it is necessary to realize the last desire, to choose the last life. This is precisely what Barthes calls the *vita nova*, the new life. This necessity to choose a last time is opposed to the repetitiveness of life that represents the second consciousness. Speaking of this second consciousness, Barthes says:

[...] there comes a time when what you’ve done, written (past works and practices) looks like repeated material, doomed to repetition, to the lassitude of repetition. (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans. 2010, p. 4)

It is the sensation of the “forclosure of anything new”, the “forclosure of adventure”, of sensation to be sentenced to repetition. Barthes establishes, therefore, in these initial pages of the course on *The Repetition of Novel*, an apparently simple opposition between a desire of a *vita nova*, due to consciousness that the time at one’s disposal has become very short, and the sensation of being sentenced to what is already done, to what is already said, and to what is already written.

III. The Event as What Breaks the Time of the Subject

This apparently simple opposition is soon complicated, in Barthes’ discourse, by a third element which is no longer a consciousness, an evidence, or a fact, but rather an “event”. An event is something that happens when life seems to be a familiar scene, closed to any possibility of renewal, when life only seems to be a repetition of identity, when all possibility of a *vita nova* seems to be impossible; the event is something unexpected, an incident, as Barthes call it, a short circuit which changes everything.

Barthes writes;

Last, an event sent by Destiny, can occur to painfully or dramatically mark, cut into, incise, break up that slow running aground, triggering the transformation of that all-too-familiar landscape—what I called the “middle of the journey of life”; it is, alas, pain’s *asset* (*l’actif du douleur*). (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans. , 2010, p. 4)

The event Barthes is speaking about is that of mourning; he is not speaking about mourning in general, but about a particular mourning, his own mourning, mourning lived in the first person by the subject who is saying I; he is referring to the event of his mother’s death, which also constitutes one of the focal points in *La chambre Claire*, which Barthes writes at the same time of his two courses. Mourning is an event which divides life in two parts, which articulates life in a “before” and “after”. in such a way that from that moment on, nothing is the same, nothing is as before it was. In this sense an event is, according to Barthes, what articulates, carves, and breaks

the time of life. Discontinuity as provoked by the event is unsolvable, definitive. The wound mourning opened in the continuity of the subject's life will not close; there is no possibility of recovery. As Barthes writes:

[...] on the one hand, I have no time left to try out several different lives; I have to choose my last life, my new life, *vita nova*. And on the other, I have to get out of this gloomy state of mind that the wearing effects of repetitive work and mourning have disposed to me. (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 5).

Therefore, the subject that declares itself in these opening pages of Barthes' course of 1979 is not an omnipotent subject, a strong subject, a subject ruler of its own time. On the contrary, this subject is a subject installed in its own finitude, installed in its own mood, at the mercy of the events, a subject in difficulty, in checkmate, a subject that has reached an *impasse*. The experience of *impasse* is the experience of a sense of finitude which is totally different from the ordinary sense of finitude. The ordinary idea of finitude is linked to the economy of time, of counted time, in days and hours, and to saving time. This is the idea of finitude described by Barthes in the first of the two states of consciousness. On the contrary, finitude, as described by the subject in the first pages of *The Preparation of Novel*, is linked to the sense of the loss of what is impossible to retrieve, to the nostalgia of what is already past. The time of this finitude is not the linear time in which I count the days, but a broken time; in this time all calculation of time loses its sense. This is no longer the finitude of the isolated subject, which counts its time; finitude in this new sense is the question of the relation with what is irreplaceable, a loss impossible to compensate. In this finitude time is not stretched out like a line, but, on the contrary, is contracted in a strange presence. That is the presence of the unreplaceable; that is past, but that at once occupies my present, filled with nostalgia for it; this contraction of time is mourning which cannot be elaborated; all is blocked in what Barthes call the feeling of affliction. This time contracted in the instant is the very short time of an instant in which everything suddenly changes.

IV. The “Desire of Writing” as Event

In *The Preparation of Novel*, this situation of impasse changes when a second event occurs. The second event Barthes describes is the desire of *vita nova*, the desire to write a novel. In the first of the two courses, Barthes describes the apparition of his desire of writing, the instant starting from which all will be oriented to the project of writing a novel.

April 15, 1978. Casablanca. The sluggishness of the afternoon. The sky clouds over, a slight chill in the air. A group of us go in two cars to the Waterfall. *The same, uninterrupted sadness*, a kind of listlessness that bears upon everything I do, everything I think. Return, an empty apartment; a difficult time; the afternoon. Alone, sad. I reflect with enough intensity. The beginnings of an idea: something like a “literary conversion—it’s those two very old words that occur to me: to enter into literature, into writing; to write, as if I’d never written before. (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 7).

This time contracted in an instant. This instant in which everything suddenly changes, is what Barthes calls “the time of individuation”. The two courses on preparation of the novel are a reflection about this strange presence in which time is not a line, in which there is no possibility of a development, in which all time is suspended in a point, which cannot be explained by the past. In Barthes’s tale, as we have just read it, there is no logical connection between the trip of few hours before and the desire to write the novel. These two elements are composed together and together they reveal a scene, a moment, which has no explanations. As described, the trip, the past just passed, does not have the function of explaining the present. In the same way, there is no connection between the sadness of a moment before and the desire to write a novel. Telling this story, this tale, that is, the story of a singularity (Barthes’s own tale, the tale of his life, of the moment he is living), Barthes tells the reasons of his desire of writing, which is to say he tells his story to explain why he began desiring to write, why he was in need to write a novel. This means that the subject which declares himself, in the first pages of this course, the subject which is about to write, the subject of the desire of writing is not a subject in general, but a subject with a proper

name. This declaration by a subject, therefore, according to Barthes, is the declaration of a singularity. For this reason, the novel about which Barthes speaks is not “the novel” in general, nor the definition of a literary genre; this desired novel is the Phantasm of a unprecedented novelty, of a radical change of life which produces a totally new *œuvre*, an absolute event, a cut in time and in history from which all can begin again.

V. The Desire of a New Practice of Writing

This novel requires a new practice of writing capable of describing the temporality of the subject of the desire of writing, which is not a continuous temporality, but temporality broken by the event. As Barthes says:

For someone who writes, who has chosen to write, that is to say, for someone who has *experienced the jouissance, the joy of writing*, [...] there can be no other *Vita Nova* (or so it seems to me) than the discovery of a new writing practice. (Barthes, 2003, Eng. tran. , 2010. p. 6)

The practice of writing the classic novel is based on the construction of a temporality which is a precise sequence between before and after: if the writer recounts something about the past of a character, often this is because the past explains, justifies something which happens in the present of the narration. In the classic narration, time is linked by a strict logic. The “and then what? [...]” of this time is always translatable with a “and therefore?” The classic structure of narration consists in the construction of a timeline in which the stories of the characters gradually develop: even the plot twists have their explanation, their justification, which the writer must, has the duty, to reveal.

The problem of this classic narrative structure is that it is not able to tell the story of the subject of the desire of writing, as described by Barthes himself. This subject cannot write his story using this classic narrative structure because the time of his life is not a line, but a time which is broken by events, a time all concentrated in a present which no past can justify. What Barthes looks for is a writing without narration, a writing without timelines, a writing without “and then”, without “therefore”. Barthes’ *vita*

nova, which is at once a project of life and the title of his projected novel, is the possibility to write the sense of finitude contracted in a single instant, in which everything changes; that's why the new practice of writing Barthes is looking for is a writing of the present. (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans, 2010, p.17)

For this reason Barthes, in these years, focuses his studies on two practices of catching the present in a text, which are haiku and photography. Almost all the course of 1979–80 revolved around the analysis of haiku and its relation with the photographic text. Haiku is a short poem, from Japanese literary culture, and is composed by three verses. Haiku, as Barthes says, only presents the scene of an instant by the composition, that is to say, by a syntax between few elements. According to Barthes, it is an exemplary model of annotation of the present (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 29). The annotation, of which haiku is a model, selects and extrapolates from the continuous flux of living experiences, a lived experience that is annotated; to note means here that it becomes notable, that it assumes a given form. The event that haiku extrapolates, that is the referent of haiku, Barthes says, is a circumstance; the referent of this form of annotation is a *circum stans*, that is, what we find around us without looking for it, and without creating it. The referent of haiku is what we meet, what comes towards us in spite of our will, what happens, the autonomous event which happens, like the change of weather or seasons.

Haiku is, therefore, according to Barthes, the result of an encounter, the result of an event that does not happen neither to an abstract, transcendental subject, nor to an individuality, that is to say to an identity individuated by a gender, a role, a nationality etc.: this is an encounter between singularities, an encounter after which all is different, all acquires a *nuance*, which makes the moment of the encounter and the singularities which meet in this encounter unique. The told present assumes a *nuance* in relation to the individuality who tells: *nuance* is a short circuit between two instants, a relation made of two that has no justification and that justifies nothing (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, pp. 46–47). The classical question of the analysis of a text, “what does the author mean”, here makes no sense, because haiku does not have any hidden meaning. The relation between the

lines which compose haiku is not a logical connection; their link is purely syntactic. It is precisely in this purely syntactic link that Barthes has an interest here, when he works on haiku, that is to say he is interested in this link which is constituted neither by a timeline nor by a logical chain.

Barthes often in the course opposes the syntactic link which characterizes haiku, to Proust's search for the lost time; Proust establishes a link between memory and he who remembers, which is constituted by a hidden sense to dig up a buried past, whose recollection enables the present to find a sense again in a continuous narration. On the contrary, in the structure of haiku there is no semantic link between the singularity that tells and the singularity that is told. This link is exclusively syntactic. This syntax, this encounter between singularities which implies the *nuance*, is what Barthes calls the process of individuation.

VI. Individuation as Encounter

The reasons of Barthes' interest in the structure of haiku is its capability to write the process on individuation, to write the moment in which this individuation happens. In this process of individuation emerges what Barthes quoting Proust calls "the edge of particular", that is to say what makes someone or something "such" is special, unreplaceable.

Individuation is, as Barthes says, a notion that consists in relating the irreducibility, the founding nuance, the Suchness, the Specialness of the individual (civic and psychological subject) to a given moment of that individual; so the "soul" in that it passes, not to return. (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 43)

Individuation is determined from the event of an unpredictable encounter with something, which from that moment on becomes necessary, which is no longer possible to substitute, which misses even before its absence; in this sense a relation among singularities is always on the brink of mourning. On this brink, finitude is no longer economic finitude which sends away death, relegating it to a future which doesn't exist yet, but is finitude blocked in the loss of the other, the presence of death as death of the other which compresses the time in this missing which doesn't pass, doesn't heal, doesn't

flow; in this time in which finitude is linked with the possibility of the loss of the other, time is no longer a line; it becomes short, blocked, stopped and flat, as on the surface of a photograph.

In the same years in which Barthes gave the two courses on the preparation of novel, he wrote *La chambre claire*, in which the question of this unjustified relation, the question of this syntax of the encounter which suspends time, contracting it in a present, emerges in the definition of what Barthes, reflecting on the peculiarities of the photographic text, calls *punctum*. In *La chambre claire*, photography is presented as an extreme condition of the text. This extremity is due to the relation between signifier and signified, which this particular text implies. In the photographic text, the relation between signifier and signified and, even more, the relation between signified and its referent seems absolutely immediate without mediation; it seems a tautology (Barthes, 1981, Eng. trans., 2010, p.12 ff.). The referent seems to be in the photographic text there, in flesh and bones. Barthes explains in *La chambre claire*, that, however, this relation of adherence between signifier and its referent in the photographic text is only apparent. And it is rather for this reason that the photographic text has a lot of things in common with haiku. This appearance which Barthes is speaking about is the appearance of a semantic link between the photo and what it represents. But in reality, as Barthes says, at the very moment it is indicated by a camera, the referent has already escaped. It is already hidden from what Barthes calls the “pose”. To assume a pose, Barthes says, means to become a signifier of ourselves. This means that the direct, immediate, almost tautological relation is not between the photographic image and the referent, but between the photographic image and the pose, that is, a signifier by which the photographed subject interprets itself, recites the part of itself, as an actor. This relation between the pose and the referent, therefore, is a very problematic relation because the subject in the pose doesn't manifest itself, but, on the contrary, it hides itself as in an act of protection. The referent escapes behind the pose. I become an image, through the pose, a moment before the click of the camera; the image I become in the pose is heavy, blocked, without evolution, and this is, as

Barthes says, very different from the subject which is always light, divided, scattered, and incoherent. This image forces itself to have an expression, a fixed expression, to exit from neutrality, to abandon what Barthes calls the degree zero. In the pose, the photographed subject tries therefore, according to Barthes, to signify itself, to become signifier of itself, that is, to establish a semantic link with itself. The photographed image, therefore, signifies the pose, signifies a subject which tries to escape. That's why often, looking at a photo, Barthes says, more than a presence, I perceive that something is missing. I miss a place, for example, a moment, a person, the way in which I or someone else was before. This sense of loss is blocked, with no possible solutions. The time of this loss is not the time in which I look forward to something, in which even if it is very slow, time is flowing.

VII. A Syntactics of Sense

This sense of loss is linked with the emerging of what Barthes in *La chambre claire* calls *punctum* (Barthes, 1981, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 25 ff.). *Punctum* is what makes some photos notable for someone, what makes a photo more than a signifier which waits for the surfacing of its signified, which makes me fix a photo for a very long time, which makes me keep a photo with me, for example, which makes a photo important to me. *Punctum*, as Barthes says, is what makes a photo happen to me, exist for me. In these photos I find what I miss, they are the image of a loss. In the first part of *Lachambre Claire* the *punctum* is defined as a coexistence in the same space of the photo of two elements without a logical connection, but that, from the moment of the click, have sense only in this relation. In this case, the loss, which is missing, is the missing of a sense, the missing of a semantic relation. A photograph in which *punctum* emerges is the exposition of this *syntactics of sense*. The result of this syntactics of sense both in the haiku and in the photograph, is not a meaning but a *nuance*; is not a signified, but a process of individuation. In this encounter in which nothing is the same, in which nothing is as it was before, the *nuances* emerge as an absolute difference. What Barthes calls *nuance* in *The Preparation of Novel* (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 46 ff.) neither belongs to the

subject, nor to the object; it is neither a particular way of the subject to see something, nor a particular moment which the individual finds and describes. *Nuance* belongs to the encounter. *Nuance* is a short circuit between two singularities, which is circumstantial, which is not justifiable by a search for sense, and which doesn't justify anything. It is a present unexplained by the past and unable to explain the future. Haiku and the photograph in which a *punctum* emerges do not establish any semantic link. They are the description of the event. For these reasons, in haiku and in the photographs in which the *punctum* emerges, the question "what did the author want to say?" makes no sense. Neither the photographic text nor the haiku can be developed. In this sense, Barthes says in *La chambre claire*, even if a photo (analogic photo) has to be "developed" by a chemical process to be seen, it allows us to see the undevelopable, the essence of a wound, what cannot be transformed but can only repeat itself in the form of an insistence (Barthes, 1981, Eng. trans. , 2010, p. 49). This impossibility of a development which characterizes the photographic text in Barthes' *La Chambre claire* is what, in the course on *Preparation of the Novel*, keeps together the photographic text and the poetic text of haiku.

What photo and haiku have in common is, as Barthes says, their *noeme*, that is what deeply defines them. In fact, both are a presentation of the "already been", the presentation of a past, which is also a presentation of a loss. They both are ways in which I can see what I miss without compensation of the loss. Nevertheless, there is an important difference between photo and haiku, which Barthes clarifies in *The Preparation of the Novel* in his own words:

The (perhaps noematic) difference between Photography and haiku = a photograph is a bound to say everything. [...] It produces excesses of meaning =/ haiku: abstract and yet lifelike effect (perhaps we are leaving the Noeme of photography and rejoining the Noeme of text). (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans. , 2010, p. 73)

A photo, as Barthes says, is obliged to say all; it is saturated with inevitable details. Details represent, signify, and take the place of facts that

the photo certifies, testifies. But one of these details can become *apunctum* for someone, provoking a drift of sense: *punctum* doesn't signify anything, but rather it is exactly what I misses. It is, as Barthes says in *The third meaning* "a signifier without a signified" (Barthes, 1970, Eng. trans., 1970, p. 61), a sign without sense, an association that has nothing to do with a semantic relation. *Punctum* is therefore possible in a photo. On the contrary, haiku, as Barthes says, gives at once the way of the fact and the way of the abolition of the fact (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 78). In a haiku, the fact, the contingency, has already established a relation with the writing individuality, that is to say, it is not a pure fact, independent from he or she who takes note. This means in it, the independence of the fact is abolished, because the fact is taken in a relation that determines the individuation and so the nuance. In a photo the *punctum* is a possibility; in haiku the *punctum* is already cut out from a horizon of sense. The nuance has already been cut out from a generality, from a common discourse, from a relation between signifier and signified based on semantic sense.

VIII. Writing the Intractable

Therefore, haiku is not similar to the photographic text in general, but to those photos in which a *punctum* emerges. This *punctum* which haiku and some photos cut out, is a space empty of sense in which two singularities enter in a relation, becoming unreplaceable for each other: it is the space of what Barthes call the *intractable*, which is, as he says, the moment in which things are filled by the affect, the moment of truth, in which I discovers what counts for me (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 107). In the two courses on the preparation of the novel, Barthes is looking for the possibility of a Novel whose material is this intractable, that is to say, the contracted instant of time in which I feel finitude as loss of what is not possible to substitute.

"The classic novel," says Barthes at the end of the first course, "is a text, a texture in which the moments of truth are rare and mixed with fiction, deception, invention." For this reason, Barthes says that his resistance, his incapability to pass from the desire of writing to the real act of writing is above all a "moral" resistance (Barthes, 2003, Eng. trans., 2010, p. 109).

The deception, the lie which worries Barthes is not at the level of the content of the literary work; it does not belong to literary invention, nor literary fiction; the deception which worries Barthes is at the level of the form of narration. The way in which in a classic novel is built according to the structure of text, is very different from the way in which, as anticipated, haiku links together differences or circumstances. The classic novel, what Barthes calls in the courses “The Book” (with capital letters) is architected, it is constructed: in it the told events are linked together in a timeline which can be inverted, as in the case of Proust’s *Novel*, but which continues to have the form of a continuous line, which flows, and where all is linked, coherent, and in which every transformation is only a development without events—in such a way the past justifies the present and present promises a future. The deception, the lie of the novel, which Barthes is speaking about is the form of this time, its linearity without incidents, without events, without any cut.

What Barthes opposes to “The Book”, is what he calls “The Album”, in which the structure is missing, as occurs in a book of poems, for example, or is given by the same succession of things, as occurs in a journal. But nor does the album, in Barthes’ discourse, seem to have the capability to work with the intractable, with the vertiginous finitude of loss, because the blank which separates the pages of a journal, or a book of poems, does not have the same value as the blank between the lines of an haiku; in a journal or a collection of poems, a ripped page is not missing in the same way in which one of its verses can be missing in an haiku; if I rip the page of an album it remains readable, while if I cancel one of the lines of a haiku it is no longer readable. This means that both “The Book” and “The Album”, which are the two main forms of Western literature, are linked to the idea of linear time, of a development, of a flowing; therefore, none of them is able to tell the story of a subject whose line of time has been broken by an event. None of them is able to write the intractable.

For this reasons, probably, Barthes remains blocked, as he says, to the first challenge that whoever wants to write a novel has to handle, that is, of choosing the form of the work. Barthes doesn’t succeed in finding the form of the work he wants to write because both “The Book” and “The Album”, only

permit the horizontal cuts which in *Le plaisir du text* Barthes attributes to the “text of pleasure”. The pleasure of text, Barthes says in this paper, is linked to the possibility of cutting the text, of making scratches in it. In the text of pleasure, these scratches are only possible on the horizontal plan of the story told, of the thread. The reader cuts the text simply by jumping, skipping, all of which are not useful to the disclosure of the secret which the text promises. These cuts are linked to an economy of time, to the economic sense of finitude. The new practice of writing which Barthes looks for in the courses on the preparation of the novel, has to be able, on the contrary, to produce a text in which the cuts, the scratches are not at the superficial level of the thread, but are deeper, at the level of the form. In “the Pleasure of the text”, Barthes calls such a text the “text of bliss” (*jouissance*). The text of bliss produces the possibility of lacerations, of scratches which are internal to language, internal to writing, and internal to the form of the literary work. In it, the relation between signifier and signified is not only deferred, as in the text of pleasure. There is no secret promised at the end of the tale. In the text of bliss, the space opened between signifier and signified is not a deferral, but a lack of sense. This space emancipates the signifier from its semantic link with the signified, opening the space of what Barthes calls significance, that is, opening the space of the nuance, in which every signified is unreplaceable and untranslatable. In the text of bliss, all semantic relations between the textual signifier, the author and the reader are impossible. Unlike the classical structure of the comment, there is no reader here who must reconstruct the meaning of the discourse of the author. In the text of bliss, author and reader are unanchored; they float off. They lose their fixed place. They no longer hold a pose. We can say that in the text of bliss, the tale is always the same: in it we no longer have a character who tries to reach a goal solving problems and affronting challenges, as in the classic structure of novel. He or she who is in trouble, in the text of bliss, is not a character, but language itself, identity, the relation between the author and what he writes. The trouble has to do the strange situation of signifiers, which begin to construct a structure of sense independently from the relation with their signified. It is the moment when I begin to perceive the bliss of the

form of writing. I like the style, the way in which someone composed its text: my bliss is determined on the syntactical level of the form, of the style, and not on the semantic level of content. On this level, every signifier becomes unreplaceable and untranslatable, the linearity of narration is transformed in the labyrinth of style, where the signifiers acquire a sense not in relation with their signified, but for their position, that is, for the relation they establish encountering other signifiers. In this sense of writing, which is for Barthes the sense of a *vita nova*, the indifference of the pose which is the individuality of the author, changes into the difference of the encounter which is the individuation of an unreplaceable singularity.

References:

- Barthes, Roland, (1970). “Le troisieme sens; Notes de recherche sur quelques photogrammes de S. M. Eisenstein”. Cahiers du cinema. English translation by S. Heath, (1970). “The Third Meaning: Research Notes on Several Eisenstein Still”, in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- , (1973). *Le plaisir du texte*, Paris: Seuil. English translation by R. Miller, (1975). *The Pleasure of Text*. New York: Hill and Wang.
- , (1978 – 1979 et 1979 – 1980). *La préparation du roman I et II. Cours et séminaires au Collège de France*, ed., Nathalie Léger, Paris: Seuil, 2003. English translation by K. Briggs, (2010). *The preparation of the Novel*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- (1981). *La chambre claire. Note sur la photographie*, Paris: Seuil. English translation by R. Howard, (2010). *Camera Lucida*. New York: Hill & Wang.

Author:

Julia Ponzio, Ph.D. in Modern and Contemporary Philosophy, Researcher in Philosophy and Theory of Languages at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, University of Bari Aldo Moro, Her Research mainly focuses on the theories of philosophy and language.

作者简介:

朱丽娅·庞齐奥, 现当代哲学博士, 意大利巴里大学外国语言与文学系研究员, 研究方向为哲学与语言理论。

E-mail: derby2626@gmail.com