

Exploring Roland Barthes in Henri Lefebvre's

“Abstract Space”

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Literature is a socially privileged mode of transaction. However pre-modern classical literature threatens the imagination of human subjectivity in several ways. A writer with alert awareness cannot be indifferent to something that threatens the freedom of choice. As one of the most important literary theorists of the twentieth century, Roland Barthes is aware of the limits of classic literary practices. He starts to question received opinions and test the limits of literary expression. In his eyes, “a good part of our intellectual work consists in casting suspicion on any statement by revealing the disposition of its degrees” (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes 66). In the early stage of his critical theory, Roland Barthes, influenced by the ideas of Sartre and Karl Marx, displayed a strong interest in issues of language, its relationship to historical and social contexts, and its relationship to power. Following this phase, Roland Barthes is associated with the movement within criticism known as structuralism. Corresponding with the ideas of linguists in the 20th century such as Saussure and Roman Jakobson, Barthes theorizes about the role of language versus that of speech. In his critical eyes, language, based on an abstract set of rules and conventions, regulates verbal and written communication. As for speech, it refers to individual instances of how that language is used. His next critical position in the 1970s was deeply influenced by French theorists Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva. In this stage, Roland Barthes is often seen as evolving from standard structural readings towards post-structuralism, one of the theories of which is famous for its questioning the identity and the definition of human subjectivity in the history of literary practices. Within this phase, Barthes specially stresses the idea that literary texts contain multiple and shifting connotations, and are therefore open to a number of possible interpretations. Roland Barthes's ideas have offered alternatives to the methods of traditional literary criticism.

Roland Barthes's “The Death of the Author,” is sometimes considered to be a post-structuralist work. In this essay, Barthes challenges the traditional way of viewing the role of the author. “Classic criticism has never paid any attention to the reader; for it, the writer is the only person in literature.” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 148) Barthes notes that the traditional approach to literature raises a thorny problem: how can one determine precisely what the writer intended? He questions the

position of the author and further criticizes the reader's tendency to consider aspects of the author's identity. Barthes saw the notion of the author, or authorial authority, in the criticism of literary text as the forced projection of an ultimate meaning onto the text. By imagining an ultimate intended meaning of a piece of literature, one could offer an ultimate "explanation" for it (Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 147).

Barthes points out that the great proliferation of meaning in language and the unknowable state of the author's mind makes any such ultimate realization impossible. Barthes's articulation of the death of the author is the most radical recognition of this severing of authority and authorship. He claims that, at the end of this essay, while the author is dead, the reader is born (Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," 148).

Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes is often considered an exemplary poststructuralist autobiography, one which implements the splitting of the self. In this autobiographical work, Barthes applied principles derived from his literary theories as described in "The Death of the Author." This autobiographical work vividly illustrates how Barthes locates literary practice at the intersection of subject and historically social context. In this autobiographical work, Barthes is especially concerned with the nature of the human subject and its relation to language. The stereotypical view of autobiography in past literature creates the risk of it being read as an expression of a constituted subjectivity. He reminds readers to be aware of what positions they should take toward their definitions of human subjectivity in an autobiographical reading. The answer shows how one will identify himself/herself and what kind of thing one takes himself/herself to be. Kristeva remarks that Roland Barthes plays the role of the pioneer and founder of modern literary studies. She declares that Barthes "attempted to constitute the concrete object of a learning whose variety, multiplicity, and mobility allow him to ward off the saturation of old discourses" (Kristeva, 93). In his autographical writing, Barthes discovers new ways of writing about writing. His self-portrait is not primarily a recollection of events or earlier works. It is, rightly, a delineation of a new method of literary practices rather than of the man himself. By escaping and subverting his socially and culturally privileged status, this autobiographical practice achieves its unusual success.

Like Roland Barthes, Henri Lefebvre is a French intellectualist of the twentieth century. Henri Lefebvre's work includes original work on a diverse range of subjects, from dialectical materialism to architecture, urbanism and the experience of everyday life. Celebrated as one of the most influential social theorists, Henri Lefebvre is widely recognized as a Marxist thinker. He made a significant contribution by making the city an object for Marxist thought. Henri Lefebvre dedicated a great deal of his writings to understanding the importance of (the production of) space in what he called the reproduction of the social relations of production, presented in his major

work in 1974: The Production of Space. Widening the scope of Marxist theory, the main arguments in this work redirect historical materialism towards a spatial problematic. By this work, Henri Lefebvre transfers the dialectic into spatial terms. This work has influenced the development not only of geography but also of sociology, political science and literary criticism. In The Production of Space, Lefebvre contends that there are different levels of space, from very natural space (“absolute space”) to more complex spatialities whose significance is socially produced (“social space”) and some which can become differential (“differential space”, also known as “abstract space”), which affects spatial practices and perceptions. In Lefebvre’s eyes, the reproduction of the social relations of production within this “abstract space” obviously follows two tendencies: “the dissolution of old relations on the one hand and the generation of new relations on the other.” (52) Thus, despite its negativity, “abstract space” embodies within itself “the seeds of a new kind of space” (52). Lefebvre’s notion of spatiality seems to have created a new process, a new situation in which all spaces have to undergo a metamorphosis and reconstruction.

This paper makes use especially of Lefebvre’s The Production of Space as the main theoretical background and resource for discussing the issue of spatial practice and production, and applies it to Roland Barthes’ autobiographical work Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes. Moreover, reversing the balance of authority and power between author and reader, “The Death of the Author” is a must-read for those who want to see the most significant changes in thinking about literature. The radical vision of critical reading in “The Death of the Author” is theoretically displayed through Barthes’s own literary practices in his autobiographical work. Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes can be viewed as a laboratory producing a new space for a new discourse. Within this laboratory, Barthes’s writing experiments clearly undermine the western previous classical conceptions of the subject self. Barthes’ artistic work is regarded as a production in (social) space and marks a transition between modes of production in (social) spaces. Within this process of transition, Roland Barthes has presented a new mode of production, which is assumed to have its own particular space. This new space, according to my arguments, corresponds with Lefebvre’s theory of “abstract space,” within which a dialectical relationship between an old discourse and a new one is developed, and “a differential space” is created, in which the transformative force is produced. A radical change in the production of literary practices in social spaces is underway.

Before presenting my main arguments in this paper, Henri Lefebvre’s theory of The Production of Space will first be portrayed. In the history of civilization, spaces are unavoidably instrumentalized. They are formulated and founded by the

intervention of cultures. In Rob Shield's view, "[f]ailing to examine the nature of space as a cultural 'artifact', the realm of the spatial has often been assumed to be purely neutral and a-political, conferring neither disadvantage, nor benefit to any group" (187). Henri Lefebvre insightfully outlines a basic epistemological framework for the study of the production of space. His project is aimed at a reorientation of human concerns away from its obsession with time and toward a reconstituted focus on space. In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre explores new dimensions of spatiality, pushing its frontiers beyond received senses. For Lefebvre, space is assuming an increasingly important role in supposedly "modern" societies (412). He is highly critical of previous epistemological arguments in the West that describe space strictly in geometrical terms, as an "empty space." In Lefebvre's viewpoint, "space is never empty: it always embodies a meaning" (154). Lefebvre states that space serves "as a tool of thought and of action; that in addition to being a means of production it is also a means of control, and hence of domination, of power" (26). That explains why the widespread attribution to spatial metaphors "appears to result from a radical questioning of all else, a decentering and destabilization of previously fixed realities and assumptions; space is largely exempted from such skeptical scrutiny" (Neil Smith and Cindi Katz, 80).

At the core of the Lefebvrian project are the concepts of *production* and the *act of producing* space. Lefebvre states: "Every society – and hence every mode of production with its subvariants (i.e. all those societies which exemplify the general concept) – produces a space, its own space" (14). He argues, "[s]ocial space contains, and assigns appropriate places to, the relations of production and of reproduction (including biological reproduction and the reproduction of labor power and social relations)" (32). Thus, the spatial order of human existence arises from the (social) production of space. In other words, while social space is a *product* to be used or consumed, it is also a "*means of production*" (85). That is why Lefebvre claims that "(social) space is a (social) product" (26). To support his arguments, Lefebvre posits the need to uncover the unity among three fields that are usually apprehended separately: the physical (nature); the mental (logical and formal abstractions); and the social (11~12). He further distinguishes among *spatial practices* (the lived space); *representations of space* (our conceptions); and *representational space* (our perceptions). Each of these three spaces contributes differentially to the production of space, varying according to local conditions.

Representations of space are tied to "the relations of production and to the 'order' which those relations impose, and hence to knowledge, to signs, to codes, and to 'frontal' relations" (Lefebvre, 33). Hence, this space is interpreted as "conceptualized space" (Lefebvre, 38). Within a system of verbal signs, this is the

dominant space in any society (or mode of production) (Lefebvre, 45). As for the implication of “*Representational spaces*,” it embodies “complex symbolisms, some times coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art” (Lefebvre, 33). As stated previously, “representations of space” are associated with the system of verbal signs. They “have at times combined ideology and knowledge within a (social-spatial) practice” (Lefebvre, 45). The “representations of space” tend to “dominate and subordinate a representational space” (Lefebvre, 40). This is the dominated – and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre, 39).

Lefebvre believes that the history of space proceeds from nature defined as “absolute space” to abstraction, known as “abstract space” (110). Realized as the bedrock of historical space, absolute space is religious and political in character (Lefebvre, 48). In Lefebvre’s arguments, “absolute space” evolved as a space that was relativized and historical (48). Though gradually losing its force, absolute space lives on as an underpinning of representational spaces. Lefebvre claims that abstract space took over from absolute space, manipulated by all kinds of “authorities”, and powers, politically, economically, and epistemologically. (50) He also refers to social space, which is dominated by cultural practice, using the term “abstract space”. With culturally instrumental characteristics, abstract space is also categorized as having two functions: positive and negative. Functioning positively, “abstract space may even be described as at once, and inseparably, the locus, medium and tool of this ‘positivity’”(Lefebvre, 50). Lefebvre claims that it is “the abstract space that produces, imposes, and reinforces social homogeneity. Within this space, and on the subject of this space, ‘everything is openly declared: everything is said or written!’”(Lefebvre, 51). In this sense, abstract space appears to be transparent and readable-intelligible. However, “this transparency is deceptive, and everything is concealed” (Lefebvre, 27). Lefebvre points out that “space is illusory and the secret of the illusion lies in the transparency itself” (27).

The abstract space also operates *negatively* in Lefebvre’s arguments. “Abstract space relates negatively to that which perceives and underpins it – namely, the historical and religio-political spheres. It also relates negatively to something which it carries within itself and which seeks to emerge from it: a differential space-time” (Lefebvre, 50). In Lefebvre’s eyes, the reproduction of the social relations of production within this space obviously follows two tendencies: “the dissolution of old relations on the one hand and the generation of new relations on the other.” Thus, despite its negativity, abstract space embodies within itself “the seeds of a new kind of space” (Lefebvre, 52). Abstract space is what Lefebvre calls a “differential space” (52). The different spatial practice, according to Lefebvre’s own explanation, is

simply the “return of an idea to an ideal state” (59). He believes a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences. By seeking to point the way towards a different space, towards the space of a different social life and of a different mode of production, this project “aspires to surmount these oppositions by exploring the dialectical relationship between ‘possible’ and ‘impossible’, and this both objectively and subjectively” (Lefebvre, 60). With Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space in mind, one comes to realize that space is no longer something concrete and opaque and something to be experienced and lived (as well as perceived and conceived). It is now something abstract and transparent. The Lefebvrian epistemological argument “assumes that space is present and implicit in the very act of creation and being, and that the process of life is inextricably linked with the production of different space” (Dear 52). Space becomes “intelligible” to the eye; space appears to be a text to be read. Lefebvre’s notion of spatiality seems to have created a new process, a new situation in which all places, and spatiality itself, have to undergo a metamorphosis, a radical change and reconstruction.

Lefebvre’s notion of spatiality also extends to the field of language and writing. Lefebvre believes that the spoken word and ideology of speech have the qualities of fetishism (28). Against the priority-of-language thesis, Lefebvre insists that Western culture has overemphasized speech and the written word. In Lefebvre’s view, every language is located in space, and he offers a warning to all those who would raise language to some new epistemological pedestal: “[t]o underestimate, ignore and diminish space amounts to the overestimation of texts, written matter, and writing systems, along with the readable and the visible, to the point of assigning to these a monopoly on intelligibility” (62). Lefebvre argues that communication brings the non-communicated into the realm of the communicated. However, “the *incommunicable* [has] no existence beyond that of an ever-pursued residue” (28~29). He also demonstrates that this ideology, deeply associated with Western culture, “stresses speech, and overemphasizes the written word, to the detriment of a social practice which it is indeed designed to conceal” (Lefebvre 28). Such are the assumptions of an ideology which, “in positing the transparency of space, identifies knowledge, information and communication.” (Lefebvre 29). What is more, acting as agent in communication, the written word must be brought to a test. Lefebvre remarks: “[t]he act of writing is supposed, beyond its immediate effects, to imply discipline that facilitates the grasping of the ‘object’ by the writing and speaking ‘subject’. In any event, the spoken and written word are taken for (social) practice” (28~29). Lefebvre further concludes that the principal purpose of reading, the decoding of the spatial text, is to help us understand the transition from representational (i.e. lived) space to representations (conceptions) of space (54). In this regard, Dear has stated

that Lefebvre “betrays a postmodern sensitivity in the matters of language and reading the *text* (of cities, etc.)” (54). In Gregory’s view, Lefebvre’s objection to such a conception assumes “‘the logical, epistemological priority of language over space’ that puts prohibitions, not productive activity, at the heart of social space” (216). In his work, Lefebvre clearly seeks to reverse these priorities. In Lefebvre’s eyes, there should be no primary statements, neither are there conceptual (but only representational) beginnings. It was on the basis of this ideology that a revolutionary social transformation could be brought about by means of communication alone. Based on Lefebvre’s arguments, what have to be uncovered are “concealed relations between space and language” (16).

Corresponding with Lefebvre’s questioning of the reality and existence of “primary statements,” Barthes also claims that reading any other literary text should not involve a quest for that text’s ultimate and original meaning. In literature, the human person logically refers to the person of the author, and the author is taken as the most important role. In this way, the image of literature is centered on the author’s personal life rather than the text or work itself. Contrary to the popular notion of the author being the omnipotent, omniscient force behind a piece of work, Barthes advocates the view that the author is no more than a mere narrator of events. “To give a text an Author” and assign a single, corresponding interpretation to it “is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 147). His essay “The Death of the Author” might raise a question from readers: what does it actually mean to say that the author is dead? The phrase itself is a metaphor for the kind of reading of literary texts that Barthes advocates. Barthes declares: “The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire’s work is the failure of Baudelaire the man” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 143). This is what Barthes disagrees with. For Barthes, this is a tidy, convenient method of reading and is, to a certain degree, flawed. Barthes challenges his own readers to determine who is speaking—and about what is speaking between lines. Barthes recognizes the existence of an unconscious mind, the opacity of language, and the role of discursive practices in the dissemination of social power. He intends to destabilize humanist notions of subjectivity as something essential and autonomous. Keith Moxey’s conclusion is that Roland Barthes believed that “the autonomous subject of the humanist tradition, a subject capable of knowing both the world and itself, was a utopian dream of the European Enlightenment.” Keith Moxey further comments that “this kind of interpretation of the human subjectivity has come to be seen as suspect because of its identification with Western culture, with the dominance of white races,

with masculinist bias, and with middle-class prejudice.”

In a traditional sense, the project of the autobiography logically presupposes subjects who can project themselves so much that they always find each self equal to her/himself. This kind of literary genre applies the approach of imitation to copy the author’s “real” life. As Moriarty has stated, “‘Mimesis’, of course, is ‘imitation’, which is, in the Aristotelian view, the relationship between literary text or other artefact and reality outside it. The text, in other words, is held to *copy* reality” (128). However, the need for linguistic experimentation is felt pressingly when exploring the boundaries of identity. In “Authoring the Autobiographical”, Shari Benstock pictures the characteristics of autobiography from a new angle:

Autobiography reveals gaps, and not only gaps in time and space or between the individual or the social, but also a widening divergence between the manner and matter of its discourse. That is, autobiography reveals the impossibility of its own dream: what begins on the presumption of self-knowledge ends in the creation of a fiction that covers over the premises of its construction. (11)

In Shari Benstock’s argument, the imperative of the sincerity of autobiography has to be put in question. In other words, how can one talk about herself or himself through formal artifice? The position of subjectivity is now fragmented and put into question.

Echoing his questioning of essential and autonomous human subjectivity in “The Death of the Author,” Barthes’ autobiographical work Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes calls into doubt the legitimization of language in manipulating reality. As the author, Barthes himself resists the customary expectations of autobiographical writing and presents in his work Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes a highly unusual form of autobiography. In this literary practice, he is especially concerned with the nature of the human subject and its relation to language. Barthes undermines the belief of naïve arguments in the pre-modernism period that there are experiences independent of language. Language should be conceived as a system of signs, sounded signifiers indissolubly linked with signified ideas. With respect to the degrees of language, Barthes states:

I write: that is the first degree of language. Then, I write that I write: that is language to the second degree. . . . Today there is an enormous consumption of this second degree. A good part of our intellectual work consists in casting suspicion on any statement by revealing the disposition of its degrees; this disposition is infinite and in scientific terms we call this abyss opened by each word, this madness of language: speech-act. . . . The second degree is also a way of life. All we need to do is change the focus of a remark, or a performance, of a body, in order to reverse altogether the

enjoyment we might have taken in it, the meaning we might have given it.
(Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes, 66)

Barthes refuses to see through the web of language to some underlying “reality.” “Barthes sees literature always in connection with responsibility, pleasure, desire – and an equally steady insistence that these connections are via form and language, not via the representation of a content” (Moriarty 4). With his autobiography, Barthes begins the serious game of conceptual remapping. He argues that our notions of subjectivity are the product of language itself: “This book consists of what I do not know: the unconscious and ideology, things which utter themselves only by the voices of others. I cannot put on stage (in the text), as such, the symbolic and the ideological which pass through me, since I am their blind spot.” (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes, 152). Doubting the relationship between authors and self-conscious writings of the self, Barthes ignores the question characteristic of such writings, namely, “Who am I?” and raises instead the self-contradictory “Am I?” He writes increasingly in fragments, making it difficult to summarize an overall position. He contrives the possibility of reading his writing as fiction. In the beginning of his autobiography, the following sentence is presented: “It must all be considered as if spoken by a character in a novel.”¹ The statement offers readers a vision where fiction and reality meet each other. It also indicates a constructing process in his writing in this work. Within this process, unilateral dimensions are unfolded. Presenting his work as a form of novel, the author unavoidably takes positions from certain perspectives, and, simultaneously, something might be left unsaid. In this way, no existential surety is maintained. That is why Barthes claims that “a text is not a line of words releasing a single ‘theological’ meaning (the ‘message’ of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend, and clash” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 146) One may raise this question: how does a personal identity register in a historical text? What is the relation between authorial subjectivity and textual product? The self would not be, of course, an authentic unity under the examination of these questions. If one admits that it is possible to have one existential subject constituting the only writing subject, nothing is able to assure us that he is at the “center” of the work. Barthes writes: “Once I produce, once I write, it is the Text itself which fortunately dispossesses of me of my narrative continuity. The Text can recount nothing; it takes my body elsewhere” (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes, preface). This statement corresponds with Barthes’s own critical reading on the issue of writing. For Barthes, “writing is the neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the

¹ This statement was presented in the first page of the text in Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes.

very identity of the body writing” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 146).

That human subjectivity was universal in nature is now placed in the open so as to assert the differing interests of divers interpretive discourses. Barthes also believes that all writing draws on previous texts, norms, and conventions, and that these are the things to which we must turn to understand a text. As Barthes has claimed, writing, “the destruction of every voice,” defies adherence to a single interpretation or perspective. That explains why the second occurrence of the phrase “Roland Barthes” is both part of the title and the name of the author. The name or the phrase “Roland Barthes” is presented as a discursive subject and an object of discourse as well. In this way, Roland Barthes seems to unfold Roland Barthes and, simultaneously, intends to conceal Roland Barthes. Since the substance of the self in this literary work is fictional, so then is the self whose autobiography it is. This autobiography is not a self-written life, yet it could be interpreted as a rewritten self. Part of its purpose is to imagine the way in which its author’s memory works. It might explain Barthes’s belief in that the personality itself is fragmented, instead of an integrated ‘whole’. Barthes switches the narrative voice between the first-, second-, and third-person pronouns in *Roland Barthes*. When the narrator uses ‘he’, Barthes asserts his difference from the subject; when he uses ‘you’, he addresses Barthes in what may or may not be a self-address; when he uses ‘I’, he claims identity with the subject. In this respect, Barthes is able to manipulate perceptions to avoid the self settling into one frame of reference. Barthes draws an analogy between text and textiles, declaring that a “text is a tissue [or fabric] of quotations,” drawn from “innumerable centers of culture,” rather than from one, individual experience (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 146). In Barthes’s eyes, any piece of writing is in fact a complex web of cultural meanings, a texture of them, a text. In his eyes, writing is a field of quotations. Barthes claims that “in the multiplicity of writing,” nothing could be “deciphered”, but only “disentangled” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 147). He further argues that “the space of writing is to be ranged over, not pierced; writing ceaselessly posits meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 148) That explains Barthes’s claims:

a **text** is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations to dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is **one place** where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. **The reader is the space** on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination. (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 148)

Now in this multidimensional space, one would encounter the multiplicity of writing, of which everything is **liberated**, nothing is decoded.

In Lefebvre's theory of The Production of Space, the human body plays a role in the interplay between representations relating to space. The body embodies a potentiality of movement and the perceptual field. It is an invitation to action. By responding to this invitation the subject unavoidably gears his/her body into the world. In this sense, "space, along with the way it was measured and spoken of, still helps all the members of a society to an image and a living reflection of their own bodies" (Lefebvre, 111). By Gregory's observation, "Lefebvre is adamant that the decomposition of the human body and the decorporealization of social space cannot be 'laid at the door of language alone'" (226). Therefore, the debate of primordial spatiality is inseparable from our very being in the world. With this idea in mind, Lefebvre's social practice

. . . presupposes the use of the body: the use of the hands, members and sensory organs, and the gestures of work as of activity unrelated to work. This is the realm of the *perceived* (the practical basis of the perception of the outside world, to put it in psychology's terms). As for *representations of the body*, they derive from accumulated scientific knowledge, disseminated with an admixture of ideology. (40)

He further declares that "bodily *lived* experience, for its part, maybe both highly complex and quite peculiar, because 'culture' intervenes here" (40). Yet one may wonder what connection exists between cultures and this abstract body, understood simply as a mediation between 'subject' and 'object'. In fact, as Lefebvre has shown, "the moment the body is envisioned as a practico-sensory totality, a decentering and recentering of knowledge occurs" (61~62). The capitalist mode of production, and its advanced division of labour, in Lefebvre's theory of space, "ha[ve] had as much influence as linguistic discourse on the breaking-down of the body into a mere collection of unconnected parts" (204). By previous arguments, one was informed that Lefebvre's body is already in revolt. This revolt is firmly anchored in the here and now:

[T]he body in question is "our" – our body, which is disdained, absorbed, and broken into pieces by images. Worse than disdained – ignored. This is not a political rebellion, a substitute for social revolution, nor is it a revolt of thought, a revolt of the individual, or a revolt for freedom: it is an elemental and worldwide revolt which does not seek a theoretical foundation, but rather seeks by theoretical means to rediscover – and recognize – its own foundations. (201)

The message indicates that space might carry traces of political power, humans'

non-verbals, and even the human body. As Shaleph O'Neill has observed, "the key to understanding Lefebvre's critique of the production of space is in understanding his explanation of how this focus on rationality and productivity has resulted in not only the alienation of the ludic but also the alienation and exclusion of the body and its extensions" (154).

Barthes's autobiographical work Roland Barthes par Roland Barthes echoes with Lefebvre's argument in abstract space, which highlights the important role the human body has played in the production of social practice. In his work, Barthes's body as part of a text goes beyond the autobiographical interpretations in the received senses. Corresponding with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological stress on the lived experience of a physical individual in contact with the material world, Barthes also attempts to bring the body, in this autobiographical practice, back into discourses in the human sciences. Barthes helps the readers to face the question of how one can critically examine received opinions. He focuses, in particular, on the significance of the image of the body which constitutes the subjectivity of oneself. The body appears most often as sign or image, and "what Barthes values is the simultaneous affirmation in the theatre of body and intellect, nature and culture, with neither term canceling the other" (Moriarty 187). By his literary practice, he interweaves the tension between a text and its author's body. As a forerunner, he rewrites the concept of the human body as part of his construction of a postmodern concept of the human subject. Barthes firstly explores the identity of a self as a fiction. He re-individuates the subject. He remodels the concept of what the writer or speaker is in a traditional sense. Then, he begins from the theoretical fact arguing that desire works from and through the body. Barthes argues that "it is conveniently forgotten that the practical 'I', which is inseparably individual and social, is in a space where it must either recognize itself or lose itself." (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes, 61)

At the price of the suffering of the subject, Barthes presents the body divorcing desire from culture. The body of the subject has an equally transgressive force. Barthes tries to deal with a textual representation of the body in his remarks:

My body exists for myself only in two general forms: migraine and sensuality. These states are not unheard of, but on the contrary quite temperate, accessible, or remediable, as if in either one it had been decided to reduce the glorious or accursed images of the body. Migraine is merely the very first degree of physical pain, and sensuality is for the most part considered only as a kind of reject-version of active pleasure. (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes, 60)

Barthes' statement describes a poor body plagued by headaches and mild sensualities. He alerts readers to his own inconsistencies, as he keeps the body from constituting

itself as an alien, hallucinated site, seat of intense transgressions. “In other words, my body is not a hero” (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes, 66). Barthes deploys the mock-heroic attitude. Moreover, his argument relies on the body as irreducibly individual, unique, and authentic, when he states that “migraine (as I am rather carelessly calling a simple headache) and sensual pleasure are merely coenesthesias, whose function is to individuate my own body” (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes, 66).

Pointing out that one has more than a single body, Barthes further takes the body as a metaphor for the text. He begins to dissolve his own subjectivity. In Barthes’ eyes, the body is presented as an object of science, which can be scientifically analyzed, from a grammatical, semantic, or narratological perspective. It is during the ‘scientific’ phase that the body tends to go underground. The body itself seems to be stereotypical, conforming to an established social type. As Rylance has observed, “the tactics of the ‘dispersed self’ are, in fact, a literary game in which the valorisation of fragmentation is an argumentative and rhetorical counter in the long battle with stereotype” (115). What is more, the body is a subject in which the process of social control unfolds by normalizing and excluding. Barthes also emphasizes that the body is a product of society and of history:

Further, I am captivated to the point of fascination by the socialized body, the mythological body, the artificial body (the body of Japanese costumes) and the prostituted body (of the actor). And beyond these public (literary, written) bodies, I have, I may say, two local bodies: a Parisian body (alert, tired) and a country body (rested, heavy). (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes, 61)

The body is experienced largely through the languages with which we render to ourselves and to others our bodily sensations. Yet, language is highly socially differentiated. As a result, the idea of the body as having a sovereign integrity is, firmly, an illusion. In Barthes’ views, the body has an unstable, fluctuating status which makes it difficult to deliver a pure message. His argument corresponds with Lefebvre’s notions: “[t]he total body constitutes, and produces, the space in which messages, codes, the coded, and the decoded—so many choices to be made—will subsequently emerge” (200). What emerges is a new subject, the conceivability of which tests the limits of the readers’ thoughts about themselves.

If space is realized as a product as Lefebvre claimed, our knowledge of it will reproduce and expound the process of that production. In Lefebvre’s critical eyes, the fantasy of art is “[t]o lead out of what is present, out of what is close, out of representations of space, into what is further off, into nature, into symbols, into representational space” (231~232). Barthes’s radical vision of critical reading in “The

Death of an Author” reverses the balance of authority and power between author and reader. This revision of the idea of subjectivity has had important reverberations for our conception of knowledge generally and our notion of history in particular. Barthes claims: “we are now beginning to let ourselves be fooled no longer by the arrogant antiphrastical recriminations of good society in favor of the very thing it sets aside, ignores, smother, or destroys; we know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 148). That explains why Barthes believes that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 148). In this respect, “The Death of the Author” is a must-read for those who want to see the most significant changes in thinking about literature. With its proclamation of the death of the author and the birth of the reader, Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes can be viewed as a laboratory for creating a new discourse and producing a new space. What experiments clearly undermine the western previous classical conceptions of the subject self. Barthes’ autobiographical book asserts the reader’s freedom to do more than simply absorb a meaning prepackaged by the author. His artistic practice is an invitation to a new practice of writing and reading and comprehending. Barthes himself also convincingly states: “This science will be unheard of, for it will overturn the habitual instances of expression, of reading, and of listening to “truth,” “reality,” “sincerity” (Roland Barthes, Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes, 67). As a result, the reader of Roland Barthes Par Roland Barthes might create his/her own activity. It is “an activity that is truly revolutionary since to refuse meaning is, in the end, to refuse God and his hypostases—reason, science, law” (Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 147). This revolutionary space, by which everything is liberated and nothing is decoded, exactly corresponds with Lefebvre’s theory of “abstract space,” within which a dialectical relationship is established and produces the transformative force in the space of literary practices. Lefebvre’s “abstract space” also leads a revolt, stating that “it is an elemental and worldwide revolt which does not seek a theoretical foundation, but rather seeks by theoretical means to rediscover—and recognize—its own foundations” (201). Barthes’ artistic work is regarded as a production in (social) space and marks as a transition between modes of production in (social) spaces. Within this process of transition, Roland Barthes has presented a new mode of production, which is assumed to have its own particular space. This new space, according to my arguments, corresponds with Lefebvre’s theory of “abstract space,” within which a dialectical relationship between an old discourse and a new one is developed, and “a differential space” is created, in which the transformative force is produced. A radical change in the production of literary practices in social spaces is underway.

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