

Methods of Translating: **Rewriting**

Understanding the layout 1

The Death of the Author

I noticed that it was difficult for me to understand what Roland Barthes was saying in his book, as it was written in a very 'serious' manner. I found the chunks of text cramped together into a rectangle of a layout to be very monotonous and less breathable while trying to understand the contents of the text

The Death of the Author

In his story *Sarrasine* Balzac, describing a castrato disguised as a woman, writes the following sentence: '*This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility.*' Who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story bent on remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author professing 'literary' ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.

No doubt it has always been that way. As soon as a fact is *narrated* no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins. The sense of this phenomenon, however, has varied; in ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose 'performance' – the mastery of the narrative code – may possibly be admired but never his 'genius'. The author is a modern figure, a product of our society insofar as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism.

Understanding the layout 2

One Publishes to Find Comrades

I found this editorial design of to be much more appealing and easy to comprehend, with spaced-out type layouts that broke the monotony with images was an easier and more relaxed read.

One Publishes to Find Comrades *

Eva Weinmayr

Before London's notorious right-wing newspaper Evening Standard was sold to a Russian Oligarch in 2009, it used to publish three editions a day, a practice ceased by now. The first edition left the printing plant just before lunchtime, followed by one in the afternoon and a late "West End Final" edition available only in central London. Alongside each edition the newspaper's drivers dropped a poster at the newsstands, the "splash", as they called it, advertising the latest front-page headline of the paper.

A few of them read like:

Venus crosses the sun
Rock star splits from young lover
Man beheaded in street
Cigarettes, beer, wine, up
Comic legend dies
Army: we must go within days
Brown gives cash to all

The poster slogans do not give away full information and merely act like teasers promising more detail in the paper. Their sole purpose is to get you buying the newspaper. The posters also exude a sense of poetry. Like Japanese haikus they shrink complex realities into three or four lines – loaded with emotion. Carefully and ambiguously worded, they are pushing for drama and a raised level of adrenaline.

They also have a punchy visual impact – partly because they employ a particular nib-pen writing with an authoritative look. When studying the letters closely, you can tell, that 99% of the posters in circulation are written by one and the same person.

With the help of London based artist publishing house Book Works, who published my archive of the newsstand posters in a book¹, I was able to meet Pat, the man whose handwriting most Londoners are familiar with. Here in the Evening Standard's bill room at their headquarters in Canada Water in London, he used to write day by day with a black marker pen the master poster, which subsequently got multiplied on an instant offset press for immediate delivery to the newsstands.



¹ Eva Weinmayr, "Suitcase Body is Missing Woman", published by Book Works, London, 2005

Rewriting

I rewrote the text using the layout of the second book as guidelines and used the content I had within the first book. I had typography to my disposal. I did keep the tone of it matched with the second book as I did not want to make it 'too fun', else I thought it would lose the 'seriousness' it is supposed to have in the first place.

The Death of the Author

Roland Barthes

In his story *Sarrasine* Balzac, describing a castrato disguised as a woman, writes the following sentence: 'This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility' Who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story bent on remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman?

Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of Woman? Is it Balzac the author professing 'literary' ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology

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No doubt it has always been that way. As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs.

The voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.

The sense of this phenomenon, however, has varied; in ethnographic societies the responsibility for a narrative is never assumed by a person but by a mediator, shaman or relator whose 'performance' - the mastery of the narrative code - may possibly be admired but never his 'genius'.

The next two pages are two pages from 'The Death of the Author' writing in the editorial design style of 'One Publishes to Find Comrades'



The Death of the Author

Roland Barthes

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The author is a modern figure, a product of our society in so far as, emerging from the Middle Ages with English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation, it discovered the prestige of the individual, of, as it is more nobly put, the 'human person'.

It is thus logical that in literature it should be this positivism, the epitome and culmination of capitalist ideology, which has attached the greatest importance to the 'person' of the author.

The author still reigns in histories of literature, biographies of writers, interviews, magazines, as in the very consciousness of men of letters anxious to unite their person and their work through diaries and memoirs.

The image of literature to be found in ordinary culture is tyrannically centred on the author, his person, his life, his tastes, his passions, while criticism still consists for the most part in saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of Baudelaire the man, Van Gogh's his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice.

The explanation of a work is always sought in the man or woman who produced it, as if it were always in the end, through the more or less transparent allegory of the fiction, the voice of a single person, the author 'confiding' in us. Though the sway of the Author remains powerful (the new criticism has often done no more than consolidate it), it goes without saying that certain writers have long since attempted to loosen it.

In France, Mallarmé was doubtless the first to see and to foresee in its full extent the necessity to substitute language itself for the person who until then had been supposed to be its owner.

For him, for us too, it is language which speaks, not the author; to write is, through a prerequisite impersonality (not at all to be confused with the castrating objectivity of the realist novelist), to reach that point where only language acts, ‘performs’, and not ‘me’.

Mallarmé's entire poetics consists in suppressing the author in the interests of writing (which is, as will be seen, to restore the place of the reader). Valéry, encumbered by a psychology of the Ego, considerably diluted Mallarmé's theory but, his taste for classicism leading him to turn to the lessons of rhetoric, he never stopped calling into question and deriding the Author; he stressed the linguistic and, as it were, 'hazardous' nature of his activity, and throughout his prose works he militated in favour of the essentially verbal condition of literature,

in the face of which all recourse to the writer's interiority seemed to him pure superstition.

Proust himself, despite the apparently psychological character of what are called his analyses, was visibly concerned with the task of inexorably blurring, by an extreme subtilization, the relation between the writer and his characters; by making of the narrator not he who has seen and felt nor even he who is writing, but he who is going to write (the young man in the novel, but, in fact, how old is he and who is he?

Wants to write but cannot

the novel ends when writing at last becomes possible), Proust gave modern writing its epic.