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Transparency, Incalculability, *Mythologies* Today

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What would it mean to speak of the 'migration into the Anglophone world' of Barthes's *Mythologies*? There are many ways in which one could answer such a question. Does 'theory' still exist, is it now dead? To employ Michael Payne's and John Schad's title, what does it currently mean to live 'after theory' and what is the current status of the translation (from a series of European words) that gave us the word 'theory'?[1] Is Barthes now immured within that archive once known as *belles lettres*? or is there a need to return to what must be Barthes's most widely consumed text (*Mythologies*) within the Anglophone world? What has been and will be the fate of semiology? *Mythologies* is indisputably a core influence on the rise of Cultural Studies in the 'worlds' to which we are referring. Thinking about *Mythologies* today inevitably leads us to consider the status and function of Cultural Studies.

Mythologies is perhaps the key text for Cultural Studies, and yet, within this context of influence and translation, one cannot but remember Barthes's closing remarks in the 'Necessity and limits of mythology' section of 'Myth Today.'[2] There Barthes, characteristically, positions himself ('the mythologist himself') as an excluded and alienated figure. Unable to enjoy the goodness of things ('wine is objectively good, and *at the same time*, the goodness of wine is a myth: here is the aporia'), he is also shut out from the history his critique of today's mythologies points towards: 'For him, tomorrow's positivity is entirely hidden by today's negativity' (M, p.157; OC, p.718). The *outsider* position Barthes ultimately assigns to the mythologist is important, given the history of the assimilation of Cultural Studies into the Anglophone university. It might be

reasonable to assume that this is something Barthes would have found inevitable and deeply regrettable, radically compromising the very analysis of ideological structures *Mythologies* attempted to encourage. I say *might* because we have to question what Barthes is being referred to here. Who do we refer to when we refer to Roland Barthes? In a retrospective essay such as this – and the subject of this collection foregrounds the issue – we can only legitimately refer to 'a Barthes,' 'a Barthes' situated at a particular stage of what Derrida calls the 'passage' and the 'periods' of Barthes's life and writing.[3] Barthes, at least the Barthes of *Mythologies*, might have agreed with Bill Readings's critique of Antony Easthope's assessment of the universal applicability of Cultural Studies.[4] In *The University in Ruins*, Readings argues:

> there is a direct ratio between the intensity of apocalyptic claims for the institutional potential of Cultural Studies and their absence of explanatory power. What allows Cultural Studies to occupy the entire field of the humanities without resistance is their very *academicization of culture*, their taking culture as the object of the University's desire for knowledge, rather than as the object that the University produces. Culture ceases to mean anything *as such*; it is dereferentialized.[5]

As part of the institution of the university, so Readings's argument goes, Cultural Studies absorbs the kind of semiological analysis of mythology practised by Barthes (the Barthes of *Mythologies*) into the processes of social reproduction.[6]

We cannot stay with Readings's critique of Cultural Studies, however. His book, itself an example of a form of 'cultural studies,' dramatically demonstrates that the very nature of the relationship between the university and culture has changed and continues to change. This change, *contra* Readings's account, has not simply to do with the collapse of the nation-state in the face of the epoch of globalism. It has also to do with the collapse of the very idea of the 'relative autonomy' upon which the idea of the modern

university was first established in the work of Kant and German Romantic philosophy.[7] Today's university is part of the general economy of the nation-state, itself part of a larger global economy. There is nothing now which separates the university from the other public institutions and the wider community save a mythology or set of mythologies concerning traditional notions of interiority and privilege. The university is now a metonymic part of a general economy (at one and the same time national and transnational); autonomy has been replaced by all the apparatus of accountability. In this scenario it makes little sense to criticize Cultural Studies for bringing culture inside the university as an object of study, since the university (what I would call the 'transparent university') no longer has anything but porous, more frequently see-through walls. It makes no more sense to argue for a return to a Cultural Studies directly inspired by the Barthes of *Mythologies*, however, since, as the Barthes of the early 1970s noted, whilst mythology remains as dominant as ever, the method of reading it has radically altered:

> Has anything changed? Not French society …. there is still a great deal of *the mythic* in our society: equally anonymous, slippery, fragmented, garrulous, available both to an ideological criticism and to a semiological dismantling. No, what has changed in the last fifteen years is the *science of reading*, under whose scrutiny myth, like an animal captured and observed, nonetheless becomes a *different object*.[8]

In 'La mythologie aujourd'hui,' Barthes refers to Lacan, but it is clear that deconstruction is a significant factor in this change in the science of reading. As Barthes puts it in the Preface to the 1970 edition:

> semiological analysis, initiated, at least as far as I am concerned, in the final essay of *Mythologies*, has developed, become more precise, complicated and differentiated: it has become the theoretical locus wherein a certain liberation of 'the significant', in our country and in the West, may well be enacted. (M, p.9)

Questions of whether Cultural Studies academicizes 'culture' or can still contribute to a transformation of a culture posited outside of the academy's walls are far less important (redundant even) compared to this question of method. In this paper, by returning to *Mythologies*, I want to suggest that the key to the 'after life' of theory and the analysis of culture rests on the issue of disciplinarity. Put simply, Cultural Studies (understood as the analysis of contemporary ideological and mythological languages, structures and forces) is as vital today as it ever was; it cannot be conducted in an effective and relevant way, however, if it depends on the promotion of an institutional discipline of Cultural Studies. 'Theory,' if that word involves the production of culture, obviously occurs within and across disciplines; it does not occur as result of them, even if they are self-declared culture-producing disciplines. 'Theory,' I would argue, cannot have one authentic (proper) disciplinary home. Paradoxically, *Mythologies*, a text upon which Cultural Studies was partly built, can remind us of this fact when we return to it from our current historical position.

Fifty years on, *Mythologies* has much to offer us in our necessary attempt to analyze and critique the mythologies which currently pervade our social environment. In particular, I want to argue, it is necessary to return to *Mythologies* to examine what it can offer us in our analysis of the contemporary rhetoric of transparency, by which I mean the unavoidable discourses of accountability, evaluation, quality-control, performance indicators, the imperatives of excellence, productivity and above all calculability. All these terms have a large mythological function within national and transnational contexts today, which means they possess a duality of signification which led the Barthes of *Mythologies* to adopt a technique of neologism: *sininess*, *Basquity*, *governmentality*,

bouvard-and-pécuchet-ity. As he states: 'there is no fixity in mythical concepts: they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely' (M, p.120; OC, p.691). I take it that part of the change in the 'science of reading' Barthes figures in the early 1970s is that instead of attempting to fix these mythological concepts through a practice of neologistic invention, our task today is to take on the painstaking (deconstructive) work of following the twists, turns and transformations, the divisions, distinctions and aporias they generate. Our task, in fact, is to unfix them, to open the lid on their internal contradictions, divisions and aporias.

In order for *Mythologies* to help us today we must return to it with a reading that privileges singularity, unrepeatability, the unquantifiable, the inimitable, the incalculable. I use these concepts with an eye on 'The Deaths of Roland Barthes,' in which Derrida explores the relation between the metonymic and the singular, the iterable and the unrepeatable, and, to employ the terms he takes from Barthes's *La chambre claire*, Studium and Punctum. The force of Derrida's reading, which we need to remember is a mourning text, a mourning text on a mourning text, can be at least partly summarized in the following extract:

> Remaining as attentive as possible to all the differences, one must be able to speak of a *punctum* in all signs (and repetition or iterability already structures it), in any discourse, whether literary or not. As long as we do not hold to some naïve and 'realist' referentialism, it is the relation to some unique and irreplaceable referent that *interests* us and animates our most sound and studied readings: what took place only once, while dividing itself already, in the sights or in front of the lens of the *Phaedo* or *Finnegans Wake*, the *Discourse on Method* or Hegel's *Logic*, John's *Apocalypse* or Mallarmé's *Coup de dés*. (Derrida, 'Deaths,' p.61)

To say that myth is the product of the iterable appears indisputable. Demonstrating the iterable structures (what structure is not iterable?) behind myth's production of

miraculous singularities is, of course, one of the principal features of *Mythologies*. Whether it be the apparently unique genius of child poet Minou Drouet, an exhibition of 'shock' photographs, or the 'wonderful singularity of the writer' (M, p.30; OC, p.581), Barthes's essays exist in order to return fake singularities to the repeatable functions that generate their mythic status. *Mythologies* reads singularity and unrepeatability in terms of the myth of 'Nature' and 'Essence' and its version of semiological analysis exists to return these phenomena to the political sphere from which they have been falsely separated:

> Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. If I *state the fact* of French imperiality without explaining it, I am very near to finding that it is natural and *goes without saying*: I am reassured. (M, p.143; OC, p.708)

One would imagine that *Mythologies* would resolutely resist a reading that privileged concepts of singularity, unrepeatability and the incalculable. One would imagine that it would read these concepts back into the iterable social and political functions which bourgeois culture attempts to utilize and hide. How could semiology speak for singularity and the incalculable? Is not the purpose of semiology to return the incalculable to the political realm of socio-cultural structures, systems, functions, discourses and iterable names? Why would we, save for the sake of the work of mourning, privilege notions of singularity, unrepeatability and the incalculable?

There are many answers. One can be found in *Mythologies* and its recurrent exposure of petit-bourgeois culture's obsession with calculation and what Barthes calls 'quantification.'[9] In this rereading of *Mythologies* Barthes's attack on the right-wing

politician, Pierre Poujade, becomes highly significant. The essays on Poujade are a key resource for opening up Barthes's critique of the petit-bourgeoisie's emphasis on calculability. Returning to *Mythologies* after fifty years allows us to see how an aspect of a politically localized and mixed attack on economic centralization now reads like a description of the dominant ideological rhetoric of our time.[10] I am not suggesting that the Union for the Defence of Shopkeepers and Artisans was anything more than a footnote in French history. I am suggesting that the insistence on calculability Barthes observes within poujadist rhetoric has become for us something more than a local, personality-driven issue.

Against what Barthes calls 'l'infini du monde' (OC, 1, p.614), we are presented, in 'Quelques paroles de M. Poujade,' with the petit-bourgeoisie's insistence on equivalences: 'a whole mathematics of the equation reassures the petit bourgeois, makes him a world to the measure of his dealings' (ET, p.51; OC, 1, p.614). What Barthes is describing is a petit-bourgeois insistence on an economy of payment and repayment which fosters a kind of 'moral bookkeeping' ('comptabilité morale') (ET, p.52; OC, 1, p.614) in which 'qualitative values' are replaced by 'a statics of equivalences (an eye for an eye, effect vs. cause, merchandise [*marchandise*] vs. money, penny for penny, etc.)' (ET, p.52; OC, 1, p.614). Barthes, reading Poujade as a spokesman for this petit-bourgeois 'moral bookkeeping,' argues that he pits the tautological ideology of equivalences against 'the dialectic' which Poujade himself 'confuses … with sophistry' (ET, p.52; OC, 1, p.614). This leads Barthes to a sustained account of the manner in which petit-bourgeois culture founds its value-system on calculation:

> We defeat the dialectic only by an incessant return to calculation, to the computation of human behaviour, to what Monsieur Poujade, in agreement with etymology, calls Reason …. Indeed, the

> dialectic risks opening this world we have so carefully closed over its equalities; insofar as the dialectic is a technique of transformation, it contradicts the numerative structure of ownership, it escapes the petit-bourgeois limits, and is therefore first anathematized, then declared an illusion: once again degrading an old romantic theme (which then was a bourgeois one), Monsieur Poujade dispenses with all the techniques of the intelligence, asserting petit-bourgeois 'reason' against the sophisms and dreams of academics and intellectuals discredited by their mere position outside of a computable reality. ('France is stricken with an over production of men with diplomas, polytechnicians, economists, philosophers, and other dreamers who have lost all contact with the real world').
>
> We know now what petit-bourgeois reality is: it is not even what is seen, it is what is counted …. (ET, p.52; OC, 1, pp.614-5).

The poujadist world-view presented here and elsewhere in *Mythologies* is one in which not only must everything have an economic exchange-value, but, despite that last truncated sentence, must equally, logically, be visible. Visibility and calculability are reinforcing forces, since if a thing can be counted (even a thing which is 'not seen') then it must be 'visible.' A thing cannot be valued in this poujadist system unless it can be *brought to view* and in that way made valuable by exchangeability. This visible universe of things (equalities, equivalences, materialities) implies, Barthes states, 'the refusal of alterity, the negation of the different, the euphoria of identity, and the exaltation of the "kind"' (ET, p.53; OC, 1, p.615). The implication is clear, poujadism denies that which cannot be counted and brought to view (to be counted). The dialectic, in Barthes's account, just as clearly involves, like Poujade's mythologized intellectuals, something that lies 'outside of computable reality.'

The experience of rereading 'Quelques paroles de M. Poujade,' from our current socio-cultural position, is to witness the rise of a particular aspect of petit-bourgeois

ideology that now (in a form it would not be able to recognize or accept) dominates every sphere of public, institutional, political and cultural life. Cris Shore's and Susan Wright's excellent collection of essays, *auditing culture*, gives readers an extremely clear and challenging account of the phenomenon I am referring to. They write:

> What we seem to be witnessing throughout the university sector, as in numerous other domains of life, are the curious effects of what anthropologists have termed 'audit culture', and in particular, a form of 'coercive accountability' that can be explicitly linked to the spread of a new form of managerialism based on neoliberal techniques of governance. The key features of this new regime of governance include, *inter alia*, a fixation with the measurement, quantification and 'benchmarking' of seemingly all aspects of university life; the invention of a plethora of new 'performance indicators' (not to mention the creation of a whole new vocabulary to enable the new auditor-experts to assess and rank 'quality' and 'excellence') and an explosion of new league tables to render commensurable hitherto unimaginable phenomena. Thus, we now have national league tables that rank everything from hospital deaths, police responses, academic output and benefit fraud, to court occupancy, bench cleaning, cervical cancers and primary school test results. All of these areas must now be scrutinized, quantified, statistically ranked and 'rendered visible' either to the consumer or, as in most cases, to the anonymous gaze of the State and its bureaucratic machinery.[11]

If something is not countable, in this world of universalized poujadism, then it cannot be part of what is called 'reality.' Barthes's analysis of this ideology of the visible and the countable begins, in the essay that follows ('Adamov et le langage'), to offer an explanation of what I have been calling *transparency*: 'As we have just seen, our poujadist good sense consists in establishing a simple equivalence between what is seen and what is' (ET, p.55; OC, 1, p.615). The context of Barthes's statement is a play that lacks symbolism and thus conventional literary meaning ('*Ping-Pong* ne symbolise rien du tout' [OC, 1, p.616]) but cannot be left in that state by a culture in which such a

phenomenon represents a dangerous, non-exchangeable, non-countable singularity. Today, one could add many other examples of things that must be brought to view in order to be counted, including knowledge (research, *bildung*, judgement) and teaching (in all its myriad forms). Transparency, as I employ it, is a figure which speaks to the ruling ideology of our day, in which everything must be calculable. It refers to a myth of total visibility (and thus total calculability) which presents itself in terms of a political and ethical imperative, namely accountability. If something cannot be calculated it cannot be made visible to a public accounting (by and within institutions, individual members of those institutions, responsible bodies, government agencies, costumers, and ultimately the wider public or mediarized 'nation'). Transparency literally sees through whatever cannot be counted and accounted, whether that be the fact that teaching occurs between specific individual human subjects in specific (historical) moments in time and in specific spaces, or the differences between academic books or even what Derek Attridge, discussing these matters, calls the singularity of literature.[12]

Transparency attempts to see through academic judgement in the university, just as it tries to see through the situated human judgement of doctors and nurses, policemen and policewomen in specific moments of response, or the social worker confronted with a crisis requiring immediate action. All arms of the public sphere are now under the sign of a transparent force which requires that acts of judgement not only be brought to view for accounting but must in fact by calculated before the fact. The culture of transparency, in instituting a general law of calculability, seeks to eradicate the possibility of *the event*, even at its most trivial, or pathetic, non-apocalyptic levels.

I am suggesting, then, not only that *Mythologies* presents a sustained critique of our current ideological environment, but that it does so in ways which, even against the grain of the semiological approach employed within it, suggests the necessity for a 'science of reading' which would articulate a defence of singularity and incalculability. It is important, for instance, that Barthes stresses the rationalism of the petit-bourgeois insistence on calculation. In 'L'usager de la grève' ('The Man in the Street on Strike'), he writes:

> Contrary to what we might suppose about petit-bourgeois dreams, this class has a tyrannical, infinitely sensitive notion of causality: the basis of its morality is not magical at all, but rational. Only, it is a linear, narrow rationality based on effects. (ET, p.100; OC, 1, p.645).

The current ideology of transparency and calculability is not an irrationalism, but a mode of reason (reduced to the level of accounting, of drawing equivalences, equalities, and analogies) that calls irrational and unreal anything that refuses (within itself, as part of its essential performance or being) to *come to view*. It is precisely that quantified, quantifying mode of reason that Barthes attributes to poujadism in 'Poujade et les intellectuals.' Poujadism is at once rational (uses a kind of reason and rationalism) and yet is highly suspicious of the rational sciences, because reason contains within itself a potential for excess or, in other words, for a movement beyond that of accountability. Barthes writes:

> Science and knowledge, for Poujade, are curiously capable of excess. Since every human phenomenon, even every mental one, exists only in terms of quantity, it suffices to compare its volume to the capacity of the average Poujadist in order to declare it excessive: it is probable that the *excesses* of science are precisely where Poujade finds it to be useless. But this quantification is precious to Poujadist rhetoric, since it engenders monsters, i.e., those polytechnicians who support a pure, abstract science which applies to reality only in a punitive form. (ET, p.129; OC, 1, p.676)

Barthes's analysis of Poujade's anti-intellectualism centres, then, on the manner in which the scientific and intellectual disciplines exceed the legitimate boundary of what is useful and quantifiable. They must be brought back into the fold and under control. The poujadist response to the threat of excess (which I am reading in terms of a resistance to visibility, and thus to incalculability) can only be, once again, prophetic for us of the climate of transparency and accountability within which we find ourselves. Poujadism, like today's culture of transparency and accountability, transforms excess into a lack of productivity, which can then be mastered through Research Assessment Exercises, national Quality Control programmes, and an exponentially accelerating environment of tests, surveys, evaluations and performance indicators:

> Here appears a theme dear to all strong regimes: the identification of intellectuality with idleness; the intellectual is by definition lazy, he will have to be put to work once and for all, it will be necessary to convert an activity which can be measured only by its harmful excess into a *concrete* labor, i.e., accessible to Poujadist measurement. We find that ultimately there can be no labor more quantified – and hence more beneficial – than to dig holes or to pile stones: that is labor in the pure state, and moreover it is the labor which all post-Poujadist regimes logically end by reserving for the *idle intellectual*. (ET, p.130; OC, 1, p.677)

As Barthes adds: for poujadist ideology, 'the head is a suspect site insofar as its products are qualitative, not quantitative' (ET, p.130; OC, 1, p.677).

It is at this point of this brief experiment in rereading *Mythologies* that the emphasis I have placed on singularity and incalculability, the same emphasis that in a different context Derrida makes when reading Barthes, becomes clear. The central mode of resistance to what I have been calling the culture of transparency must be a complex, rigorous and uncompromising articulation of the necessity of what does not and cannot come to view.[13] In today's transparent universities, for example, when we are instructed

to operate calculable methods for teaching and research our (dialectical) responsibility is towards all those aspects of teaching and research which are either consigned to the realm of the invisible and the unsayable, or are by their very nature invisible and resistant to articulation. Books cannot be counted as if they were commodities, so we must find ways of articulating and defending their singularity and incalculability, even within the contexts of such insistent forces as the Research Assessment Exercise. Teaching depends on a host of incalculable phenomena, such as desire, transference, emulation, ethnic and regional difference, class and 'culture', the relationship between private histories and public modes of discourse, the uncertain, telepathic ways in which knowledge and culture are conveyed and received. Our responsibility, once again, is to explore and defend the fundamental aspects of teaching (where teaching involves knowledge, rather than simply information), even in the context of the bureaucratization of 'delivery' and 'outcomes.' As Barthes states of authentic literature (rather than bourgeois Literature): 'Literature, however, only begins in front of the unnamable, facing the perception of an elsewhere alien to the very language which seeks it out' ('La Littérature ne commence pourtant que devant l'innommable, face à la perception d'un *ailleurs* étranger au langage meme qui le cherche') (ET, p.118; OC, 1, p.661). The semiological method practised in *Mythologies* will not help us in such an articulation, but it can significantly remind us of its necessity today. The Cultural Studies partly inspired by Barthes's book must move beyond the field of the visible, the audible, and the iterable. I am, of course, referring to Cultural Studies as a discipline, in fact the 'idea' of a discipline, which would continue and develop the socio-culturally transformative work of 'theory.' As a discipline, Cultural Studies inevitably strives to fix (define, position, distinguish, map, name) its object(s) of study. It

has to do this *as a discipline* in order to define its own intellectual and institutional disciplinary identity. I have just broken off writing and gone to the bookshelf for an example of the Cultural Studies I am attempting to describe. A certain randomness, a certain openness to chance, is also important in the resistance to transparency I am suggesting here. The apparent randomness, or at least the visible contingency, of the selection of subjects is, of course, one of the lasting pleasures of *Mythologies* and of Barthes's oeuvre generally. The book my eyes alighted on was John Storey's *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*.[14] The first chapter of the book is indicatively titled 'What is Popular Culture?' Storey finishes his preamble with the following: 'The main argument which I suspect students will take from this book is that popular culture is in effect an empty conceptual category, one that can be filled in a wide variety of often conflicting ways depending on the context of use.'[15] There appears to be no doubt that in one way or another this empty signifier will be and must be 'filled' (Determined, named, fixed). For Cultural Studies to perform the task of critique and transformation so necessary today, it needs to spread itself across the university and beyond (where is the border?), and promote the difficult work of exploring and speaking for those things which do not come to view and do not count (cannot be counted). Rather than a discipline with a disciplinary method or methods, Cultural Studies today must be and act like a 'foreign body' within (and beyond) the institutional arena of disciplines.[16]

The culture of transparency depends on a vast array of unnameable and invisible processes, but it is not the case that what I am naming invisible and incalculable are exempt, somehow (magically) outside of the economic order. These unnameable processes may in fact be what make the economic and the symbolic realms possible. But

they are also what potentially disturb them and question the legitimacy they gift themselves. Two examples. The vision of a European Higher Education Area made law by the Bologna Treaty presents us with a trans-national field which is utterly transparent (students' ECTs can be read without need for translation and without interference or distortion) and yet which, in the Treaty's Eurocentric rhetoric, magically retains each participating country's educational and institutional traditions (or idiosycracies).[17] In a similar way, the now universal demand for Learning Outcomes for all university modules implies that student learning (and what do we mean by that?) can be calculated and guaranteed long before the teacher (and one presumes they have something more than information to impart, something like a culture, *bildung*) meets the specific, individual, and 'singular' students who will this year constitute the class. Such institutional discourses (of learning and accountability) force the essential singularity and incalculability (one cannot do without them, even if one tries) into the realms of the invisible and the unsayable. Such demands, such ideological forces would, if they could, and they always speak the language of the victor, make student and teacher transparent bodies; bodies which can be calculated, seen through, and ultimately guaranteed; bodies that are accountable, because on the level of language (the official language of transparency) they possess no resistant substance. The dialectic, however, remains, as Barthes knew and continued to state, and it makes itself felt, first and foremost, on the level of language's (the sign's) opacity, its resistance to instrumentalist transparency, the current dream of total calculation.

It may seem that all I have done here is to read *Mythologies* in terms of Barthes's later, 'post-structuralist' work. In fact, by keeping that work *in reserve*, by remaining

silent on it and keeping it (for the time of this essay) silent, I have attempted to demonstrate how *Mythologies* can still speak to us today, how it demands a rereading and rethinking which is properly historical rather than simply archival. The historical rereading of *Mythologies* is dialectical only if it provides us with a text that we did not (because we could not) see before, and which in its own terms (apparently now defunct) reflects back to us aspects of our current socio-political climate we struggle (in our own terms) to analyze and resist. But such an historical rereading is not guaranteed, it can only be wagered. When the forces to be resisted are those of transparency and calculability, there can be no disciplinary critique, only a wager on the incalculable and the (for now) unrepresentable. What stands between us and *Mythologies* is the (later) Barthes who articulated this need for a non-disciplinary wager, which he positioned firmly within what he called 'literature.' So I conclude with Barthes's inaugural address to the Collège de France, three years before his death, and I finish the citation at the point where death, which, as Derrida notes, Barthes associated with the name, with the tendency in language to impose names, to fix names and fix things through names, is, if not defeated, then at least, if only for a time, resisted:

> semiology is not a grid; it does not permit a direct apprehension of the real through the imposition of a general transparency which would render it intelligible. It seeks instead to elicit the real, in places and by moments, and it says that these efforts to elicit the real are possible without a grid. It is in fact precisely when semiology comes to be a grid that it elicits nothing at all. We can therefore say that semiology has no substitutive role with regard to any discipline. It is my hope that semiology will replace no other inquiry here, but will, on the contrary, help all the rest, that its chair will be a kind of wheelchair, the wild card of contemporary knowledge, as the sign itself is the wild card of all discourse.
>
> This negative semiology is an active semiology: it functions outside death.[18]

Notes:

1. Michael Payne and John Schad (eds) *life. after. theory* (London and New York: Continuum, 2003), pp.7-8.

2. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Jonathan Cape, 1972), pp.156-9. Hereafter M. Roland Barthes, *Œuvres completes*, 3 vols., ed. Éric Marty (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993-1995), Vol. 1, pp.717-9. Hereafter OC.

3. Jacques Derrida, 'The Deaths of Roland Barthes', trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, in *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp.31-67 (p.38). Hereafter 'Deaths.'

4. Antony Easthope, *Literature into Cultural Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991).

5. Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), p.99).

6. I take the phrase, of course, from Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, 2nd Ed., trans. Richard Nice (London: Sage Publications, 1990).

7. Immanuel Kant, 'The Conflict of the Faculties,' in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant*, gen. eds. Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. and ed. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.247-327.

8. Roland Barthes, 'Mythology Today,' in *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp.65-8 (p.66). See OC, Vol. 2, pp. 1183-5 (p.1183).

9. Roland Barthes, *The Eiffel Tower and Other Mythologies*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1997), p.129. Hereafter ET.

10. I say 'mixed' because, as Robert Gildea reminds us, Poujade's movement was temporarily supported by the Communist Party. See Robert Gildea, *France Since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.48.

11. Cris Shore and Susan Wright, 'Whose Accountability? Governmentality and the Auditing of Universities,' in *parallax* 31, 2004, *auditing culture*, ed. Cris Shore and Susan Wright, pp.100-16 (p.100).

12. Derek Attridge, *The Singularity of Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

13. See, for example, Jacques Derrida, 'Les pupilles de l'Université: Le principe de raison et l'idée de l'université' in *Du droit à la philosophie* (Paris: Galilée, 1990), pp.461-98. For the English translation see *Eyes of the University: Right to Philosophy 2*, trans. Jan Plug & Others (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp.129-55.

14. John Storey, *An Introduction to Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 2nd Ed. (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

15. Storey, ibid, p.1.

16. See Nicholas Royle, 'Foreign Body: The deconstruction of a pedagogical institution and all that it implies,' in *After Derrida* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp.143-58.

17. See Graham Allen, 'Transparency and Teaching: Thinking Through Bologna,' in *Theory Culture Society*, 23: 2-3, 2006, *Problematizing Global Knowledge*, pp.568-70.

18. Roland Barthes, 'Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France,' in *Barthes: Selected Writings*, ed. Susan Sontag (Oxford: Fontana, 1983), p.457-78 (p.474).