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Ca' Foscari University of Venice

Master Degree Programme in

European, American, and Postcolonial Languages and Literatures

Final Thesis

Writing as Laboring: The Making of the Writing Subject

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Abstract

When Roland Barthes published his seminal essay "The Death of the Author" (1967), he destabilized the authority that is etymologically linked to the term "author." The word "author" indicates a problematic figure whose meaning does not accurately represent writing as a creative and embodied activity. By contrast, this thesis attempt to theorize a writing subject understood as a literary agent who emerges through the composition of a literary piece. In order to open the space for interpretation and wrestle with the implications of Barthes's essay, this thesis will argue that the "author" is a worker. Additionally, Julia Kristeva's theory of language will be used as a foundation upon which the writing subject will be theorized as a laborer. Work and labor will therefore carry different meanings, even though in everyday life they are often used synonymously. Hannah Arendt argues that the purpose of "work" is to build durable objects, while labor is tied to basic survival. For example, in her work, she argues that in our contemporary world, work and labor have been used to designate similar activities. Yet, in the ancient world, the Greeks and Romans used different terms, *ponein* in Greek and *facere* in Latin. In the philosophical meaning of these two words lies the essence of why the writing subject is a laborer and the author a worker. The former designates the emotional labor of human experience but with a noble purpose, which is to create art. In the act of writing, the writing subject labors through chaos to write something beautiful. *Facere,* with its Roman philosophical roots of establishing and creating something, makes an author a *homo faber* who turns the fluid process of writing into a rigid object, which is a book. To track the true death of the author and rise of the writing subject, the thesis is structured as follows: Chapter I focus on the author and its problematic etymological history through the lens of Roland Barthes's critical work. Chapter II demonstrates how the writing subject is theorized through the work of Julia Kristeva. Finally, Chapter III reads two novels, *Walden (*1854*)* and *The Making of Americans (*1925*)* by Henry David Thoreau and Gertrude Stein, respectively, to demonstrate how the writing subject weaves the text with the thread of their thoughts thus laboring with language.

Key Words: Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Henry D. Thoreau, Gertrude Stein, Author, Writing Subject

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Introduction

On November 1, 2024, a tragic accident took place at Novi Sad Train Station when sixteen people died, either immediately or as a result of life-threatening injuries. Following the accident, the student community in Serbia was at the forefront of nationwide demands for accountability. Moreover, students held protest walks and other grassroots initiatives at their home faculties, held plenums, and voiced their dissatisfaction with the government's impunity and failed institutions. Ljiljana Kolarski, in her essay "Civil Society in Serbia: A Force for Change or a Target for Suppression," writes that students "cycled from Novi Sad to Strasbourg and ran from Novi Sad to Brussels, carrying a message of justice, accountability, and urgent reform" (3). Such a historic moment is reminiscent of the student-led protests in many countries in Europe in the 1960s. What both events share is that students began to protest against established sources of authority, social hierarchy, and restrictive university education. In the former, a tragedy stripped away the corrosive and oppressive political apparatus that indirectly led to it, while the latter was caused by continued dissatisfaction and its slow buildup. What is more, both protests inspired intellectuals to participate in the conversation and investigate the ills that trouble society and how it impacts the singular subject. For example, Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva, two critical thinkers whose works are relied on in this thesis, witnessed the student-led protests and the reaction of the academic community in France to the events of 1968. What is more, intellectuals became weary of universal theories and more interested in questioning power and societal differences. This thesis would like to illuminate that such moments of crisis can be an opportunity to question the assumed and reconsider what is taken for granted. In the spirit of this sentiment, by putting into conversation Gertrude Stein and Henry David Thoreau and their novels *The Making of Americans (*1925*)* and *Walden (*1854*)*, respectively, Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes as critical thinkers, a liminal space emerges which will enable the writing subject to

be theorized as a laborer of language. Donald Winnicott writes about this liminal, or in other words, potential space.

In his book *Playing and Reality (*1971*)*, more specifically, the concept which he called "potential space" can help us understand writing as labor and processual activity. He argues that "the place where cultural experience is located is in the potential space between the individual and the environment" (100). If we imagine literature as a form of playing and an exercise where subjectivity is continuously developed and reconstituted, then it can be a vehicle for transferring that meaning to other spheres of public life. Reading can, therefore, be understood as a form of cultural experience, and Winnicott argues that "cultural experience begins with creative living first manifested in play" (100). In order for such an understanding of literature to be possible, a new concept of literary production needs to be developed. Moreover, the concept of potential space will be used extensively in this thesis, as the liminal space found in conversation between languages, books, and critical thinkers can produce meaning and enable us to push the boundaries of language and its communicative power. Returning to the event which inspired the pursuit of this thesis, the potential spaces found in society and intellectual thought can help us reconceive the thinking subject and enable changes to occur. The writing subject, conceptualized through the theory of language by Julia Kristeva, opens the possibility for literature to be understood as a processual activity and not an expression of an authoritative individual, which Roland Barthes sought to dismantle. The author is a historical problem that will be addressed in Chapter I, while the writing subject is a theoretical solution that will be the focus of Chapter II. Both have a relationship to language that is entirely distinct, and in that distinction lays the reasons why the writing subject is a better agent for understanding literary pieces.

Language is an important medium of reflection and investigation for this thesis. It is the only tool that we have, and, as this thesis will demonstrate, it is a palimpsest of history

and culture. The figure of the "author" needs reinvestigation, as it does not support the understanding of language and the book as a space where subjectivity is always shaped and is in process. Moreover, in this thesis, two important distinctions will be made. In Chapter I, the problematic "author" Roland Barthes attacked in his essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) will be analyzed and unpacked as a "worker," while the writing subject will be considered as a "laborer." As these two words are etymologically linked, in the introduction, we will differentiate the two, as the difference is of foundational importance for this thesis. Hence, let's begin with the word work.

Work comes from the Old English *weorc*, whose meaning is a "deed, action, effort," and, most importantly, "something produced." As Chapter I will demonstrate, an author produces a book, but the act of writing is not subsumed under that definition. On the other hand, labor comes from the Latin *laborare*, meaning "exertion, toil, hardship, and suffering." With such an etymological history, in the 19th and 20th centuries, the word began to have a more political connotation and is today most associated with Marx's political theory. Hannah Arendt, in her essay "Labor, Work, Action," writes that.

> Against this scarcity of evidence stands the simple obstinate fact that every European language, ancient or modern, contains two etymologically unrelated words for what we have come to think of as the same activity: Thus, the Greek distinguished between *ponein* and *ergazesthai*, the Latin between *laborare* and *facere* or *fabricari*, the French between *travailler* and *ouvrer*, the German between *arbeiten* und *werken*. In all these cases, the equivalents for labor have an unequivocal connotation of bodily experiences, of toil and trouble, and in most cases they are significantly also used for the pangs of birth. The last to use this original connection was Marx, who defined labor as the "reproduction of individual life" and begetting, the production of "foreign life," as the production of the species. (Arendt, 32)

Nevertheless, instead of comparing words within the languages themselves, what if we were to compare Greek and Latin? For their comparison reveals how these two cultures perceived human effort and conceptualized it through their respective languages. For example, Arendt correctly attributes that *ponein* means to toil and labor. However, she does not ask what the philosophical meaning of the word is for the Greeks themselves and their culture. Its

significance is that this word does not simply mean mindless and purposeless exertion but an active struggle that requires sweat to reach excellence (think of the labors of Heracles). On the other hand, *facere*, which means to "create," simply refers to the product itself; its meaning is pragmatic and refers to creating objects and writing laws. Hence, this thesis would like to deploy a similar distinction, when writing about labor to refer to its Greek philosophical meaning, while work Roman. This distinction is made because the word author is etymologically linked to the Latin word *auctoritas* that comes from Roman philosophical school, while *ponein* has a philosophical significance of laboring to reach excellence. In the context of the writing subject, to *ponein* is to fully encapsulate human subjectivity through language. The writing subject with his or her labor brings text into existence. Labor has been a topic of much contention and debate in the Western philosophical canon, and one such example is the essay by an Italian critical thinker, Giuseppina Macchia.

Giuseppina Macchia, in her essay "Paolo Virno: From the Language of Labor to the Labor of Language," investigates Paolo Virno's philosophy of language and writes that "Politically and philosophically, it is impossible to go from the language of labor to the labor of language: the linguistic faculty never expresses itself in a bio-natural vacuum, but it is in fact the last horizon of the capitalist appropriation of labor" (13). Understanding "labor" only in capitalist and political terms is reductive, and this thesis's use of "labor" to describe the writing subject would like to expand the potential meaning the word holds as it does not need be reduced to only political context. Additionally, she writes that "What is wanted is a language for present forms of labor. We need to pay attention to the infinite instances of political subjectivation that, today, give rise to actual struggles and debates. Language does not say anything, nor does it actualize politics: only speakers do, and always in the context of a struggle for the control of our physical and intellectual abilities" (13). Macchia invites us to treat language as something used by embodied speakers who struggle to actualize their

human capacities. Literature and poetic language disturb the apparently stable relationship between the subject, language, and meaning. In this sense, when Macchia says that we need to attend to "political subjectivation," the writing subject enables us to think about what happens to him or her during the act of writing. Writing itself becomes a form of subjectivation, and therefore literature can be a vehicle for making changes on the individual level and slowly carrying that change upwards to larger and larger systems. Understanding what happens to the subject when language becomes a form of labor can radically transform our understanding of reading a book and can make literature a site where investigating subjectivity can have political implications. Bridging the questions that Macchia asks, which are "What are the limits of language in relation to labor?" and Kristeva's "How does the use of language transform the subject?" represents the essence of this thesis. The author, as a historical figure, has a socially recognizable position as the producer of a literary work. In short, to differentiate the author and the writing subject as a worker and laborer, respectively, the former names a social position, while the latter names a process. Process is essential for understanding the embodied act of writing, and Roland Barthes' observation of how the cinema explores the processes of watching can help us better illuminate the process of writing.

Roland Barthes' essay "Leaving the Movie Theatre" (1975) leaves one enamored. Enamored because of his language that reveals both vulnerability and intellectual precision, and in the biological image of the silkworm, he encounters the writing subject. In the dark spaces of the movie theatre, the potential space created by the combination of image and sound with the dark and brief but explosive sounds of fellow viewers, he experiences the kind of reverie that the writing subject produces in the reader. He writes that "It is in this urban dark that the body's freedom is generated; this invisible work of possible affects emerges from a veritable cinematographic cocoon; the movie spectator could easily appropriate the

silkworm's motto: *Inclusum labor illustrat*; it is because I am enclosed that I work and glow with all my desire" (*The Art of the Personal Essay,* 419). Yet, besides being enamored with this language, one is simultaneously frustrated. Why does Barthes decide to call it "work" and not "labor"? The Latin phrase itself is translated as "Labor honors what is enclosed." Barthes is weary of the word labor as he associates it with something problematic and wants to break the semantic burden of the word "work" that has been linked with labor. In the book *The Grain of the Voice (*1985*)*, he writes that "We should ward off certain connotations in advance: completely eliminate the idea of work as trouble, punishment, distress" (96). In his attempt to liberate the word "work," he goes to Julia Kristeva and uses her theory to transform the word into something that can have creative potential. He writes that

> On the other hand, this same metaphorical exploration should be made for the word 'work' (which is, in fact, much more than signified, the true correlate of *signifier*). 'Work' is also a numen-word (capable of strengthening a discourse), which I analyze as follows: associated with the problem of the text, it is to be understood in the sense described by Julia Kristeva, as presense work [*travail pré-sens]*— work outside meaning, exchange, calculation, work within expenditure and play. (95)

In the aforementioned essay Barthes' asks: "How to come unglued from the mirror? (*The Art of the Personal Essay,* 421), meaning how to approach disentangling the semantically and etymologically charged words "work" and "labor?" In the following fragment we can begin to undertake that process, cross the threshold, Barthes writes that "the Real knows only distances, the Symbolic knows only masks," (421). The "real" experience of writing, wrestling with language is laborious; it means understanding the distance between what the mind and heart want to communicate and the white blankness of the page. Sometimes that distance can feel insurmountable. On the other hand, the "symbolic" mask that the author holds makes work the correlate of the book and not language. The figure of the author always leaves one thinking about the finished product, and his or her mask does "work outside meaning," outside the bounds of the text. The writing subject is the polar opposite, and works within the language itself that is the very origin of the meaning Barthes mentions.

If we privilege the writing subject over the author, then literature can be understood not merely as the production of an object that can be attributed to an individual, but as an activity through which subjects engage with and transform their relation to language, themselves, and the world. Winnicott's conception of creative living opens a possibility for literature to be effective; creativity constitutes a way of actively experiencing and inhabiting reality. Literature may therefore possess a broader social significance, not because it provides instruction and transforms society, but because the creative practice through which writing subjects are constituted can alter our understanding of how subjectivity, from which social life is experienced and practiced, is formed. To return to the beginning of this introduction, the tragedy that happened in Novi Sad became the event that drove this realization and inspired the theoretical investigation this thesis aspires to undertake. The event returns us to the question of the subject. Students' protests demonstrate that the possibility of political change is not produced by faceless structures alone, but by subjects who speak, organize, imagine other alternatives, and act together within particular historical circumstances. If literature is understood through the writing subject rather than the author, writing and reading can be approached as a practice of subject formation and not the production of a literary object. This does not mean that literature produces political action, nor that literary writing should stand as a substitute for political struggle. Instead, it suggests that literature may constitute one of the spaces in which subjects develop and exercise their capacities and perceive social reality, question it, and potentially transform it. Creative living that Winnicott gives us can help us perceive literature as a mode of actively and creatively engaging with reality. Finally, the significance of the writing subject lies in the possibility of finally destabilizing the privileged position of the author Barthes sought to displace and letting literature be a space where subjects negotiate language, experience, and their relation to the world.

Chapter I

Roland Barthes' Elusive Author— In Search of the Writing Subject

1. Introduction

The question of the author has been a matter of contention for a considerable amount of time. Moreover, reflecting on the word and its implications inspires questions such as, "Is the human self infinite or finite? Can an individual ground political authority on individual creativity? What is the basis for human freedom? Can any artist claim absolute originality?" (*Critical Terms for Literary Study,* 105). Each investigates philosophical and political implications of the word, and yet it can still refer to different human activities. For example, "it can refer to someone who starts up a game, or invents a machine, or asserts political freedom, or thinks up a formula, or writes a book" (105). In literature, specifically, the word author holds a powerful position. When Roland Barthes published his essay "The Death of the Author" (1967), a literary avalanche was set in motion. Criticism responded and either argued for or against the implications of Barthes' argument. To this day, the conversation still continues, as Barthes never settled the question of the author but rather reframed it in order to open the text as a space where the reader can seek meaning independent of the author's intention. This chapter aims to contribute to this conversation and point towards the inadequacy of "authorship" as a concept. E.D. Hirsch Jr. published his book *Validity in Interpretation (*1967*)* in the same year as Barthes' essay, and its thesis is the direct opposite of Barthes', meaning that the author is fundamental to understanding a given text. This is not coincidental. Although the two texts were published independently and from different theoretical traditions, their publication marks a crucial moment when the concept of the author came under theoretical investigation. In the following paragraphs, the word "author,"

its history, and its connection with authority will be analyzed in order to argue why it remains problematic and should be reframed to the writing subject.

Scholarship after Barthes' essay responded to the arguments presented within and one side aimed to cement the author's "death," while others remained wary of the vacancy that was left. For example, William H. Gass' own essay "The Death of the Author" (1984) affirms the implication of Barthes' argument, which is that the author has a theological significance in relation to his or her own work and that Barthes dismantled that authority with his essay. He writes that "the death of the author signifies a decline in authority, in theological power, as if Zeus were stripped of his thunderbolts and swans, perhaps rising on Olympus still, but now living in a camper and cooking with propane. He *is*, but he is no longer a god" (1). Gass instinctively recognizes that the "authority", that is, the quality assigned to the word *author,* is under contention and not necessarily the person behind the text. He goes on to write that "it is the demise of the confident, coldly overbearing creator— that so palpably erased disdainful imperial person of the artist— that he longs for" (5).

Nevertheless, Gass's argument is that the author should therefore be found within the literary work itself through aesthetic choices, style, and form that the text takes. This is why he italicizes the word "is," directing our attention to the fact that the authorial power of the author has been dismantled but that the figure nevertheless remains. With this theoretical move, Gass preserves the concept of the author because he never interrogates how he or she acquired the meaningful and authoritative power in our culture. On the other hand, scholars such as Molly Nesbit acknowledge that Barthes did, in fact, "kill" the author. In her essay "What Was an Author?" she already accepts his or her own "death" by using the verb "was" writes that "Those who go looking for authors must devise the means by which to recognize not only the worker but the work; at some point, perhaps by night, culture was camouflaged" (1). She interrogates this culture in her essay and how it came to shape the figure of the

author and give it legal and political power rather than focusing on the figure himself or herself. In her argument, "Authors of all kinds have for a long time been flatly equated in the law, though the equation is not made using the familiar terms like creativity, genius, and ancient lyric breath. It is instead an equation of rights" (3). More precisely, when the word author is invoked, it points towards the property rights which he or she has over their book. Molly writes that "in the law, the term author did not and does not carry with it a mark of supreme distinction, nor did it designate a particular kind of profession, like a poet. It was only meant to distinguish a particular kind of labor from another, the cultural from industrial" (7). This thesis argues that the word *author* does not differentiate labor of writing but rather conceals it. Instead, it directs our attention to the finished product, or in other words "the book," thus defining the author as a legal subject whose relationship to his or her work is determined through ownership and intellectual property. Before the author becomes the owner of a literary object, he or she is a worker engaged in a form of cultural work. This work is defined as organizing the manuscript, sending it to publishers, and other similar activities. Such activities empower the author with authority, and it becomes an inseparable quality of the word, as it needs it in order to possess the power of ownership. In this sequence of events, the labor of writing is never the topic of investigation; hence, the author is solely related to the work of transforming the manuscript into a finished product that is then culturally and legally negotiated. Therefore, authority and author are two words whose relationship needs further investigation, as it lays out the history of how the author became such a problematic concept.

2. Author and Authority

Authority and author are words that are deeply intertwined, both historically and linguistically. Each descends from the Latin root *auctor* (originator, founder, or promoter), which comes from *augere* (to increase, to grow, or to augment). The relationship between

these words and their meaning informs, historically, that *auctor* is not simply an author, but someone who brought something into existence, thus giving it force and legitimacy. Hannah Arendt, in her essay "What is Authority" (1954), explores and analyses the historical legacy of *auctoritas* (authority). Arendt's analysis of the political implications that the word authority carries and its application in our modern times lays down the groundwork upon which said notion has been connected with the figure of the author, which Barthes sought to dismantle. When we question authority, we, therefore, question the author and place the conversation in the realm of political philosophy and not literature. Discussing the labor of writing itself never becomes a topic of exploration, as there are concepts such as authority that first need to be broken down. Additionally, as we will see later, when Roland Barthes, in his book *Mythologies* (1972), started attacking the sign and myths in modern culture, he does so precisely because of the authority that they acquire through culture. Arendt's questioning of authority lends itself to questioning the author: "Practically as well as theoretically, we are no longer in a position to know what authority really *is*" (Arendt 92, italics original).

Plato and Aristotle first began to politically explore authority as a concept. Each drew analogies from human relations within the Greek household and family life, where the head of the household ruled absolutely over everyone. Paradoxically, this quality vested in the patriarch subverts his very freedom. This explication goes on to figures such as kings and despots. Arendt writes that the "master, according to Greek common opinion (which was still blissfully unaware of Hegelian dialectics), was not free when he moved among his slaves; his freedom consisted in his ability to leave the sphere of the household altogether and not to move among his equals, freemen. Hence, neither the despot nor the tyrant, the one moving among slaves, the other among subjects, could be called a free man" (105). An analogy can be made between the seeming lack of freedom of the king or tyrant and the author in relationship to his or her text. Arendt points towards the inextricable relationship between the

ruler and his subjects. If there is no ruler, then there are no subjects to be ruled over. In essence, one cannot exist without the other; hence, neither is truly free. A book as an object needs the stamp of ownership of the author as much as the author needs the book, which he or she can claim ownership of.

Arendt goes on to make a connection between authority and obedience. She writes that "Authority implies an obedience in which men retain their freedom, and Plato hoped to have found such an obedience when, in his old age, he bestowed upon the laws that quality which would make them undisputable rulers over the whole public realm" (106). When we consider Gass's as well as Barthes' argument in relation to Arendt's, then it becomes clear that the question of authority is what is at stake. This makes the word "author" problematic as it carries the weight of historical and quasi- divine power. Its etymological burden has troubled scholars and this makes it necessary to replace the word "author," with the writing subject. Barthes' sought to reframe the author into the "scriptor" but such a theoretical move still carries some of the etymological burden the word author carries. To distinguish the two terms, Barthes' first goes to describe the author as someone who is "thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation to antecedence to his work as a father to his child" (*Image Music Text, 145),* while "in complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text" (145). The first quote establishes that the author is a figure who works in order to bring the book into existence and has the authority over it, as does a father in relationship to his child. Nevertheless, his scriptor is equally a worker in the sense that he or she performs the activity of writing without having the authority traditionally granted to the author. Moreover, it can be argued that if we were to look toward the Latin root of the word scriptor, which comes from the verb *scribere,* meaning "to write." In Ancient Rome, scriptors were workers who performed the physical act of copying a text without having any ownership of the ideas. Such

activity represents the translation of human thought into a permanent form, in this case, parchment. In modern times, "scriptor," or writer, performs work— they are an artisan of language whose intellect, and not muscle, creates the final product, in this case the book. Hence, although scriptor provides a possible alternative to the author, it still does not replace the etymological triangle between the words author – authority- and work. What Barthes accomplishes is to deprive the author of his or her authority, rendering the word unnecessary and replacing it with the scriptor. Donald Pease provides the historical background and reasons why this is the case.

Donald Pease, in his essay "Author," which is part of the book *Critical Terms for Literary Study (1995)*, goes to the Middle Ages, when the definition of the *auctor* did not mean what we come to understand to be the author at the time of Barthes' writing his essay. Auctores in medieval times were writers whose works were influential and shaped people's understanding of their world. Pease writes that "every discipline in the trivium had auctores (Cicero in rhetoric, Aristotle in dialectic, the ancient poets in Grammar) and similarly in the quadrivium (Ptolemy in astronomy, Constantine in medicine, the Bible in theology, Boethius in arithmetic)" (*Critical Terms for Literary Study*, 106). Their text and work contained the quality of auctoritas, which itself comes from the Greek noun autentim, or in other words, sanctioned truth. Moreover, Pease's essay complements Arendt's arguments of authority, as in the Middle Ages, the monarch provided authority of the works which the auctores produced. He writes that "Whereas individuals within medieval culture could interpret their lives in terms that elaborated or reenacted the sayings of the ancient auctores, only the monarch, as God's representative, could claim divine sanction for his everyday actions. By correlating the divine basis for his rule with auctorial precedents, the medieval ruler sanctioned the auctores' cultural authority" (107). Hence, it can be discerned that the monarch himself was the embodiment of the auctor's authority.

However, during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, writers began to claim authority over their creative works, which previously belonged exclusively to divine institutions, thus transforming the author into a sovereign creator with legal and intellectual ownership over their work. This was a consequence of the discovery of the New World "whose inhabitants, language, customs and laws, geography, and plant and animal life did not correspond to referents in the auctore's books" (*Critical Terms for Literary Study,* 107). Such novelties required the languages to change and incorporate new words in order to describe the new environments that were discovered. When it comes to the Renaissance period, the "historians now refer to as 'new men,' individuals within Renaissance culture who turned 'news' sent from home from freshly discovered lands into forms of cultural empowerment for unprecedented political actions and their personification by new agents within the culture" (107). Said figures were precisely what we come to understand as "authors" who "unlike the medieval auctor who based his authority on divine revelation, an author himself claimed authority for his words and based his individuality on the stories he composed" (107). One can imagine the monumental shift such a transformation caused. For the people to recalibrate their understanding of the increasingly changing world, authors became the stabilizing factor. Boccaccio's *Decameron (*1471*)* provides a useful illustration for this sudden change. Each member of the household tells a story according to a theme given by the day's king or queen. As Boccaccio describes the effect of a story told by Emilia or Filostrato, among others, a reader can sense both the instructive, amusing, and heartbreaking moral behind each story. Most importantly, the king and queen of the day tell a story that is according to the agreed-upon theme, with one exception: the stories told by Dioneo, which are repeated every day. This disorder in the otherwise unified structure itself becomes a rule. Ever since that period and up to the time of Barthes, and one could argue today, the philosophical and etymological burden the word author carries could never truly be dismantled. Donald Pease argues that the

"author" enjoyed a continual rise in respect in their communities. Paradoxically, he or she became an instrument that signified a "break from cultural constraints imposed by feudal kinds" (108). Yet, this very break only moved authority to the word "author" itself.

Thus, we come to the important distinction this chapter aims to establish. Said distinction is that Barthes' "author" is a worker while the writing subject, which will be the focus of Chapter II, is a laborer. Pease can be helpful in beginning to make this distinction, as he says that aligning the word "genius" with the word "author" means that the initial auctor has returned again. Once the genius emerged, he or she wanted complete ownership and authority over their text in order to be able to "live by the pen." Following the social revolutions throughout Europe, which came as a result of discoveries of the New World, fundamentally transformed the texture of politics and the need for feudal monarchs; the "genius" "enabled the separation of the cultural from the political realm. As the legatee of a previous cultural identification, affiliating the auctor's creative power with a founder's power to establish a city-state, the genius established a cultural realm utterly dissociated from either the political or the economic realms" (110). This ushered in what is called the "Republic of Letters" (110), which once again realigned the auctor and the author "ruling over the Republic of Letters" (110). This movement cemented the author's importance as the divine originator of his or her creative output. Having the context of Pease's essay, a provocative question of Barthes' seminal essay should be asked. Whether the "Death of the Author" is not an appropriate name for his essay but rather the "Death of Authority," for Barthes focused on where the author exercises his or her power but did not ask the question of how that power is exercised. When we conceive of the author as a worker, the former question can then be answered. In other words, rejecting authorial authority does not erase the fact that the author performs culturally negotiated work. On the other hand, understanding the writing subject as

a laborer situates our interpretation of a literary piece primarily on the creative act of writing that speaks of the subject's choices and experience.

3. The Republic of Letters

Pease's invocation of "The Republic of Letters" points to the idealization of the word "author," and from this realm the word draws its cultural power. Having said that, Pease does not question how the "Republic" is actually built. It is not a theoretical construct but a concrete one, as it contains printed texts and legal contracts, which are part of an economic exchange and legal framework. Martha Woodmansee, in her essay "The Genius and the Copyright: Economic and Legal Conditions of the emergence of the Author" (1984), presents a thesis that the author as a genius and someone with divine authority is a historical construct, which emerged in the late eighteenth century to support new economic legal claims about literary property and copyright. In her essay, she argues that "The Republic of Letters" came to exist as a solution to the problem of piracy as well as the issues authors had with their publishers. In those times, "Book piracy affected serious writers and conscientious publishers most of all, exposing problems that have become highly familiar to us in today's conditions of mass-market publishing" (16). The problem grew to such proportions that it launched a significant debate that lasted between 1773 and 1794, and as Woodmansee argues, the problem arose because of "legitimate publishers' resentment of the book pirates and authors' resentment of both triggered an intense debate in which all manner of questions concerning the "Book" were disputed" (17). Due to these problems that the authors faced, the poet Friedrich Gottlob Klopstock in 1772 announced the *Deutsche Gelehrtenrepublik (German Republic of Letters).* This body enabled writers "to circumvent publishers altogether and bring their works directly to the public by subscription" (17).

Although it was ultimately a failure in economic terms, the "*Gelehrtenrepublik "* must be regarded as an important milestone in the development of the concept of authorship—as

Goethe seems to suggest in the tenth book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* when he remarks in the person of Klopstock that the time had arrived 'for poetic genius to become self-conscious, create for itself its own conditions, and understand how to lay the foundation of an independent dignity" (18). Essentially, Woodmansee argues that the "Republic of Letters" emerged as a result of the debate over what the book as an object is and who has ownership and authority over it. Because the production of the book involved not only the author but also the "the scholar and the writer, the paper maker, the type founder, the typesetter and the printer, the proofreader, the publisher, the book binder…" (19) of which all deserve share of the profits, then the book becomes a heterogeneous object that is a product of work, which makes the author like everyone else involved – a worker. To further establish the concept, the book *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment (1994)* by Dana Goodman shows that the aforementioned concept was a transnational one that affected the cultural and political life not only in Germany but also in France and marked the intellectual project of the Enlightenment period, which ultimately ended with the French Revolution.

In France, "The Republic of Letters" developed over the course of two centuries alongside the French Monarchy. Dana Goodman points towards the inadequate critical analysis of its history; hence, "Here, then, is a history of the Republic of Letters, from its founding in the seventeenth century as an apolitical community of discourse through its transformation in the eighteenth century into a very political community whose Enlightenment challenged the monarchy from a new public space carved out of French Society" (12). It is interesting to note that a parallel can be made between the change from the apolitical to the political nature of the Republic of Letters and the philosophical and theoretical movement from structuralism to post-structuralism that was also happening during the student protests of the 1960s. Both movements challenged the apparent autonomy of

intellectual production: while the Republic of Letters began to challenge the absolute power of the monarch, so did the political movements of the 1960s sought to expose institutional power over the intellectual and public realm. Hence, the post-structuralist removal of the autonomous author can be understood as a broader reconsideration of the intellectual subject and its relation with power and labor. The author is therefore not only an authority whose privileged position must be dismantled, but also a worker who does not properly convey the importance of literary creation. That is why the writing subject, as a laborer, consequently deserves a privileged position when interpreting books, as it points to subject formation in the very act of writing.

Thus far, we have followed the development of the author starting from the Middle Ages and into the modern period as well as the emergence of the "Republic of Letters." All this was made possible by the division of the public and private sphere. In the Middle Ages, "publicity was simply a kind of 'status attribute' of those with power; it represented the power of the person rather than a sphere of social action. Indeed, it follows that there was no private sphere either" (12-13). Both public and private spheres came to exist in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Authors, who at first exercised their authority through the monarch, then began to claim it independently of any religious and secular figure, mirror the emergence of the two spheres. This is why authority is such a fundamental concept to the figure of the author. He or she exercises their power and becomes a worker through the Republic of Letters, which was conceived "an intellectual community transcending space and time, [but] recognizing as such differences in respect to the diversity of languages, sects, and countries…" (15, Paul Dibon qtd.). Words in oral, printed, and written form were the medium of the Republic of Letters; hence, the authors were their main communicators and formed a kind of intellectual community. In this community, the "author worked within the paradigms of the contemporary state, building and publishing. He asserted that the project must have

hegemony if it was to work. It had to be unique, had to have a protected monopoly or copyright on the publication of its report" (29-30). Such concerns were very much similar to the ones that the German Authors experienced. Greater and greater control was what the author wanted, and it is why it slowly became such a problematic figure by the time of Barthes. What is more, this relationship to the product of their work and why we must think of an author as a worker will be aided by Hannah Arendt's concept of *vita activa,* which she analyzed in her book *The Human Condition (*1958*).*

4. The Author's Condition

Hannah Arendt breaks down and conceptualizes *vita activa*, which means "active life." Through the term, she analyses the human condition and denotes how "life on earth has been given to man" (*The Human Condition, 29)*. In her book, Hannah names three distinct human activities, which are subsumed under *vita activa*: labor, work, and action. Labor, for Arendt, is an activity that corresponds to the human body and its necessity in sustaining one's life. On the other hand, work is unnatural in the sense that people bring artificial objects into the world. Finally, action is an activity that happens between human beings; it takes place in their interaction with one another. These three activities are "intimately connected with the most general condition of human existence: birth and death, natality and mortality" (30). Although Arendt presents the three activities without imposing a specific hierarchy, through the text, labor and work enable human beings to take action in the world. A fleeting glimpse of this hierarchy can be seen through her description of labor as the "activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body" (29), while "work is the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence" (29). Finally, action is "the only activity that goes on directly between men without the intermediary of things or matter, corresponds to the human condition of plurality, to the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (29). In this plurality of human experience, that is, the human

condition, Hannah goes to the ancient Roman's language and Genesis to establish that the "plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live" (30). The etymological history of words seems to play a pivotal role in our understanding of literary concepts we have come to take for granted in contemporary literary critical thought. Work and labor for Hannah Arendt have their own histories she uses to make her arguments. As with Pease's word *auctor*, work and labor carry their etymological history, which can be traced back to the times of Ancient Greece. Specifically, Arendt writes that "*vita activa* is loaded and overloaded with tradition. It is old as (but not older than) our tradition of political thought" (*The Human Condition*, 12). Moreover, Arendt prioritizes work, and the worker as *homo faber, while* labor and laborer as *animal laborans* is underprivileged. This is best exemplified in the following quote: "Homo faber's proper work, the making of the human artifice, has been guided by the standards of utility and usefulness... laboring, on the other hand, is an activity without an end, guided only by the needs of life and its continuous cycle" (305). Arendt not only privileges the builder but writes that

> Homo faber, the builder of the world and the producer of things, has always been a builder of the world and a maker of tools; in his second capacity, he invented tools in order to build a world, not in order to produce tools. The utilitarian standard, which is the standard of utility and usefulness, is the standard of Homo faber par excellence. As producer and fabricator, man became the lord and master of nature, but in his capacity as the maker of tools he remained nature's servant; he could build a world only by using nature's materials, and these materials were the only reality that was given to him. (139)

This lording and mastering over nature can be extended to the artificial world and in the context of this chapter, a book which is why Barthes' was so suspicious of the author as a figure. It is equally why he is argued to be a worker because of this inherent nature of producing and fabricating the book but not language.. When we consider reasons why Arendt distinguishes three distinct human activities as well as arguing that, although labor is necessary, it is glorified, we must understand her fear of totalitarian regimes which existed

during her life. Nevertheless, her contribution that work and labor are fundamentally two different activities is critical to understanding why the author is a worker and the writing subject is a laborer.

Utilizing Arendt's thesis that the *homo faber* is a worker who brings material objects into the world, an author is *a homo faber* or, in other words, a worker because he or she brings a book into the world. She writes that "work and its product, the human artifact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of mortal life and the fleeting character of human time" (30). The author, as earlier sections claim, transforms the manuscript into a finished product, which far outlives the figure herself or himself. To further establish the argument, when we consider "The Republic of Letters," it is sustained by the productive activity of the author, where scholarly debates take place. In view of such debates, action, which is the third part of *vita activa,* takes place. When the book becomes not only a physical object sitting on a shelf, but a vehicle for action and transformation in "The Republic of Letters," the author becomes both a worker and an agent of authority who aims to transform and shape public opinion. Such a view of the author persisted by the time Barthes published his essay, and this thesis argues, to this day, that the author was not treated as a worker. The death of authorial authority does not entail the disappearance of the author as a historical producer of his or her book. Returning to her essay on authority, she writes that "At the heart of Roman politics... stands the conviction of the sacredness of foundation... Authority, as the word implies, derives from augere, 'to augment' or 'to increase'; and what the auctor or person of authority constantly increases is the foundation" (*Between Past and Future*, 121). Therefore, the word author and its meaning have become self-referential and caught in a continuum of etymological history that requires us to do away with the word. By recognizing that legacy of authority is one of sacredness and that the auctor's sole role is preserving and increasing authority, it is not a surprise that Barthes, despite his monumental

essay, was not able to destabilize it; in the context of Arendt and "The Republic of Letters," author is a worker because of his relational nature to the aforementioned concepts. Barthes was successful in removing the interpretive authority of the author but not his material existence as a producer, or rather, a worker of texts. Arendt's notion of authority reveals that the connection between the author and the public survives the "death of the author" because literary authority is fundamentally relational. This persistence makes it necessary to move beyond the overbearing figure of the author and towards the writing subject, as a literary agent, which is constituted by labor with language. Additionally, Jauss's *poiesis* will help us further establish why Barthes' author is a worker.

Hans Robert Jauss's work on *poiesis* defines and examines this relationship, which is central to our understanding of the relationship between the creative person and their output. To put it more concretely, Jauss's central argument is that the meaning of labor and work has been a contentious issue, especially among the arts and sciences. While Arendt gives us the means through which we can understand the productive act of creating a book as work, Jauss's *poiesis* points to the creative act, which is something that did not exist before and comes into the world. This makes artistic creation of a book, a kind of production, thus reinforcing the concept of the author as a worker. Moreover, this contention lies in the differentiation between the Greek tradition and biblical tradition. In the Greek's tradition, *praxis*, which is practical action, is always superior to *poiesis*. Jauss writes that "according to the Aristotelian conception, the subordination of *poiesis* to practice corresponded to a ranking of knowledge in which the activity of the craftsman or artist as *techne* was distinguished from the labor of slaves, which was merely the following of orders" (*Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, (48). Moreover, the biblical tradition offers a much more nuanced relationship to work and labor, "that man is meant to maintain himself only by toiling against a resistant nature ('cursed is the ground for thy sake' [Gen. 3:17]); salvation can only be

found beyond his activity in this world" (47). On the other hand, in "both the classical and the Christian conceptual field relation to labor, we already encounter ambivalent definitions which could introduce and justify an upward revaluation of man's labor (48). In the same vein, Barthes' essay needs further reevaluation, as his "author" is a worker while, as Chapter II will demonstrate, the writing subject theorized in this thesis is a laborer. This crucial distinction will allow us to examine the creative work as independent of his or her creator. As we have seen Pease's essay establish, the author as *auctor* can never be disentangled from the product of their work, while the writing subject emerges from the very act of laboring with language and is always in process.

It will only further deepen the examination already started by scholars such as Philip Seyer, whose book *Authorship Wake: Writing after the Death of the Author (2020)* engages with the question of the possibility of creative work and the many contemporary writers such as Zadie Smith, Teju Cole, and David Foster Wallace, among others, who have engaged with the question of what it means to be an author in the post-Barthian authorless world. In Sayer's argument, the writers he has mentioned and their respective works have no choice but to respond to Barthes' essay. Sayer's examples of such books are Zadie Smith's novel *NW* (2012) and David Foster Wallace's *The Pale King* (2011). He writes that "contemporary writers—writers who, like Zadie Smith, were trained in theory's critique of the author during their undergraduate humanities education or who, like Roland Barthes and Judith Butler, took an active role in that critique—have expanded our understanding of what it means to be an author and why it matters, from the smallest scale to the largest" (18). Here, this thesis would challenge the necessity for using the word author in the first place. As previous sections have demonstrated, its etymological burden makes such use extremely theoretically burdensome. Seyer argues that Barthes "accomplished at least two things. Most obviously, it declared the beginning of a new era of polyvalent textuality unconstrained by the controlling figure of the

sovereign author; it insisted on the necessity of 'overthrow[ing] the myth' of the omnipotent 'Author-God' (15). Sayer argues that contemporary writers have expanded the meaning of authorship to the extent that although Barthes proclaimed his or her death, the word itself remains a useful category when thinking about identity and politics. Therefore, Sayer's retaining of the word conserves its privilege. However, by introducing Pease and Arendt, this thesis has established that the author is a worker who can never be disentangled from his or her work. Such a relationship has been possible through theoretical investigation brought on by structuralism, which will be the topic of the next section.

5. The Worker and the Work

In the Old Testament, when God created the world, man held a more active place and, once placed in the garden of Eden, was "to dress it and to keep it' (Gen. 2;15) (4)." However, because of two clashing textual traditions in Genesis, man's work can be understood both as a participant and a fellow creator tasked with completing God's efforts. In the Christian tradition, man would come into existence as a *homo artifex* and can understand his role according to Genesis 1:26, or in other words, to dominate nature and transform it into a human world by his work. *Homo Artifex* is connected to Arendt's *homo faber*, thus representing another bridge on how the productive act of writing lends itself to the author becoming a worker. Here we have the polarity of the meaning of work, which is simultaneously one of domination and service. In the "Republic of Letters," the author is an authorial figure, and the one who enables it to exist, providing service that enables debates and arguments to be had between the members of the state. As much as the Judeo-Christian tradition establishes work as both a creative participation in God's creation and service to it, it privileges the individual worker as the source of productive activity. With the emergence of structuralism shaped by the work of the French linguist Ferdinand Saussure, it helps establish the author as a worker who exists in the system of relations and signs. The author is a figure

who works with language in a predetermined system of relations within "The Republic of Letters." Such a theory is supported by Donald Pease's argument that the author is a culturally and institutionally produced figure. If we consider the text as an object constituted through linguistics and social structures, then its producer has to be understood as a worker engaged in creating a cultural object. It is within the structuralist framework and simultaneous intellectual upheaval that Barthes wrote "The Death of the Author"; hence, we need to understand the period better in order to discern why his author is a worker.

Barthes produced his essay in the period of the late 1960s, a turbulent period in French public life: "culturally and politically, this period of French history is dominated by the student and workers' revolt of 1968 and its aftermath" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes,* 80). Politically, this period of instability was eventually stifled; however, "the spirit of radical, at times revolutionary, ideas came to dominate the intellectual thought in France and beyond" (80). This is the intellectual space Barthes was operating in. In literary theory, these radical thoughts meant the beginning of a questioning and dismantling of structuralism, which led to the emergence of a new theory: post-structuralism. Myth and what the word stands for represent this transition most succinctly. In the *Routledge Companion to Barthes,* the etymology of the word and how it relates to Barthes is expanded upon:

> In Ancient Greece, myth (mūthos) came to mean a fiction. Nowadays, usually associated with fictions which include the gods or supernatural forces, myth also has the general meaning of the major fictional stories that have abided since ancient times. Thus myth, while denoting what is fictional, also tends to refer to stories that have an apparently timeless and universal appeal and truth. Barthes's use of the word myth is therefore particularly telling in that what he designates by the term presents itself as natural and even timeless but is, in fact, an expression of a historically specific ideological vision of the world. (34)

How Barthes approaches the word *myth* is similar to the way the word *author* was approached earlier in the chapter. In both cases, Barthes' concern is with concepts that have acquired a seemingly universal status. Just as myth disguises a historically specific

ideological construction as something timeless, the figure of the author can be understood as having acquired an authority that appears intrinsic to the literary work but is, in fact, historically produced. However, Barthes never conceives of the author as a producer. When he dismantled the authority attributed to the author, Barthes does not consider the material activity through which literary work comes into existence. The author is treated as a figure of interpretative authority rather than as a worker whose work produces the text. Until the author is treated as a worker and the material activity of writing is analyzed, the figure will not be able to be properly done away with. Yet his work on semiology has laid the foundation upon which he could have approached the deconstruction of the author as a worker. This is why this chapter argues that Barthes throughout his theoretical career has been in search of the writing subject.

Barthes entered the field of semiology, that is, the study of signs, by using the word myth to analyze and critique bourgeois culture, which, in his view, subsumed literature under its control. He wrote a number of essays on diverse topics that range from the Tour de France to Einstein. Barthes analyzes each cultural symbol as a sign, which provides an illuminating perspective on French as well as Western society as a whole. Together, the pieces "present a compelling and invariably witty description of French cultural life in the 1950s" (34). Consequently, the thesis of his essays became an attack on how bourgeois culture created modern-day myths which reinforced a vision of the world that was dominated by signs. Signs and what they mean are critical to our understanding of the author that Barthes so desperately wanted to disrupt. The student protest invariably laid siege to this world of signs and myths and sought to dismantle them. It was a monumental event which demanded critical response. Barthes was unavoidably affected by these protests, which was reflected in his work. It transformed him into a thinking subject, which, for the rest of his career, continuously

evolved his thought. Moreover, these events also illuminate the tenuous relationship between language and labor.

Alex Wermer-Colan, in his article "Roland Barthes after 1968: Critical Theory in the Reactionary Era of New Media," explores Barthes's relationship to the protests. Wermer argues for Barthes's often paradoxical relationship to the protest and his moving away from structuralism. He writes in the abstract, "By reconsidering Barthes's reflections on technological transformations in the era of late capital, this article leverages Barthes's figuration of the "neutral" to explicate his paradoxical politics of aesthetic resistance." (1). Wermer-Colan calls Barthes' politics "paradoxical" because he never explicitly argues for political action or complete revolution but rather for resisting established institutions of authority through writing, disrupting the categories and meanings said institutions depend upon. This is where Barthes' book Mythologies as a project represents a useful representation of his evolving critical thought. In fact, it can be argued that there are two versions of the same book: one, which was published in 1957, and the subsequent edition which came out in the 1970s. The latter had a different preface which detailed that the book in its original form could not be written: "in the aftermath of May '68" (6). This is because Barthes was engrossed by the idea that the protests were in fact a failure and that "our inability to deal with '68's reactionary aftermath has been symptomatic of, and conducive to, our societal decline into an intolerable, inexorable hegemony" (2). However, what if this "failure" can instead be an opportunity? Barthes looked towards failure "as a starting point of writing" (4). However, his seminal essay remains incomplete by not reframing the author as a worker and his literary production as the form of his work. Such ambitions require intellectual labor, which is the basis for the transformation of the author into a writing subject.

Even though the student protests were a failure, they did reveal the West's frail foundations and many contradictions. It is therefore the job of the thinker to reveal and

question said contradictions. Wermer-Colan writes that "while 1968 seemed to rebuke structuralism as a field of thought and praxis for protest, for Barthes, it was only proof that structuralism itself would need to be deconstructed in order to understand and transform the material conditions and cultural engendered *écriture*. By this term he means literature, more precisely an avant-garde literature that escaped the conventions of canonical writing. Yet, when Barthes dismantles the author as the source of textual meaning, he does not reframe the figure. As the protests of 1968 were fundamentally about labor and the laboring body, they were able to make labor politically visible and present in the intellectual discourse of the time. This is important for Barthes' analysis of authorship because his critique takes place through the study of the sign and semiology. In that way, he exposes the strenuous relationship between language and meaning that gives the author his or her authority. However, the material production of the author remains underdeveloped. This is why, at this point, we must treat the author as a worker in order to deepen the analysis of the problematic concept.

6. Structuralism and its discontents

Before understanding Barthes' essay in terms of a transition from structuralism to post-structuralism, we must understand Barthes "the structuralist." To understand why Barthes' critique of the Author takes the form it does, it is necessary to understand the structuralist conception of language from which his attack emerges. Structuralism enables Barthes with the theoretical tools necessary to challenge the author as the origin of meaning. Therefore, in this phase he can be read as a "founder of language, generating a world (of classifications and systematic relations) in his texts" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 81). In his book *Sade/Fourier/Loyola* (1971), Barthes brings together three writers: Marquis de Sade (1740-1814), Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556), and Charles Fourier (1772 – 1837) in order to showcase that they share an obsession with systems and classifications and the pleasure

such activities create when performing them for their own sake. Interestingly enough, Barthes wrote on these writers independently but then decided to bring them together within a single book. He looks to them as role models, as "each of them is a 'founder of language', more concerned with the world created in their texts than representing the actual world around them" (*Sade, Fourier, Loyola,* 81). Their creative work represented a kind of transgression against the symbolic order of their time, what Kristeva calls the name-of-the-father. Kristeva, in her essay "The System and the Speaking Subject," writes on the act of transgressing, "The moment of transgression is the key moment in practice: we can speak of practice wherever there is a transgression of systematicity, i.e, a transgression of unity proper to the *transcendental ego" (The Kristeva Reader,* 29). By choosing to focus on the world created by their text, each writer transgresses and becomes the writing subject, the writing being who creates a language of his or her own. Therefore, Barthes' choice of bringing said writers together represents an act of transgression itself. This intellectual move will help us unpack the shortcomings Barthes sees in structuralism as it relates to understanding literary works and its ultimate attack in the form of the essay "The Death of the Author."

Barthes, in the preface of the book, writes of the importance of these three writers as it relates to his project of finding a language that would liberate the individual from the bourgeois culture he found problematic.

> From Sade to Fourier, sadism is lost; from Loyola to Sade, divine interlocution. Otherwise, the same writing: the same sensual pleasure in classification, the same mania for cutting up (the body of Christ, the body of victim, the human soul), the same enumerative obsession (accounting for sins, tortures, passions, and even for accounting errors), the same image practice (imitation, tableau, séance), the same erotic, fantasmatic fashioning of the social system. (*Sade/Fourier/Loyola,* 11)

Barthes' motive in bringing these three writers under a single semantic meaning is in itself playful since it reflects the creation of a kind of language that they share. He tells us that "the language they found is obviously not linguistic, a language of communication. It is a new language, traversed by (or traversing) natural language, but open only to the semiological

definition of Text" (*Sade, Fourier, Loyola, 11*). It has several distinct characteristics upon which it is built: first being self-isolation, the second being articulation, and the third being ordering. Each of these characteristics— isolation, articulation, and order— safeguards their language from being poisoned by what Barthes calls an "outmoded language, whose 'noise' might hinder it" (12). This is why it needs to be isolated. A kind of language that resides outside the cultural influence dominated by signs. Articulation is its second important feature. Each author plays with language as he chooses: "Sade distributes ejaculation like the words in a sentence (postures, figures, episodes, séances); Loyola cuts up the body (successively experienced by each of the five senses) as he cuts up the Christian narrative (divided into 'mysteries' in the theatrical meaning of the word" (12). Finally, as for order, their language is not ordered by its grammatical logic and syntax. On the contrary, it is based upon the imago, a symbolic principle: Loyola's cutting up the body can be understood as an imago which then creates the language that effectively communicates the said principle. Therefore, "the writing reaches a point at which it produces a row of signifiers, such that no language matter can still be recovered…" (14). This is why it is an imagined body which language aims to convey and breathe into existence and which subsumes interpretation and grounds it within the bounds of the text: "the new discourse is provided with an Ordainer, a Master of Ceremonies, a Rhetorician: in Ignatius, it is the retreat director, in Fourier some patron or matron, in Sade, some libertine…." (13). Additionally, they reflect what Barthes names "Sadian ecstasy, Fourierist jubilation, Ignatian indifference…" (13). By being founders of language, in this sense, Barthes argues, Sade, Loyola, and Fourier show that their goal is to communicate nothing. If they wanted to, they would have used "linguistic language."

> Thus, if Sade, Fourier, and Loyola are founders of a language, and only that, it is precisely in order to say nothing, to observe a vacancy (if they wanted to say *something*, linguistic language, the language of communication and philosophy, would suffice: they could be *summarized*, which is not the case with any of them (*Sade/Fourier/Loyola, 6)*

When Barthes does away with the author in his seminal essay, he aims to attack and dismantle "linguistic language," that is to say, language reduced to its communicative function. To understand this language, we must look at how Barthes engages structuralism through "a critique of modern society through the demonstration of its frequently concealed reliance on artificial sign systems" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes, 62)*. These artificial sign systems are the myths analyzed in the book *Mythologies* mentioned earlier. Additionally, their alliance demonstrates the seductive power said systems have upon the language and therefore the individual. The book is an attempt at conveying how the speaking subject is negotiated by artificial signs which, through the pervasiveness of bourgeois culture, take up the significance of myths. What myths were to Ancient Romans or Greeks are modern myths to Barthes' society. Barthes wrote about this as the "notion of myth seemed to me to explain these examples of the falsely obvious. At that time, I still used the word 'myth' in its traditional sense. But I was already certain of a fact from which I later tried to draw all the consequences: myth as a language" (*Mythologies,* 9). Myth as a language is the "linguistic language" Barthes so vehemently opposed and differentiated from the language Sade, Fourier, and Loyola wrote in. The "linguistic language's" aim to communicate was exemplified through the images French society wanted to communicate to the world – the idea of itself.

Roland Barthes' attack on Western culture's modern myths can be exemplified through his analysis of bourgeois French culture. An example of this can be seen in the explication of how French culture builds an idea and myth of itself through the image of a black soldier saluting the tricolour. Barthes "describes this in terms of the idea: that 'France is a great Empire that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag '" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 37). His work in this period became increasingly focused on demystifying the sign and depriving it of its power in modern critical discourse.

Barthes sought to do this as his creative application of the concepts of myths, showcased how "Mythology transforms one culture's values, in Barthes's case bourgeois French culture, into a universal and natural value: it turns culture into nature, often while still recognizing its status as myth, as a cultural product" (37). As a consequence, what Barthes' feared was that cultural signs devoid individuals of their agency while simultaneously making humanity an essential, a universal idea. Such images deny the "historical and cultural differences which make work an act of individual or collective agency in some cultures and an act of alienated labour under the capitalism in others" (37). Rescuing the individual from what Barthes saw as pervasive and invasive culture brought him into contact with the ideas of the Swiss linguist Ferdinand Saussure. Language became an avenue upon which he could interrogate the meaning of individuality in modern times. Structuralism and its impact on our understanding of narratives is where he would go next.

The essay, part of the book *Image – Music – Text,* titled "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative", begins with Barthes acknowledging that the " narratives of the world are numberless" (*Image – Music – Text,* 79). When considering the sheer number of possible narratives, one quickly understands that it is impossible to analyze each individually. This is why the discoveries of Saussure were instrumental to Barthes' intellectual development. Like Saussure, Barthes seeks a model which would be applicable to every single possible narrative. His solution is to call upon structural linguistics, as "all acts of narrative (parole) must come from a system of codes and conventions (la langue): 'no one can combine (produce) a narrative without referring to an implicit system of units and rules'" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes,* 56). Structural linguistics bases the analysis of language on the sentence as its fundamental value and focuses on what allows for the sentence to be constructed. Narratives, on the other hand, are much larger structures, ones that are composed of multiple sentences. To be able to build a model for narratives, one must treat them as if

they were a single sentence. Barthes thus introduces principles from linguistics into the analysis of the literary text, i.e., narratives. Hence, he establishes "three levels of narrative, Barthes argues: a basic level of primary units, which Barthes calls *functions*; a higher level, which Barthes calls the level of Actions: one final, highest level, which Barthes calls the level of Narrative itself" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 57). Reading narratives is to understand that meaning is "generated by a process of integration, functions being integrated into Actions and Actions finally being integrated at the level of Narrative itself" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 58). Barthes exemplifies this by deploying James Bond in Ian Fleming's *Goldfinger* to demonstrate two main functions that help unpack and understand narratives. One is the "distributive function," which involves a cause-and-effect logic. If an event A happens, then an event B follows as a consequence of event A. The second one is indices," which help us build the meaning of a "character" in a given story. To understand a character as "evil" or "good," we look for different details, such as the way they dress and behave, to help us build the meaning of said character. It is therefore how an analysis of narratives leads Barthes to his longstanding critique of bourgeois ideology with respect to literary works. In other words, narrative relies on the "linguistic language," discussed earlier in the chapter. Narratives aim to communicate and rely on artificial signs in order to communicate meaning. Barthes, on this point, wrote that.

> Among the vehicles of narrative are articulated language, whether oral or written, pictures, still or moving, gestures, and an ordered mixture of all those substances; narrative is present in myth, legend, fables, tales, short stories, epics, history, tragedy, *drame*[suspense drama], comedy, pantomime, paintings (in Santa Ursula by Carpaccio, for instance), stained-glass windows, movies, local news, conversation. (*Image – Music – Text*, 76)

In other words, it is all-encompassing and suffocating, creating reliance upon them in order to navigate the world. In order to combat this, Barthes looked to the author as the figure whose "death" might liberate the subject from the chains of "linguistic language." What is more, for Barthes, "the modern novel uses functions and indices of character and atmosphere to

generate the illusion of 'reality '" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 59). This implication leads Barthes to argue that narratives have to be considered by the way they establish the relationship between a narrator and a reader. Traditionally, literary criticism had assumed that there is an author behind the narrator of a particular literary work. Nevertheless, structural analysis rejects a relationship between the author and his or her text. In other words, the idea that "an author as the source of a narrative's signs runs directly against structural analysis, in that it suggests that a narrative's form and meaning stem from an original human consciousness" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 60). Barthes argues that the "psychological person (referential order) has no relation with the linguistic person, never defined by arrangements, intentions, or features, but only by (coded) place within the discourse" (Barthes qtd. in the *Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 61). The implication is that the structural analysis line of reasoning takes us outside of the narration itself and into the different social institutions. Said institution's presence in the life of the subject is through the "articulated or linguistic" language, which is communicated through images (for example, the image of a black soldier discussed earlier). This begins Barthes need to demystify the sign and its mythology as "the reluctance to parade its codes marks bourgeois society and the mass culture which has issued from it: each demand signs which do not seem to be signs" (Barthes quoted in the *Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 61). Barthes' obsession becomes dismantling centres of Western capitalist meaning, beginning with how it is expressed in the understanding of novels.

The author is one of the centres of the association of literature and meaning understood as capitalist exchange: "to take the example of literary works, the centre has traditionally been the author: the source of all meaning, the origin from which the literary work derives" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 67). Pease's auctor, and therefore the author, represents this tradition. Derrida's attack on structuralism can be seen in his argument

that the text cannot be anchored in a single consciousness. Pease takes this argument further by claiming that the author himself or herself is a historically constructed figure. Therefore, literary criticism must reconfigure the author as a worker. The issue becomes what motivated the author to write the text in the first place. This calls for a transcendental signified, which, "we find that they are, as Derrida puts it, always somewhere else. This means not only that they are always actually outside the structure they apparently stabilise, but also that they themselves have their meaning elsewhere" (69). When following this line of reasoning, the image of the author as the centre of all meaning that a literary work could possibly contain dissolves. The author ", like all apparent transcendental signifieds, turns out to have meaning only as a signifier for other signifieds: aesthetics, psychology, society, history and so on" (70). In other words, the author is both a signifier and signified and hence limits the meaning that a text can have. Barthes' intention is to dismantle the author as a singular source of meaning and allow for the reader to enter the text freely. Here we again return to why Barthes' understanding of the author as a worker is problematic. When he or she is tied to their work, they can only be understood as a worker, which can be seen in his essay "From Work to Text."

Barthes argues that the "text" is an object that is produced and negotiated by the relations between writer, reader, and the critic. He writes that "Just as Einsteinian science demands that *the relativity of the frames of reference* be included in the object studied, so the combined action of Marxism, Freudianism and structuralism demands, in literature, the relativisation of the relations of writer, reader and observer (critic)" (*Image – Music – Text,* 156. Italics original). Within this context and understanding of this relation, a new object must be thought of in order to properly study literature. This new object is the text: "Over against the traditional notion of the *work,* for long – and still – conceived of in a, so to speak, Newtonian way, there is now the requirement of a new object, obtained by the sliding or

overturning of former categories. That object is the *Text*" (156). For the remainder of the essay goes on to define the text through propositions that are not to be confused with logical propositions but rather as enunciations. Barthes is exercising his right to be a speaking being and a thinker.

> The word 'proposition' is to be understood more in a grammatical than in a logical sense: the following are not argumentations but enunciations, 'touches', approaches that consent to remain metaphorical. Here then are these propositions; they concern method, genres, signs, plurality, flirtation, reading and pleasure. (156)

Attention to how Barthes qualifies his propositions might be rewarding. They are reminiscent of the kind of experience he praises Loyola's, Fournier's, and Sade's texts create in the reader: an experience of movement, uncertainty, and pleasure. Therefore, the very text we are reading is not a communicative, linguistic text but the kind of text that is made up of a different kind of language. The first proposition is that "the Text is a methodological field" (157) and not an object that can be calculated. On this point, Barthes' writes that "In particular, the tendency must be avoided to say that the work is classic, the text avant-garde; it is not a question of drawing up a crude honours list in the name of modernity and declaring certain literary productions 'in' and others 'out' by virtue of their chronological situation: there may be 'text' in a very ancient work, while many products of contemporary literature are in no way texts." (156). One of the essential qualities of a text is that it contains in itself an awareness that it is, in fact, a text, it is "experienced only in an activity of production*"* (157).It contains movement and creates conversation, it is held by and in the language, "the work can be held in the hand, the text is held in language, and only exists in the movement of a discourse" (157). The second proposition is that it subverts and goes against any form of classification, "it cannot be contained in a hierarchy, even in a simple division of genres. What constitutes the Text is, on the contrary (or precisely), its subversive force in respect of old classifications" (157). Barthes gives an example of George Bataille as a thinker who cannot be simply classified and put into certain categories. His pieces are examples of texts

that Barthes praises: complexity and bending the boundaries of discourse are among the outcomes that the Text produces.

> …the Text is that which goes to the limit of the rules of enunciation (rationality, readability, etc.). Nor is this a rhetorical idea, resorted to for some 'heroic' effect: the Text tries to place itself very exactly *behind* the limits of the *doxa* (is not general opinion – constitutive of our democratic societies and powerfully aided by mass communications – denied by its limits, the energy with which it excludes, its censorship). Taking the word literally, it may be said that the Text is always *paradoxical.* (158*)*

The third proposition champions the possibility of the text having within it an infinite number of interpretations. On the other hand, if it is interpreted under the umbrella of literary science, then it must always be understood in relation to the "institutional category of the civilization of the Sign" (158). What Barthes argues is that the text is not "comprehensive (define 'what the work means') but metonymic; the activity of associations, contiguities, carryings- over coincides with a liberation of symbolic energy…" (158). In order for the text to have symbolic energy, it needs to contain the possibility of having a multiplicity of meanings. Barthes therefore argues that "the Text is *radically* symbolic: a *work conceived, perceived and received in its integrally symbolic nature is a Text"* (159). As a consequence of such a theory of the text, Barthes inevitably must do away with the Author in order to restore the "pleasure" of interacting with the text. In his argument, the "Text is that *social* space which leaves no language safe, outside, nor any subject of the enunciation as judge, master, analyst, confessor, decoder. The theory of the Text can coincide only with a practice of writing' (*Image – Music – Text,* 164). We must again return to the question of why the Author is a problematic figure.

Roland Barthes' seminal essay therefore marks an important point in the history of literary criticism. Barthes aims to dismantle the legitimacy of the author and his or her necessity for understanding the text. By doing so, he wants to reject the image of the father, that is, the author, which structuralism compares to a God-like figure, from whom all

meaning of the text originates. Barthes writes, "We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning (the 'message of the Author-God) but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash" (*Image, Music, Text,* 151) Instead, he privileges the understanding of the text as a combination of signs, "The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture" (151). In other words, through the essay Barthes seeks to dismantle "the sign," which subsumes meaning under a single origin,

> The sign must be attacked, it seems, because it is involved in a 'system of meaning' which underpins Western Culture, from its philosophical origins (Plato and Greek philosophy) to its modern system of mass communication (here exemplified by the popular magazine France-Dimanche) and because it is somehow connected to philosophies and monotheistic religions, which seek or believe that they embody the Truth. (*Routledge Companion to Barthes,* 83)

"The Death of the Author," then becomes "a usefully condensed expression of Barthes's developing post-structuralist approach to the issues of reading, writing, and the relationship between texts and the signs which comprise them" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 73). The figure of the author for Barthes becomes the synonym for the father and God as "the Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child" (*Image – Music – Text* , 143). Such an understanding of the text and the author troubles Barthes. He begins the essay by questioning and unpacking the meaning of a single sentence taken from the novel *Sarrasine* (1830) by Balzac. The sentence is as follows: "This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings and her delicious sensibility" (*Image – Music – Text,* 142). The context of the sentence is that the narration is describing a castrato disguised as a woman. This is important as there is an explicit concealment which operates within the narrative. Moreover, it complicates the origin of the voice that is speaking to us while reading the book. Barthes unpacks this by posing the following questions:

> Who is speaking this? 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? (142)

These sets of questions reveal the deconstructing move of determining the origin point of the sentence, i.e., the text. They seek to locate the signifier which signifies the sentence. However, Barthes has trouble doing it. Each question gradually pulls away towards larger and larger concepts. If we consider Derrida's decentering of meaning, then there is no true origin point, which is why Barthes writes "We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin" (142). To solve this problem, he does away with the author and will justify such a move for the remainder of the essay. In his conceptualisation, writing is a voiceless space and needs to be as such because it is to be inhabited by the reader who will give it shape. The reader does not need to rely on the capitalist and Western notion of the singular meaning, i.e., the truth of the text. He or she enters the space of the text as a blank slate and exits transformed only by reading. That is why the author needs to be invisible, "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" (142).

It presents a problem which must be solved. Barthes' solution becomes removing the author altogether and substituting the reader, "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author" (148). In Barthes view, the reader does not bring instability to the text; in fact, it opens it up to an entire new world of interpretive play. For him, once "the Author is removed, the claim to decipher a text becomes quite futile. To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing" (147). However, in Barthes's critical move of rejecting the author as a transcendental signifier, which becomes dismantling the western culture's understanding of what meaning is, he introduces a troubling notion. This notion is that it is not the death of the author we should

worry about, but the death of the text itself. In this move, Barthes ignores that there is always an individual who writes the text and an individual who reads it.

7. Photography – in search of the writing subject

To achieve his search for the elusive subject, Barthes "abandons" literature as his primary intellectual focus and turns to photography and its unique language, which allows it to be a fully contained object of meaning that does not require any outside interpretive force but the eyes of the observer. To expand upon this transition, it is useful to return again to his book *Sade/Fourier/Loyola,* as these "founders of language" possessed another quality which Barthes valued. The fourth and key feature of the kind of language these three authors employ is "theatricalization." In fact, Barthes names them "formulators," and only tentatively goes towards the general term "writer." Through this operation, they unbind the language and give it thickness that does not rely upon signifiers, which makes "the Text as an intellectual object (for reflection, analysis, comparison, and mirroring, etc.) (15). However, Barthes cannot but acknowledge that even the three writers whom he champions in this book "are committed, through historical position, to an ideology of representation and sign. (13)" What they create is nevertheless a kind of text that Barthes champions and privileges. They subvert the linguistic language through "the opposition of matter and form; it is the lamination of a substructure; the writing reaches a point at which it produces a row of signifiers, such that no language matter can still be recovered; because it is conceived as a 'form,' style implies a 'consistency" (14). Their unique style is what makes the unbound language: "the style is absorbed in the writing, the system disintegrates into systematics, the novel into the novelistic, prayer into the fantasmatic: Sade is no longer an erotic, Fourier no longer a utopian, Loyola no longer a saint: all that is left in each of them is a scenographer: he who disperses himself across the framework he sets up and arranges *ad infinitum"* (14). This term, scenographer, is where we can trace Barthes' turn to photography.

For Barthes, the focus on photography became a way to pay tribute to his mother; the book is "directly about this mother and the impact upon him of her death" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes,* 125). What makes *Camera Lucida (1980)*engaging is that "it is certainly a text which blends the discourse or language of method (theory) with a wholly personal discourse (of mourning) and thus unsettles and disturbs the very results it seems to present" (126). Furthermore, it is a combination of the personal and the intellectual, which will help us pave the way towards the writing subject which Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory helps establish. The book's argument on the theory of photography centers upon two concepts: the "studium" and the "punctum."Before delving into these two concepts, it is important to understand what prompted Barthes to write on photography. In chapter three of the first part, he writes on what motivated him to pursue photography.

> Then I decided that this disorder and this dilemma, revealed by my desire to write on Photography, corresponded to a discomfort I had always suffered from: the uneasiness of being a subject torn between two languages, one expressive, the other critical; and at the heart of this critical language, between several discourses, those of sociology, of semiology, and of psychoanalysis – but that, by ultimate dissatisfaction with all of them, I was bearing witness to the only sure thing that was in me (however naïve it might be): a desperate resistance to any reductive system. (*Camera Lucida*, 9)

Barthes saw writing on photography as an escape from the centers of meaning discussed earlier. His dissatisfaction with the author and doing away with his or her image was not enough. He sought to liberate himself by moving towards photography, which to him was not subject to a system of meaning. In order to communicate his interest in photographs, "My rule was plausible enough for me to try to name (as I would need to do) these two elements whose co-presence established, it seemed, the particular interest I took in these photographs" (*Camera Lucida*, 25). The first element, "studium," equates to "the obvious symbolic meaning; it is something that all viewers of the image can agree upon since it presents meanings which are culturally coded" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes,* 126). Barthes came to distinguish this first element by observing Koen Wessing's photograph

Nicaragua (1979). The stadium of the photo would be the presentation of soldiers walking down a destroyed street with two nuns in the background. Such a scene presented in the photograph would be culturally understandable to every observer. For Barthes, the interests which studium sparks is "a kind of general enthusiastic commitment, of course, but without a special acuity. It is by *studium* that I am interested in so many photographs…" (*Camera Lucida*, 26). The second element, "punctum," is of more critical importance to Barthes: "it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me" (*Camera Lucida*, 26). This second element creates a feeling in the observer of the photograph; it is not a culturally given or shared understanding of all the observers but a more personal and independent relationship which one establishes with a particular photograph. It is an element which lies outside shared meanings and descriptions.

If we apply these two terms to the text, the studium would represent the signified while the punctum exists outside the realm of the signified and remains only within the world of the signifier, "lying precisely outside of shareable codes and thus a general description" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes*, 127). Barthes further unpacks the relationship between the studium and the punctum by expanding upon the intricacies of observing a photograph. When observing a photograph, one enters into a conversation with it, "to recognize the *studium* is inevitably to encounter the photographer's intentions, to enter into harmony with them to approve or disapprove of them, but always to understand them, to argue them within myself, for culture (from which the *studium* derives) is a contract arrived at between creators and consumers" (*Camera Lucida*, 28). Interestingly enough, the specter of the author reappears through the image of the "operator" as well as the reader as the "spectator." Barthes, by turning to photography, attempts to reconcile the relationship between the reader and the author, which he could not have done within the text. Having said that, Barthes, by observing historical photographs, feels dissatisfaction as he cannot grasp the universal value of

photography. He still has not grasped "the nature (the *eidos)* of Photography. I had to grant my pleasure was an imperfect mediator, and that a subjectivity reduced to its hedonist project could not recognize the universal" (*Camera Lucida,* 60). To attempt to find the universal, he makes an interesting move towards the more personal, to the photographs of his mother.

This creative move is caused by the death of his mother. Barthes writes, "Now, one November evening shortly after my mother's death, I was going through some photographs. I had no hope of 'finding' her…" (63). He turns to photography in the hope of reconnecting with the image of his mother. This search also denotes his reformulation of what the punctum represents in a photograph. For "Barthes's argument, as we have seen, comes to an impasse at the end of the first part of the book: this impasse is created by the fact that a theory of the punctum within a photographic image cannot be the subject of a general theory without the loss of its uniqueness as a punctum" (*Routledge Companion to Barthes,* 128). At the heart of the second part is the "Winter Garden Photograph," which is never included but only spoken about. However, in doing so, Barthes now self-consciously asserts the impossibility of having a generalized theory of photography: "How can Barthes, that is to say, write about his mother without his reader generalizing his comments; without his readers placing Barthes and his mother into general social categories?" (128).

This question speaks to the difficulties Barthes experiences while attempting to find a perfect medium which would sustain an individual experience of art. From his analysis of literature, its relationship to semiology, and eventual turn to photography, Barthes seeks a subject that is wholly influenced by a piece of art, without having any relation to existing external sources. Having said that, to return once again to S*ade, Fourier, and Loyola* to find an inkling of what Julia Kristeva would develop through the lens of psychoanalysis into the writing subject. In one of the more important paragraphs of the preface, Barthes attempts to redefine the author of a given text by referring to the pleasure of reading his or her work. He

writes, “The pleasure of the Text also includes the amicable return of the author” (16). This return is characterized as “amicable,” as it is not the threatening and oppressive presence of the author described in the titular essay. Moreover, the new author who returns to his or her text seems more like a ghost, a specter of the former one.

Of course, the author who returns is not the one identified by our institutions (history and courses in literature, philosophy, church discourse); he is not even the biographical hero. The author who leaves his text and comes into our life has no unity; he is a mere plural of ‘charms,’ the site of a few tenuous details, yet the source of vivid novelistic glimmerings, a discontinuous chant of amiabilities, in which we nevertheless read death more certainly than in the epic of a fate; he is not a (civil, moral) person, he is a body. (*Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, 16) This new author has for its home the text and not the book; for Barthes, the “text” releases the author while the “book” looks to contain him or her. In the last paragraph, he becomes open about the project of his book, that is to say, to “unglue the text from its purpose as a guarantee: socialism, faith, evil” (17). However, Barthes' rediscovery of the author still does not illuminate the space which reading occupies, “but another site remains enigmatic, escapes for the time being any illumination: the site of reading” (18). For when thinking about the text, there is the one who writes it and the one who reads it. The space of reading is being obscured, and this “occurs at the very moment of bourgeois ideology…” (18). Barthes fails to reconcile reading and writing as being possible to simultaneously exist within the text; in other words, for the reading and writing subject to exist and must therefore do away with the author. He admits this by writing that “the only possible rejoinder is neither confrontation nor destruction, but only theft: fragment the old text of culture, science, literature and change its features according to formulae of disguise, as one disguises the stolen goods” (18). The result of this gives rise to what Barthes calls the “terrorist” text. Such a text allows itself to *“exceed* the laws that a society, an ideology, a philosophy establish for themselves in order to agree

among themselves in a fine surge of historical intelligibility" (18). Another way to understand this "terrorist" text is once again through the essay "From Work to Text." In it, Barthes writes about how the text goes against any singular interpretation. He writes that "The work has nothing disturbing for any monistic philosophy (we know that there are opposing examples of these); for such a philosophy, plural is the Evil. Against the work, therefore, the text could well take as its motto the words of the man possessed by demons {*Mark 5:9}:* 'My name is Legion: for we are many' (*Image – Music – Text*, 160). Barthes' decision to phrase the text as "terrorist" represents his failure to reconcile language, text, and the author. However, Julia Kristeva's intervention with psychoanalysis will reintegrate the three axes by introducing the writing subject, which can exist for the reader to refer to when reading a particular text. To re-contextualize Barthes' anxiety, "There are those who believe that they can with assurance discuss the site of this responsibility: it would be the author, inserting that author into his period, his history, his class" (*Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, 17).

It is not the author being inserted by the other but the author himself or herself introducing the writing subject into his or her time and class. Such a dynamic can only be understood if we equally understand reading as a creative labor with a given text. Barthes never went into that space, while also recognizing it exists. He writes on this that "another site remains enigmatic, escapes for the time being any illumination: the site of the reading" (17). Hence, the writing subject inserts himself/herself through the language, more precisely a "poetic language" which Julia Kristeva argued for. Roland Barthes' intellectual exploration cannot be thought of as linear, starting from one point and ending on another, but rather nonlinear. Through the different books, Barthes sought the subject and wanted to negotiate it with the literary text. For us, to negotiate the writing and the subject, we must look to Julia Kristeva. Her theory of language make possible to understand the writing subject as the generative force behind a literary piece. Finding the writing subject through the lens of

psychoanalysis was a creative leap that profoundly influenced our understanding of literary pieces.

Chapter II

Labor and Language: The Emergence of the Writing Subject

1. The text and the body

Creative labor is fundamental to our understanding of the writing subject. Having moved away from Roland Barthes' conception of the author, which, in the previous chapter, is argued to be a worker who cannot be disentangled from his or her work, we can now direct our attention to Julia Kristeva and her theory of language, which enables the emergence of the writing subject to be theorized. The writing subject is an agent who is an active voice in a given literary text, unlike the author who is an oppressive presence. Sten Moslund, in the essay "The Phantom Walking the Text: The Death of the Author Reconsidered," writes that "The Author figured as a mark of power, as the authority of a closed sign-system, dictating, or centralising, the ways in which a text must be read" (2). Using the modality "must" gives away the essence of the author as being too overbearing, too controlling over the text, centralizing its meaning upon a single axis, his or her intention of what to instill in the reader. The former, Kristeva argues, is constituted through signifying practices; it is always a subject in process, which is why he or she is a laborer, as it is an ongoing activity of signification. By contrast, the author, as denounced by Barthes, is a cultural institution and an ideological construct. He or she is a worker who, through The Republic of Letters, participates in producing a legally and culturally negotiated product, which is the book, and has his or her stamp of individual ownership. However, before unpacking Kristeva's language theory,

Hans Robert Jauss's essay "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory" represents a foundational debate between the Marxist and Formalist schools of thought to which Kristeva herself partly responds. On one side, we have the formalist school with figures such as Bakhtin, and on the other, the Marxist school, which changed the trajectory of the development of literary critical theory without ever directly interacting with it. If we move past the theoretical foundations, at the heart of the matter is the human subject, who can be a writer and therefore the writing subject. Jauss's aim to "bridge the gap between literature and history" (1) will allow for the contribution this thesis aims to achieve, which is to point out that we live through a crisis that recalls the crisis that people experienced in Henry David Thoreau and Gertrude Stein's time. Stein's *The Making of Americans* was published in 1925 in book form while written between 1903 and 1911; a time when political and armed alliances were being made that foreshadowed the coming war. Most importantly, in 1908 the Austro-Hungarian Empire annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina, which would eventually lead to the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand.

On the other hand, during the time *Walden* was composed, the United States experienced massive expansion with the justification of "manifest destiny." There was the Mexican–American War among other important events. In short, all these crises affect and shape public as well as intellectual thought. The writing subject as an active agent is a voice whose role is to blend the personal as well as the public, showing how the individual is supposed to lead their life in times of challenge and strife. These crises prompted both writers to write the books that will be the topic of Chapter III.

Jauss argues that both the formalist and Marxist schools treat literature "in terms of the circular aesthetic system of production and of representation" (1). In later sections of the chapter, both schools will be independently analyzed. However, both schools' arguments on what literature is and its role in society reveal the heart of the problem this chapter aims to

resolve, which is that the writing subject, through his or her labor, and therefore the body, is bound strictly to the text while the author as a worker is subsumed under the broader structure of society. Therefore, the notion of the text needs revaluation. It is neither a wholly independent, autonomous object, independent of any external source, nor a space where social structures are reinforced. The writing subject allows for the understanding of the text as a space where the psychological motivations of the writer meet the public intellectual discourse of a given time. It is what Kristeva called "the dissident." She writes that "A specter haunts Europe: the dissident. Give voice to each individual form of the unconscious, to every desire and need. Call into play the identity and/or language of the individual and the group. Become the analyst of the every kind of speech and institution considered socially impossible." (*The Kristeva Reader*, 295). The writing subject therefore is an agent who speaks that the personal has political value and is an echo of the feminist movement of the 1960s which proclaimed that "the personal is the political." It is why one must acknowledge that a creative piece is written in a particular moment in history and therefore exists as part of the ongoing development of literary history. Jauss writes that the "historicity of literature as well as its communicate presupposes a relation of work, audience, new work which takes the form of dialogue as well as a process, and which can be understood in the relationship of a message, and receiver as well as in the relationship of question and answer, problem, and solution" (3). He means that when interpreting literary works, one must acknowledge their historicity, which is why Jauss says literary criticism "must therefore be widened to include an aesthetic of reception and impact" (3). Such an acknowledgment opens up the possibility of establishing a connection with the "fathers," exactly the connection that writers such as Henry David Thoreau and Gertrude Stein sought to reject. A given particular historical moment has its own unique system of values and what the subject needs and demands. When the predecessors do not satisfy the needs of the present, then the writing subject rejects them

and proposes new literary forms and languages to communicate what the subject experiences. Their rejection becomes a symptom of the historical crisis. This becomes significant as it means that the inherited aesthetic forms cease to satisfy the individual's demands in a new age. Within this rupture, the writing subject emerges as the agent that points to the text. Kristeva writes about the text that.

> This heterogeneous object is a body, because it is a text. I have written down this much-abused word and insist upon it so that you might understand how much there is in a text, how much nonidentity, nonauthenticity, impossibility, and corrosiveness it holds for those who choose to see themselves within it. A body, a text that bounces back to me echoes of a territory that I have lost but that I am seeking within the blackness of dreams in Bulgarian, French, Russian, Chinese tones, invocations, lifting up the disremembered body. Territory of the mother. What I am saying to you is that if this heterogeneous body, this risky text, provides meaning, identity, and jouissance, they do so in a completely different way than a "Name-of-the-Father" (*Desire in Language*, 163).

Understanding the text as a body is equally important in relation to labor. In the passage above, Kristeva reflects how the personal meets the political. Her notion of the text is one that rejects stability and ordered meaning but rather one that, through labor, both physical in terms of the mechanical process of writing and spiritual, in terms of reflection, creates a new territory, which she calls the "territory of the mother" and not the father, or in other words, the determined social order borrowed from Lacanian psychoanalysis. Scholar Patricia Yaeger broadens the relationship between the body and language in her book *Refiguring the Father (*1989*)*. She writes that "In the Old Testament, it is God's bodiless voice that becomes the source of eternal life. Ejected from paradise, 'man and women move outside the garden to the realm of the troublesome body, permanently blocked from the verbal category" (38). Once this severance takes place, the only way for man and woman to reclaim their language is through the body and through the text. Michael Foucalt in his essay "What is an Author?" (1969) speaks of the author not as an individual but rather a function that has an institutional role. He writes that "the author is not an indefinite source of significations... the author is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes, and chooses" (*The*

Foucault Reader, 118). Therefore, in the context of Yaeger's argument and this chapter, the author is a bodiless figure defined by the "name-of-the-father," and like seen in Chapter I, a theological figure.

Yaeger's concept of "asomia," or in other words, bodilessness, can be connected to Foucault's concept of "author-function." In the chapter "The Father's Breasts," she introduces the aforementioned concept. She writes: "I want to make two suggestions. First, if somatophobia, or fear of the body's fleshiness and mutability, characterizes our conflicts with women's bodies, then asomia, or bodilessness, characterizes our way of describing and thinking about the father" (*Refiguring the Father*, 9). Yaeger here talks about what the female body experiences, but the concept can be expanded further when put into conversation with Foucault and deepen our conversation on why the writing subject is a solution to the problem of the author presented in Chapter I. When introducing Kristeva, the connection becomes even more fruitful and disruptive to the debate this thesis hopes to produce. In the essay "Stabat Mater," Kristeva's analysis of the maternal body through the depiction of the Virgin Mary in Western Christian canon champions subjectivity by grounding it through the maternal body. In the same vein, we can argue that the text, which acts as a body for the writing subject, grounds his or her subjectivity. Interestingly enough, the very construction of the essay, having both the theoretical and autobiographical side, reveals the writing subject in action. On one side of the page we have the creative autobiographical text in bold, while on the right the critical analysis of maternity. The opening of the bolded portion of the essay speaks to the body being a text.

> Words always too remote, too abstract to capture the subterranean swarm of seconds, insinuating themselves into unimaginable places. Writing them down tests an argument, as does love. What is love, for a woman, the same thing as writing? Laugh. Impossible. Flash on the unnamable, woven of abstraction to be torn apart. Let a body finally venture out of its shelter, expose itself in meaning beneath a veil of words. WORD FLESH. ("Stabat Mater," 3)

Finally, the essay "A Meditation, a Political Act, an Art of Living," by Julia Kristeva points to the heart of this thesis, which is the discussion of how literature, psychoanalysis, and philosophy are not there to redeem us, reveal the truth, or produce beauty but are rather practices that shape our understanding of the human subject. She writes that "In this apprehension of the human adventure opened by literature and psychoanalysis, literature and art do not constitute an aesthetic décor, no more than philosophy or psychoanalysis claim to provide salvation. But each of these experiences, in their differences, is offered as the laboratory of new forms of humanism" (*Psychoanalysis, Aesthetics, and Politics in the work of Julia Kristeva*, 22). Foucault and Barthes, in the time of post-structuralism, abandon the notion of humanism; in other words, the Enlightenment notion of a stable rational subject. On the other hand, Kristeva seeks to redefine it by investigating how psychoanalysis and artistic labor are sites in which a new kind of subjectivity arises. The "new humanism" for her is not one that can be understood as universal human nature but a continual evolution of the embodied subject. In terms of literature, Kristeva does not seek to recover the author as the sovereign origin of meaning. For her, literature is experimentation in which subjectivity is produced, questioned, and transformed. Therefore, the writing subject is neither Barthes' empirical author nor Foucault's author-function; it is an agent who emerges through writing. Her creative realization that subjectivity and language provide an insight into what it means to be an individual and how literature aids in this realization is relevant today as it has ever been. Jauss's own argument that literature is an event and has its own unique history of reception completes Kristeva's arguments by also thinking of the reader. He writes that, "The historicity of literature is based not on an organization of literary 'facts' established post festum, but rather on the preceding experience of the literary work by its readers" (Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory). As readers enter a given text with preexisting expectations that are historically and culturally shaped, which Jauss calls the "horizon of

expectations," then literature can produce historical change. The writing subject is an agent of "literary history," which is dialogical and has the power to transform the present. We do not need to look towards institutions for change but rather towards individual acts of creativity that can inspire us to change the world. It is a process which requires labor but one that can bring happiness.

Kristeva writes on the kind of subjectivity and pleasure literature can produce in the book Desire in Language, more specifically, chapter "The Novel as Polylogue." Kristeva ventures into the inner workings of subjectivity and its relation with language in the context of literary texts. In the beginning of the chapter, she places a quote from Phillipe Soller's Logiques which encapsulates this relationship. She writes that "Language is seen as the scene of the whole, the way to infinity: he who knows not language serves idols, he who could see his language would see his god" *(Desire in Language*, 159). This chapter also provides a framework upon which we can understand what desire as a category means when it is in relation to language. Desire will be integral to our understanding of The Making of Americans in the next chapter as it represents an embodied subjectivity. To desire, one must have a body, and to have a body, one must know his or her language. Kristeva's review begins with "H is a music that is inscribed in language, becoming the object of its own reasoning, ceaselessly, and until saturated, overflowing, and dazzling sense has been exhausted (159)," which speaks to the power language has over subjectivity. What is more, she further emphasizes this by stating that "H sweeps you away. It whisks you from your comfortable position; it breathes a gust of dizziness into you, but lucidity returns at once, along with music, and you can watch your opacity being dissolved—into sounds; your blind, organic, murderous sexuality being unwound into a subtle, easy gesture, projected from the body into language….. (159)."

Kristeva complements Jauss's arguments on the importance of reading and the reader by connecting subjectivity and language. For her, it causes a nirvana-like experience, which Kristeva describes as "your opacity being dissolved," and the line between language and body becomes blurred. Such a relationship between the reader and books is very similar to the kind of experiences Barthes conveyed in his book Sade, Fourier, Loyola. Kristeva's experience of the student protests completes the circle on why literature is important and can have societal impact. She writes about it as "The jolt of May '68: a call from the masses. For those who have long known that imagination is an absolute antipower, what was new was the concrete manifestation of this truth – the general strike immobilizing France. Were they mistaken? The time of history passes through the stories of individuals: the birth, their experience… (*Desire in Language,* 160)." Student protests of the late 60s sought to reject the established sources of power, which treat the body as a commodity. Therefore, as much as protests suspend labor, which paradoxically reveals its true power, so does literature interrupt the symbolic production of institutions. The writing subject becomes a laborer because, as an agent, he or she reveals that subjectivity is produced through continual labor on oneself.

2. History vs. Theory – Formalism vs. Marxism

Formalism, which began in Russia and then spread across other European countries and into the United States, influenced Kristeva's views and therefore requires critical inquiry. Putting their thesis of literature briefly, it is, in their view, "literature does not convey any clear or paraphrasable message; rather it communicates what is otherwise ineffable. Literature is regarded as a unique mode for expression" (Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present, 197). Ineffable here is a crucial word because it points to something inexpressible, which is a unique property of literature. However, this is the extent of the formalist understanding of literature, which they view as a relatively closed system. Kristeva, although

indebted to their contribution, goes precisely into the territory of the inexpressible and ineffable; hence the move to Lacanian Psychoanalysis. It enables her to investigate how literature becomes creative labor, which organizes symbolic life. In short, the formalists focus on the how, while Kristeva extends it to what literature accomplishes.

In the formalist school, the most prominent figure was Mikhail. M. Bakhtin (1895 – 1975), whom Kristeva directly quotes in her work. Although the formalist school rose at the time of the Russian Revolution, prominent figures such as Trotsky critiqued its postulates. Nevertheless, it was Bakhtin who tried to reconcile the formalist school with the Soviet theoreticians. He introduced "formal linguistic analysis and sociological emphasis, by treating language itself as the supreme ideological phenomenon, as the very site of ideological struggle" (Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present, 198). This ideological struggle ushers in the Marxist contribution to literary criticism and will be important for understanding labor and the need to disentangle it from the Marxist context. It is through the Bakhtian concept of "dialogism" that we can understand labor and its relation to the writing subject. Bakhtin's radical view that "there is no direct unmediated relation between a word and its object" (Literary Criticism from Plato to the Present, 200), this rather radical view inspired Kristeva. In her work, she interrogates "the status of the word as a minimal structural unit; Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them" (Desire in Language, 65). Therefore, Kristeva not only borrows from Bakhtin but further radicalizes his views. For Bakhtin, the word is shaped by its previous users, speakers, social contexts, and ideologies. Therefore, "dialogism" becomes "intertextuality"; the writing subject does not simply describe history; he reads and writes it, labors. Kristeva recognizes that "Bakhtin shuns the linguist's technical rigor, wielding an impulsive and at times even prophetic pen…" (65), and paves the way for the redefinition of literary analysis. The new analysis is seemingly based

upon an understanding of the importance of the "word" in the space of texts: it is a "signifier for different modes of (literary) intellection within different genres of texts" (65) that "puts poetic analysis at the sensitive center of contemporary 'human' sciences" (65). It builds from the ground up, first proceeding to map discoveries onto larger and larger elements. Ultimately, it ends up at the relationship between language and text. The text has three dimensions: the writing subject, the addressee, and exterior texts. Bakhtin's arguments for the novel empower Kristeva to develop intertextuality because the writing subject encounters language, which is always populated and haunted by its previous voices, meanings, and uses. In reckoning and interacting with these voices, transforming them into the aesthetic forms of one's given historical period while also incorporating the personal and subjective experience of the writing subject behind the language is the essence of labor and its distinction from work. While Bakhtin treats language as a social activity, Kristeva enables us to treat it as a form of symbolic labor. It is why she claims that literature is a laboratory of new forms of humanism. The novel then becomes one of the experiments, performed in the laboratory.

Bakhtin opens one of his most important essays, "Discourse in the Novel," which summarizes his entire philosophy of the novel rather succinctly. He writes that

> The principal idea of this essay is that the study of verbal art can and must overcome the divorce between an abstract "formal" approach and an equally abstract "ideological approach." Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon – social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning. (*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, 273)

Bakhtin distinguishes two kinds of languages: one is the "social" language, while the other is "literary" language, which he further differentiates between the one found in poems and the other in novels. Furthermore, "Language— like the living concrete environment in which the consciousness of the verbal artist lives— it is never unitary" (288). It is akin to a living organism which continuously evolves through the different historical epochs. Such a

view of language, further intensified with the introduction of psychoanalysis by Julia Kristeva, allows for the writing subject to exist as a mediator between the inner life of the artist and the aspiration to transform public opinion and shape the intellectual discourse of a particular time. It is precisely because language is a breathing and ever-evolving system that labor becomes particularly important, as creating language requires the creative effort of the writing subject, who labors. Imagine labor being something akin to the character in Melville's Moby Dick who dusts old grammar books in the library. Bakhtin himself acknowledges that the "poet speaks in his own language" (287). Language therefore becomes an object of history and political tensions: "it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between the differing epochs of the past between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form" (291). When Bakhtin speaks of "bodily form," he speaks of language being situated within historical discourse solely. Kristeva, however, goes a step further and, through the semiotic process, tells us what that body feels. If Bakhtin gives language its body, Kristeva tells us what that body feels. Marxism and its ideological foundation look at societal structures which require transformation; it never ventures into accounting for the body itself. Kristeva instead does.

Although literature does not play a significant role in Marx's thought, the latter has had a transformative impact on literature because it rejects the Hegelian concepts of identity, meaning that literature can be analyzed independently of any ideological, class, and socio-economic structure. Marxism considers "art itself as a commodity, sharing with other commodities an entry into material aspects of production" (*Literary Criticism: Form Plato to the Present*, 210). It also understands literature as the space where class struggle and the clash with history converge. Jauss echoes this tension. Kristeva uses and critiques Marx and incorporates his philosophy into her work by aligning semiology with Marx's project of

understanding how material production shapes consciousness. Kristeva, having defined semiology as a "semiotic level" (The Kristeva Reader, 80) where the "signifier is taken as the model of the signified" (80), aligns semiotics with Marx's political theory. She writes that "This definition in itself suffices in order to designate the novelty if the semiotic process in relation to previous 'humane science' and to science in general: a novelty by means of which semiotics allies itself to Marx's strategy where he presents an economy or society (a signified) as a permutation of elements (signifiers)" (81). However, she identifies spaces where Marx does not go in his critique of capitalist economy, and that space concerns the body: "There, on a scene where work does not yet represent any value or mean anything, our concern is with the relation of a body to expenditure" (82). She critiques Marx and says that he did not concern himself with labor itself before any value or meaning that labor has: "Marx had neither the wish nor the means to tackle this notion of a productive labour prior to value or meaning" (82).In Chapter III we will analyze the literary demonstration of how the writing subject labors, but for the purposes of the discussion on labor, Thoreau is of critical concern as he thinks of the laboring man. Both resist reducing human activity to productive labor measured by economic standards. Hence, he theorizes a different kind of productivity whose purpose is to enrich one's life not in economic terms but rather philosophical and spiritual. Writing falls under this definition of productivity and is the means through which the laboring writing subject achieves it. Thoreau's insistence on deliberate living can be aligned with Kristeva's signifying practice, as both require human activity, or in other words, labor in the form of spiritual activity. When it comes to Gertrude Stein, in her novel *The Making of Americans (1925),* she rejects representing reality but rather creates her language through insistence on rhythm, repetition, and experimentation with syntax. Hence, each thinker points to labor being more than simple economic measurement; it is a creative, embodied process through which subjectivity is formed. Language becomes the means in

which the laboring body liberates itself. Literature, therefore, becomes an action of liberation and can have a transformative impact. In essence, Kristeva creatively recognizes that Marx's critique of political economy reminds one of the "contemporary critique of the sign and the circulation of meaning; moreover, the critical discourse on the sign acknowledges its similarity to the critical discourse on money" (83). Consequently, Kristeva returns to the speaking being through Freud, whose psychoanalytic work "revealed production itself to be a process not of exchange (or use) or meaning (value), but of playful permutation which provides the very model for production" (83). It is Freud's dream work and the introduction of the concept of the unconscious that return us to the problem of semiology. It cannot be limited to analyzing stable signs because language itself is animated by unconscious processes that continually transform meaning. Kristeva writes on this.

> This seems to encapsulate the whole problem of contemporary semiotics: either it continues to formalize the semiotic systems from the point of view of communication (in the same way to risk a brutal comparison, that Ricardo regarded surplus-value from the point of view of distribution and consumption), or else it opens up to the internal problematics of communication (inevitably offered by all social problematics) the 'other scene' of the production of meaning prior to meaning. (84).

This "other scene" is not simply the unconscious, for Kristeva it is the pre-symbolic space of production where the body and its drives mold language. To give an example, Gertrude Stein often uses the word "being" throughout her novel The Making of Americans, and its meaning constantly changes depending on the context. One such example is this sentence ""Certainly there are many ways of being ones being completely living in being living..." (T*he Making of Americans,* 805). Therefore, the problem of semiology is the problem of the speaking being and equally of the "writing being." Kristeva writes that in terms of semiotics, literature can be understood as a "particular semiotic practice which has the advantage of making more accessible than others the problematics of the production of meaning posed by a new semiotics, and consequently is of interest only to the extent that it ('literature') is envisaged as irreducible to the level of an object for normative linguistics

(which deals with the codified and denotative word [parole])" (86). What this means is that the question of writing, which can be seen as a production, must take up a new meaning under the umbrella of semiotics of production, which "must tackle these texts precisely in order to join a scriptural practice concerned with its own production to a scientific thought in search of production" (86). Essentially, the problem of "speaking being" as well as "writing being" must be resolved. She addresses this question through the signifying practice.

3. Kristeva's signifying Practice

Before understanding what semiology did for Kristeva, let's first unpack the unique term she coined, which is "semanalysis". The term "semanalysis" is derived from semiology, which is the study of signs that Saussure deployed in his lectures, Course in General Linguistics (1916). For Kristeva, this term became problematic as "semiology designated an enormous science of signs of which linguistics was only a part. But it soon became clear that whatever semiology's sign-object happens to be (gesture, sound, image, etc.) it can only be known through language. It follows that 'linguistics is not part of the general science of signs, not even a privileged part; rather, it is semiology which is part of linguistics, and specifically that part responsible for the large signifying units of speech' (*The Kristeva Reader*, 76). When compared with other hard sciences such as Physics, Mathematics, etc., semiology (or semiotics) can be understood "as the production of models" (77). Such an understanding of semiology reveals its crucial difference from other exact sciences. For example, in Chemistry, we have come up with a symbol (a sign) which denotes water (H20). The symbol is a representation of water and not the water itself: "The theoretical models of any science, including semiotics, are representations" (76). In addition, the symbol for water is one of many "representations, and, as such, are produced within spatio-temporal coordinates" (77). On the other hand, semiology is a "production of the theory of its own model-making, a

theory which in principle can accommodate that which does not belong to the order of representation" (77). What this means is that semiology can be understood as a critique of itself, a theory which "necessarily theorizes its own production of other theories…" (76). While semiology borrows terms from other hard sciences, it also necessarily appropriates and transforms the meaning of these terms. Therefore, what semanalysis has enabled us to understand is that science is always negotiated by ideology. For our concern, language is then equally negotiated by ideology as semiology is part of linguistics. The ideology with which Kristeva is concerned is capitalism, and so she turns to Marx and his critique of capitalism. Kristeva's unique intervention and discovery reveals that semiology is able to take capitalist critique beyond what Marx sought to achieve. Kristeva points out that the body is productive and not only expressive. This circles back to the "other scene" mentioned in the previous section. As much as Marx asks us to look to the process of labor, Kristeva asks us to look beneath communication to the process of signification. Kristeva begins to unpack the notion of signifying practice through poetic language, which she describes as "a semiotic system generated by a speaking subject within a social, historical field" (*The Revolution in Poetic Language*, 11). Its connection to the writing subject is that "literary practice is seen as exploration and discovery of the possibilities of language; as an activity that liberates the subject from a number of linguistic, psychic, and social networks" (12). Moreover, to understand language as part of the signifying process, we begin to discern "two ways or modes in which it operates: (1) as an expression of clear and orderly meaning; and (2) as an evocation of feeling or, more pointedly, a discharge of the subject's nervous energy and drives" (16). It is important to remember that Kristeva looks to avant-garde writers and their literary works because they represent a change in the way language is used. To put it simply, the thesis of her work is as follows: "the works of literary avant-garde writers produce a 'revolution in poetic language '" (13).

The avant-garde writers, through poetic devices, transformed the way in which we can interact with the text and understand its meaning. They exploded the text and pointed towards an experience of literary works that does not constitute an exchange within the framework of capitalist centers of meaning. Their experience is much more personal and invites the readers to have a personal relationship with the text. Such a relationship is negotiated through the fact that "modern texts which, even structurally, perceive themselves as a production that cannot be reduced to representation" (The Kristeva Reader, 86). They are aware of their own artificiality and so become what Kristeva termed "social text," which can be understood as a space where two subjectivities can coexist. Therefore, we cannot study the writing subject without studying the language. And to study language, we must understand the "speaking being's own living energy" (15), which "infuses meaning into language" (15). A good example of how the speaking being's energy subsumes the order of the language by breaking punctuation and syntax would be a passage from Molly's soliloquy towards the end of James Joyce's Ulysses:

> the sun shines for you he said the day we were lying among the rhododendrons on Howth head in the grey tweed suit and his straw hat the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leapyear like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes. (Joyce quoted in *The Routledge Companion to Kristeva*, 16).

To understand this new poetic language that Kristeva saw, we will begin by mapping her venture into psychoanalysis and the semiotic and symbolic practice and the energy it produces that can then be transferred to literary texts through the notions of "genotext" and "phenotext." The semiotic (le sémiotique) is "the extra-verbal way in which bodily energy and affects make their way into language" (17), and it is not subject to the grammatical and syntactical rules of language. On the other hand, the symbolic is "a mode of signifying in

which speaking beings attempt to express meaning with as little ambiguity as possible" (17); it is an attempt at communicating the internal world of one to the other through the usage of culturally shared and understood symbols. For example, in today's digital age, "emojis" serve such a purpose; we send heart emojis to our loved ones, family, or friends to express love, and it is generally understood and accepted that "heart" means love. How does the writing subject utilize this tension between the semiotic and the symbolic? – by operating within the potential space that exists between the semiotic and the symbolic. The writing subject helps us stress this tension, while the author does not. Barthes' "author" has a completely different relationship to language, as he is the figure of authority. On the other hand, the writing subject is not a person behind the text but rather an agent produced through the very process of writing. The writing subject takes up the potential space where the semiotic and symbolic in a given book interact. This does not mean, however, that it cannot gravitate towards one polarity or the other as seen in the example above. The writing subject's play with language is what gives energy to the text and facilitates the reader's relationship with it. Kristeva argues that we are naturally predisposed to the use and understanding of poetic language since birth because a child uses both semiotic and symbolic language to communicate his or her needs with the mother. The child's developmental trajectory paves the way for using the language symbolically and can be mapped onto literary criticism. The language the writing subject uses is "both semiotic and symbolic" (24) because "no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (24). That is why poetic language is integral to our understanding of the writing subject. It energizes the body, which in turn energizes the language and the text. If it were not for this process, the text would not have any meaning for us.

To describe the energy which the signifying practice produces in children and which then prepares the child to use language, Kristeva borrows the term "chora' from Plato. She writes, "we borrow the term chora from Plato's *Timeus* to denote an essentially mobile and extremely provisional articulation constituted by movements and their ephemeral stases" (25). These articulations are babies' coos and other sounds which are used for expression and release of energy stored in the infant's body. Their purpose is to communicate to the mother the drives and needs that the baby experiences. It is why Kristeva in her book uses the term "the semiotic chora' as "the infant's tactile relation with the mother's body provides an orientation for the infant's drive" (19). Kristeva reminds the reader that the "chora" is a space where the meaning which is produced by the baby's articulations is semiotic as the "infant who does not yet know how to use language to refer to objects…" (19). This developmental trajectory eventually leads the child to gain awareness and causes "the thetic," which is the phase in which the child recognizes the difference between the self and the other. Moreover, it "comprehends that language can point to things outside itself, that it is potentially referential" (21). A stage in which the child begins producing sounds and imitations such as "woof-woof" to refer to a dog. By doing this "the child has identified a dog as something separate from itself" (21). This is the first clear assertion of identity and the development of the child's subjectivity. Finally, the subjectivity of the child is fully realized in the mirror stage proposed by the French psychoanalyst Lacan, which Kristeva uses to mark the beginning of the child's ability to use language "as means of orderly communication" (22). In Kristeva's view, "language learning can therefore be thought of as an acute and dramatic confrontation between the positing-separating-identifying and the motility of the semiotic chora" (47). The mirror stage prepares the child to use language symbolically, meaning that he or she can establish a relational meaning between the word and the object the word describes; in other words, that objects can have names and can be identified. The mirror

stages coincide with the Oedipal stage in the child's development. The male child begins to have fears of castration, i.e., losing a penis, while girls suffer from lacking one. Kristeva, on this point, writes that "The discovery of castration, however, detaches the subject from his dependence on the mother, and the perception of this lack [manqué] makes the phallic function a symbolic function— the symbolic function" (47). This moment in the developmental stage of a child is extremely consequential, as the child is able to separate from the mother. Lacan's influence on Kristeva is that she begins to understand that the "phallus is itself a signifier" (47). It is why, for both girls and boys, it takes on a symbolic meaning: "At the level of the imaginary, the penis has multiple meanings. The infant imagines that the mother must have one; it comes to realize that she does not and hence he might not; it becomes a 'detachable object,' something he demands that his mother have. In Lacan's scheme, the penis is also what a woman demands and thus wants from a man and ultimately what he or she seeks by having a child" (*The Routledge Companion to Kristeva*, 32). Moreover, the child can start learning the rules of grammar and syntax to convey meaning as it accepts the symbolic order of the father. He or she is at the precipice of the symbolic, or "orderly communication," which is the name of the father. Kristeva, as did Barthes, looks to Ferdinand de Saussure to describe the schism between the semiotic and symbolic, which is denoted by the break within the symbolic, between the signifier and signified. The tension between the semiotic and symbolic allows Kristeva to explore that tension in literary practice. In order to translate this, she introduced two concepts, which are the "Genotext" and "Phenotext."

4. The "Genotext" and "Phenotext"

By analyzing the chapter "Genotext and Phenotext," Julia Kristeva's map of the child's developmental trajectory and acquisition of language can now offer a unique way of

reading literary texts by discovering the "hidden" text, one that exists beneath the surface of words. The distinction between the "Genotext" and "Phenotext" "could be mapped onto the distinction between semiotic and symbolic – albeit roughly" (*The Routledge Companion to Kristeva,* 24). The chapter titled "Genotext and Phenotext" begins as such: "IN LIGHT of the distinction we have made between the semiotic chora and the symbolic, we may now examine the way texts function" (*The Revolution in Poetic Language,* 86). The functioning of any literary text is equally important, as it allows for the distinction between the author and the writing subject. Kristeva's arguments help us redirect our attention away from the conscious intention of Barthes' author and towards the production of meaning within language. The writing subject labors to create this meaning for us to interpret. Firstly, the "genotext" includes both the semiotic processes and the emergence of the symbolic. The "former includes drives, their disposition, and their division of the body, plus the ecological and social system surrounding the body, such as objects and pre-Oedipal relations with parents. (86) The semiotic process, which is one of the two constituents of a "genotext," is the psychological force that generates the motivation behind using language in a literary way. In other words, the "genotext" is the "language's underlying foundation" (87). Now, the symbolic "encompasses the emergence of object and subject and the constitution of nuclei of meaning involving categories: semantic and categorial fields" (86). The subject could be understood as the "reading subject" who has a relationship with a given text, i.e "the object." Equally so, we can understand the "genotext" as the potential space where the writing subject is allowed to play with language as he or she chooses while the reading subject can interpret equally freely. Conversely, the phenotext is one which exists under the constraints of a language, its syntax and semantic structure. It is an element which is constituted by "language that serves to communicate (87)," and is a structure that "obeys rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee" (87). In other

words, it assumes a speaking being as a static entity, unchanged and resistant to psychological forces. It is important to note that each literary text contains both the "genotext" and "phenotext" and is itself a process which Kristeva's "writing being" consciously engages within its production. It helped shape Kristeva's approach to literature and create a solid foundation upon which to build our understanding of the writing subject. The signifying practice left a strong desire for language to be understood as inseparable from "speaking beings"; hence, Kristeva went on to compile her essays on literature and art in the book *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art (1969)*. In the preface of the book, she goes on to state the project of the book.

> … there remains the necessity to pay attention to the ability to deal with the desire for language, and by this I mean paying attention to art and literature, and in even more poignant fashion, to the art and literature of our time, which remain alone, in our world of technological rationality, to impel us not toward the absolute but toward a quest for a little more truth, an impossible truth, concerning the meaning of speech, concerning our condition as speaking beings. (9)

Kristeva's intellectual concern is the "speaking subject," which she seeks to find through language. This chapter's aim is to draw inspiration from her search and define the "writing subject" as an agent that labors through language. When the "speaking subject" reads, he or she too labors in order to understand a given literary work; hence, these two labors create a potential space where freedom can be exercised, lessons can be learned, and broader societal change can occur by working from the ground up, rather than looking towards institutions for change. Therefore, a parallel can be made between Kristeva's concern that "the overly constraining and reductive meaning of language made up of universals causes us to suffer" (10). Barthes' "author" as the divine authority over his or her book makes its language universal. When he removed it and proclaimed him or her "dead," he cleared the space for a new understanding of textual production but never went a step further. Kristeva did and conveyed the subjectivity which operates within this new space. The logical

outcome of Kristeva's theories of language is that we can "weave an identity for subject, or sign, or sentence" (10). This identity is the writing subject within a given piece.

Kristeva presents the relationship between language and the writing subject through analyzing how the Russian poet Mayakovsky explores and plays with language using rhythm in his poems. It is a relationship portrayed as the "struggle between poet and sun." The sun is "a paternal image that is coveted but also feared, murderous, and sentences to die, a legislative seat which must be usurped" (29). Moreover, it is an "agency of language since it is the "crown" of rhythmic thrust, limiting structure, paternal law abrading rhythm, destroying it to a large, but also bringing it to light, out of its earthy revolution, to enunciate itself" (29). This struggle is akin to the tension between the symbolic and semiotic language which we explored earlier in the chapter. On the one hand, the writing subject wants to play with language as he or she chooses, while on the other, it must abide by the very rules of the language in order to play. Kristeva conveys this as "vying with the agency of limiting and structuring language…." (29). The goal of "structuring language" is related to the concept of the "father." In other words, the symbolic function that organizes language, social law, and meaning. The "father" represents the movement from bodily experience of the child to symbolic representation as explained in Lacanian psychoanalysis. In part, it is through the act of labor that the writing subject, as an agent, rejects the fathers. This concept has been part of the European and American cultural, theoretical, and literary legacy. In the next chapter, Gertrude Stein and Henry David Thoreau's novels, The Making of Americans and Walden, respectively, are both examples of their writer's goal of rejecting the fathers and establishing their own unique voices and writing an "American classic." Debra Shostak, in her book *Fictive Fathers in the Contemporary American Novel*, analyses the role of the "father" in both theoretical and narrative contexts. She writes in the introduction that the figure of the father evolved "from the Enlightenment stereotype of an autonomous liberal subject who

embraced bourgeois sensibilities, ideals of self-control and manly beauty, and connections with nationhood" (3). Shostak makes an equally important connection between the figure of the father and what constitutes the American family. The concept of family is one of the more important ones in *The Making of Americans,* as well as how it is transformed and negotiated through Stein's language. To conclude, the writing subject as a creative agent whose labor is no one's but his or her own provides a solid foundation upon which to interpret a novel and its power to point out the individual's struggle in the contemporary world.

5. Kristeva and Modernity

Sara Beardsworth, in her essay "Love's Lost Labors: Subjectivity, Art, and Politics," also recognizes Kristeva's aspirations to point out the importance of the inner life of the subject in relation to his or her time. She writes that "Kristeva's diagnosis of a condition in which historical being is blocked in late modern societies, a blockage manifested as a crisis of meaning and values, "the subjective process that is the essence of art gains its significance only and through being a remedy for this blockage" (*Psychoanalysis, Aesthetics, and Politics in the work of Julia Kristeva,* 128). Furthermore, Beardsworth, in her separate book *Julia Kristeva Psychoanalysis and Modernity* (2004), interrogates how Kristeva's critical output looks towards modernity in order to liberate the subject. She writes in the book that Kristeva's "methodology in Revolution in Poetic Language divides psychoanalysis and art into the theoretical and practical components, respectively, of her analysis of the social and symbolic inflexibility of the modern bourgeois world, which is the political problem she addresses there" (18). For Beardsworth, Kristeva's work primarily aims to address the problem of what she calls "modern nihilism". However, she fails to acknowledge precisely why Kristeva connects psychoanalysis and art; it is to strengthen the notion that art can cause social transformation. The idea that "Psychoanalysis no longer stands to art as theory to practice" (18) is baseless if we account for the fact that labor enables us to connect theory

with creative practice. It is through labor that we can connect Kristeva's poetic language with modern literature. In the book Beardsworth writes that

> In sum, Kristeva's particular rendering of the thesis that modern literature reaches into the conditions of its own appearance as a work is one that insists that the signifying elements freed from a deracinated signification are themselves trajectories of the agitated body, semiotic-and-symbolic. There are moments in Kristeva's writings where it looks as though this is a transhistorical capacity of the artwork. However, her assertion that the negativity of poetic language becomes self-conscious in nineteenth-century avant-garde literature provides some acknowledgment that what distinguishes modern art is art's autonomy. Only art freed from doing duty to the ritual, religious, or political realms (which thereby define art's meaning) can represent *signifiance*, and so the semiotic-symbolic relationship. Thus the political meaning of Kristeva's thesis on revolution in poetic language is that the bourgeois social symbolic system both divorces aesthetic practice from social relations and may be subject to critique thanks to the autonomous signifying practice of modern literature. (48)

Modern literature is precisely, a great vehicle for understanding how the body can become the site of rejecting imposed social norms by political and religious realms. In the next chapter, we will analyze Gertrude Stein and Henry David Thoreau as writing subjects whose creative practice reject conventional social syntax and stage their own revolt which is grounded in language and labor. Thoreau achieves is this by grounding language to the land and physical labor while Stein by undermining conventional syntax and creating her own language made up of repetition and unique rhythm. Their respective use of language as writing subjects foreground art as a site where critique of social systems can be found and revolution in poetic form can take place. Thoreau and Stein write labor on the boundary between raw psychic drives and formal systems imposed by the language, what Kristeva earlier called laboring with the structuring language. Sara Beardsworth writes about this as "Poetic language is the site where the heterogeneous process of signification—the dialectic of semiotic drives and symbolic position—is brought to light as a practice, a labor on the boundary of subject and language" (45). Kristeva uses the Hegelian concept of negativity to distinguish how poetic language disrupts the structuring language determined by the order of the father. Beardsworth writes that "Kristeva reappropriates Hegel's concept of negativity to

articulate the dynamic process that constantly disrupts and reorganizes signification" (41). The writing subject's labor prevents language from maintaining, rigid meaning but rather, its meaning evovles continously in the potental space created by the interaction between the writing and reading subject. The author's work (*facere*), on the other hand, freezes the linguistic and bodily drives inherent in language , by framing it within a fixed structure that is the book. His or he work is a paradox as it maintins Kristeva's concept of the phenotext, or, in other words where syntax and grammar put language into stasis. By analyzing the relationship between the Genotext and Phenotext, as well a Kristeva's relationship to modernity, we can now pass the threshold, and enter Chapter III where Gertrude Stein and Henry David Thoreau will be analysed as examples of how the writing subject labors with language, in that labor resist the "work" of the author and allowing language to become linguistic and structured. Their linguistic resistance can be translated into the public sphere where we can explore how the writing subject's personal labor with language can form a defence againts the collective conformity and open the space where individual subjective action can form the grounds for geniune change. Keltner's essay further lays the groundwork upon which we can understand how Kristeva's theories help shape the writing subject as an agent that can express societal change.

S.K Keltner's essay "What is Intimacy?" interrogates Kristeva's work across diferent periods and her use of the word "intimate" in order to differentinate between the personal and public space. Keltner writes that

> The first movement of the intimate as revolt is a return to that affective moment of heterogeneity that inscribes an affective disposition in the subject. Revolt as return is essential because it takes us back to the necessary moment of affectivity and through an active interrogation holds on, experiences, and undergoes it. Here Kristeva establishes an affective moment in subject constitution in modernity as a necessary part of revolt. This movement interrogates what is called "trauma" in psychoanalytic language, as the return to the subject's fundamental, corporeal passivity as both rupture and condition. It is a heterogeneity that cannot temporalize. The second movement of the intimate as revolt is linguistic expression—what would correspond

> to "word" and "deed" in Arendtian language. (*Psychoanalsis, Aesthetics, and Politicis in the work of Julia Kristeva, 166).*

This revolt is another aspect of the crisis mentioned earlier in the chapter. When the current aesthetic forms fail to satisfy the needs of the subject, then the revolt becomes the very essence of linguistic expression. These revolts are the novels *Walden* (1854) and *The Making of Americans (*1925) that we will analyze in greater detail in the next chapter. Another of Keltner's arguments is that revolt itself is the necessary aspect of modernity; hence the writing subject can be understood as an integral agent that can help us reevaluate how these novels were responses to a crisis that demanded attention. The "deed" in Arendtian language would be the action as the third part of *vita activa;* hence the labor of the writing subject is an integral component that enables action. Work, on the other hand, is the tool of the author does not have intimacy, and his or her work is there to actively prevent the revolt that Keltner mentions. Modernity and the two writers we will look at in Chapter III will enable us to see how the writing subject labors.

Chapter III
The Laboring Writing Subject

1. Introduction

The laboring writing subject beckons us to be curious and adventurous when thinking about the books we are reading. In this chapter, what first appear as entirely distinct reading experiences, when put into conversation, complement each other rather fruitfully and engagingly. The books in conversation are *Walden* (1854) by Henry David Thoreau and The *Making of Americans* (1925) by Gertrude Stein. Throughout this thesis, when talking about the writing subject, names of the writers themselves were also used. Hence, it is important to distinguish that in such moments when the names Stein and Thoreau are mentioned; it does not refer to the historical person but rather the writing subject himself or herself. The writing

subject is neither a historical writer nor a disembodied entity but rather an agent who emerges through the writing process itself when the inner life of the writer meets the blankness of the page.

Stanley Cavell, in his book about Thoreau titled *The Senses of Walden* (1972), conveys the kind of impact both writers have on us. He writes that "The writer keeps my choices in front of me, the ones I am not making and the ones I am. This makes me wretched and nervous. My choices appear as curiosities, and to be getting the better of me. Curiosity grows with every new conjecture we find confirmed in the words. It seems all but an accident that we should discover what they mean. This becomes a mood of our acts of reading altogether: it is an accident, utterly contingent, that we should be present at these words at all" (67). Cavell here explores what this chapter argues as the labor of reading, which mirrors the labor of writing. As much as the reader makes choices, so does the writing subject as he or she labors with the text. Paths taken and not taken leave the possibility of rereading, entering the landscape of the book once again. Happy accidents occur, and in those accidents one begins to understand the book more and more with each new reading. Some words stand out much more than they did before. To give an example, in *The Making of Americans,* when the writing subject writes about Mary Maxworthing and Mabel Linker, she describes them as having a stupid being. In the first reading, this word *stupid* stood out as something uncomfortable. One would not like to think of another as having such qualities. However, upon a second reading, when arriving at the same passage, the word had the possibility of taking another meaning. When the writing subject uses the word, it does not necessarily entail a lack of intelligence but rather utility. Some feelings in us have good utility, and others do not. To describe this *stupid* feeling, the writing subject writes of it in the following way: "As I was saying every one has stupid being in them. It is very important to know it in each one the kind of stupid being in them. Stupid being is not foolish being, it is not dull or senseless

being, it is sometimes foolish being, it is sometimes dull or senseless being, it is not always any very certain kind of being, it I always in each one and sometimes it comes in some fashion out of every one" (*The Making of Americans, 283).* In the following pages and the ones preceding them, we have great and detailed descriptions of both characters. Again, upon the second reading, the happy accident that occurred is that the lives of these two women and understanding the *being* in them becomes crucial for understanding David Hersland, as it lays the foundation that subjectivity is not a static state but rather evolves and has its progress, like the very language the novel is written in. Such a reading experience is what the writing subject enables us to experience when we labor with the text. In the curiosity that grows with each page, the reading experience brings a host of different feelings, an emotional journey into the mind of the writing subject as well as our own. Cavell later notes that it brings a kind of loneliness, but this is a point that can perhaps be challenged. The range of different emotions that one feels can inform the reader of the complexities of having subjectivity. Subjectivity is itself laborious, and one must wrestle with it continuously. Such an epiphany can bring people together rather than doom us to loneliness. If one imagines people listening to the oral poets reciting the epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey,* they were not listening to a fixed text but an active performance enhanced by the skills of the orator. These experiences perhaps brought people together, and this chapter argues that the writing subject can be an agent that does the same. Let us then listen to the active and laborious voice that the writing subjects in *Walden* and *The Making of Americans* sing to us

2. The American Writing Subject

Walden (1854) and *The Making of Americans* (1925) are literary demonstrations of how the writing subject labors with language, leaving behind a testimony of subjective becoming. When one reads their pages, a new kind of language erupts, one that meticulously demonstrates how the writing subject emerges through each page, inviting the reader to be

curios, as Cavell writes. Approaching literature as a space where we get to read attaining subjectivity can create a possibility of attaining freedom and independence that comes with being a fully embodied and thinking subject, and that both writers convey through their books that depict characters, descriptions, and experiences. Paul Schwaber echoes this sentiment in the opening pages of his essay. He writes that "When a man is able to live his philosophy, it becomes more than a theoretical construction of his mind. It becomes his attitude, his way of having experience" ("Thoreau's Development in Walden, 1). This chapter argues that both Stein and Thoreau lived their philosophy deliberately and consistently, laboring with language that communicates messages which are pertinent to this day. Both novels require patient reading and engaging with their books, exploring and rereading them, thus laboring and understanding the process that engenders subjectivity. Roland Barthes' "author" in Chapter I is a figure of authority that makes the process of reading and rereading a conversation that ultimately ends with debating at what point do the intentions of the author stop and the reader's freedom to interpret begin. The writing subject disrupts this at its stem and allows for the reader to approach a book with a freedom to freely interpret and play as the reading subject. When a reader approaches the writing subject's book, he or she invite, even demand speculation. In the case of *Walden*, the questions are: why the first chapter is titled "Economy," and what kind of book is one reading while in *The Making of Americans*, how the parable of the man in the orchard creates the potential space, which is written about in the introduction of this thesis, creates the possibility of writing a language that defies conventional syntax and insists on repetition and the word being. The exact parable goes as follows:

> Once an angry man dragged his father along the ground through his own orchard. "Stop!" cried the groaning old man at last, "Stop! I did not drag my father beyond this tree." It is hard to living down the tempers we are born with. We all begin well, for in our youth there is nothing we are more intolerant of than our own sins writ large in others and we fight them fiercely in ourselves; but we grow old and we see that

> these our sins are of all sins the really harmless ones to own, nay that they give a charm to any character, and so our struggle with them dies away. (1)

A parable, derived from the Greek word "parabole," means to "cast along," or "throw beside." At the very beginning of the novel, we have a very simple contained story that is then followed by white space before beginning the next paragraph that describes being an American is a privilege. The meaning of a "parable" is that you put forward a simple story in order to better describe a much harder concept. In short, when the reader enters the world and language of the novel, he or she is immediately confronted with a simple story. Everybody once felt angry. Yet very quickly, one begins to wonder why protest being dragged beyond a particular tree? The rest of the paragraphs communicate an emotional truth that one does not necessarily need to understand but can feel and resonate with; struggling with the self is a lifelong process. Moreover, from the beginning, the writing subject invites the reader to think about the tree as a substitute for tradition. The tree in itself does not matter but rather the dragging "beyond this tree" speaks of breaking some kind of a tradition. Julia Kristeva's theory teaches that the subject is always in process, always becoming. The blank spaces that follows until the next paragraph is the potential space that prepares the reader to enter the novel and begin to read and experience what it means to be an American for the writing subject. Equally, the experiment the writing subject undertakes in Walden is itself a potential space in which he begins to understand, practice, and appreciate a different kind of living. All this stems from the experience that is the labor of reading. Thoreau writes about reading in the chapter of the same name. He writes that

> To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written. (*Walden*, 112)

Using the adverbs "deliberately" and "reservedly" speaks much about Thoreau's approach to literature that extends to his writing as well. Relying on Cavell again, when one writes and

reads deliberately, one makes a conscious choice and sticks to it. One takes a certain path that leads one towards some destination and an outcome. To read and write deliberately is to do it with purpose, to labor and instill something in the reader. On the other hand, one has to be reserved as well, as Cavell invites us to reflect; one choice points to awareness of the choices that were not made. Hence, one must read again. Such an approach to writing, reading, and understanding the labor of the writing subject can bring contradictions and weariness. Again, departing from Cavell, this is not necessarily a bad quality. Contradictions and uncertainties make us think and labor, thus deepening our understanding of ourselves, the book, and the world. Moreover, Stein goes even a step further and writes that "Writing and reading is to me synonymous with existing" (What are Masterpieces and Why Are There So Few Of Them, 92). For Stein, to exist is to live deliberately and to have the "independent dependent" and "dependent independent" being. Both writers' relationship to language and the labors of reading and writing speak to their discipline and the discipline they want to instill in their reading audience. When Thoreau talks about being deliberate, he points to each word being a meaningful choice through which the writing subject emerges. In both writers, the subject is created through an active engagement with language, realizing its contradictions and limitations, rather than simply positioned outside as its user. Echoing Barthes' weariness of "linguistic language" in Chapter I, being positioned outside dooms one to see it as a means towards an end, a stable construction of uniform syntax, while the active engagement of the writing subject frees one to break its chains and create something new, making the contradictions and limitations into freedom and harmony.

The initial pages of Walden reflect this most succinctly. In the very first page of the book, the writing subject announces himself as the generative force of the book. It begins as follows: "When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbor, in a house which I had built myself, on the shore of

Walden Pond, in Concord, Massachusetts, and earned my living by the labor of my hands only" (1). In the first line, Thoreau tells his readers that he is a writer who had the ambition, which he achieved, to write an American novel. What distinguishes the author from a writing subject is that the latter comes forward as an embodied being. Working and living by "the labor of my hands only" demonstrates that Thoreau has come out of his experience all the contradictions, uncertainties, and beauty that come with living a truly independent, self-sustaining life; one that the writing subject wants to instill in its readers as a true American life. Now, an interesting question to posit is how we would understand Walden had this address to the reader not existed. Would the book be about the author stating his experience concerning various aspects of life in the woods, a kind of diary? Thoreau already anticipates the reader's wonderment and writes, "In most books, the I, or first person, is omitted; in this it will be retained; that, in respect to egotism, is the main difference. We commonly do not remember that it is, after all, always the first person that is speaking" (2). Thoreau, the writer, informs us that the writing subject is behind the lines of Walden. The bodily experience which generated the language, its syntax and grammar, cannot be separated from the "I" of the book. For example, in the following passage we see the writing subject engaging in physical labor while simultaneously appreciating the American wilderness and his experience of it:

> Near the end of March 1845, I borrowed an axe and went down to the woods by Walden Pond, nearest to where I intended to build my house, and began to cut down some tall arrowy white pines, still in their youth for timber. It is difficult to be without borrowing, but perhaps it is the most generous course thus to permit your fellow-men to have an interest in your enterprise. The owner of the house axe, as he released his hold on it, said that it was the apple of his eye; but I returned it sharper than I received it. It was a pleasant hillside where I worked, covered with pine woods, through which I looked out on the pond, and a small open field in the woods where pines and hickories were springing up. (4)

The writing subject engages with the land and the local people. Let us not forget that the first chapter of the book is titled "Economy"; it is an address to the reader on how to lead a truly

independent life. Why Walden should be understood as a novel lies in the opening pages: we have the account of the beginning of the writing subject's journey into the wilderness to carve out a place of his own. Unlike the Pilgrim Fathers, who came and established their colony on the hill, the writing subject goes into the woods, into the landscape itself, and labors to build his abode. Stanley Cavell argues that the Thoreau's physical activities are forms of symbolic work that transform *Walden* into an elevated philosophical work. Nevertheless in Cavell's other book *Must We Mean What We Say (1969),* he writes about ordinary language and how we use it. He writes that

> This is all that 'ordinary' in the phrase 'ordinary language philosophy' means, or ought to mean. It does not refer to particular words of wide use, nor to particular sorts of men. It reminds us that whatever words are said and meant are said and meant by particular men, and that to understand what they (the words) mean you must understand what they (whoever is using them) means, and that sometimes men do not see what they mean, that usually they cannot say what they mean, that for various reasons they keep themselves from mean-ing. (270)

If we are to understand the writing subject in *Walden* as a transcendented voice, then he must be infalliable agent that does not make mistakes. Yet on many accounts, especially when Thoreau details his expenses, he writes that he spent "too much" on something. As we read the book, which this chapter argues is a novel, we are reading an account of the writing subject who is actively learning and not an all-knowing voice. Treating the novel as scripture detaches the writing subject's words from the laboring context that produced them. Finally, the writing subject is concerned with the laboring body: "Actually, the laboring man has not leisure for a true integrity day by day; he cannot afford to sustain the manliest relation to men; his labor would be depreciated in the market. He has no time to be anything but a machine" (8). Focusing our attention on the laboring body, the writing subject through the form of the novel opens the possibility for the reader to see a choice and a path that labor need not make him or her into a machine but an independent self, that can rely on simple labor to sustain oneself and free up the time for intellectual labor. In Chapter I, we discussed

Arendt's argument that labor is only there to sustain biological life. However, Thoreau observes of his fellow neighbors that it goes even further: when labor becomes a value to be commodified, the man and his or her body become part of a larger system, ensuring that it functions like a "machine." As an answer and challenge to this system, Thoreau titles the first Chapter of his book "Economy," discussing that labor, whose purpose is only to bring material wealth, should not be everything life is about. He argues for a different kind of "Economy," one which prioritizes simple living, relying on one's own labor, and that the rest should focus on intellectual labor, pursuing knowledge and observing nature's beauties. It is why he writes that "The cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it" (33); when one reduces their material needs that can be satisfied with short physical labor, then there is more time for intellectually laborious activities such as reading, writing, and thinking. Schwaber observes that this is reflected in how Walden is written and that the writing subject gradually develops through each chapter. He writes that "The change in Thoreau's attitude from opening chapter to last reinforces and can perhaps be understood by the gradual change in his response to things, animals, and people about him. The form and quality of his description reflect the fact of his psychic growth and reveal that he has become able to live the kind of life he values" ("Thoreau's Development in Walden, 8). While Schwaber attributes this development to Thoreau the writer, it should be equally attributed to the writing subject as an agent whose development we are witnessing with each new page.

Stanley Cavell argues that Thoreau's novel "Walden is itself about a book, about its own writing and reading: and in entering certain experiments to determine how one philosophical text is prompted by another, why the history of philosophy is a history of such promptings, and what, accordingly, constitutes an original, or initiating, text" (13). Cavell here explores the book as being written out of the labor Thoreau did in interacting with

philosophical texts that have come out of Europe. In his time, intellectuals were still establishing their own philosophy of what it means to live an American life and how it differs from that of a European. Although this is a fruitful point of inquiry, Cavell makes a choice of pursuing a line of questioning and thinking that makes Walden something of a philosophical book or what he would later argue as scripture. In fact, Cavell writes "We started thinking along one line about the writer of Walden calls 'heroic books'; and what I take him there to be claiming an epic ambition, the terms in which he might project such an enterprise could not be those of Milton or Blake or Wordsworth" (31). Nevertheless, this chapter argues that the experiment that the writing subject undertakes is a result of a crisis, dissatisfaction with the aesthetic forms which have come out of Europe and that do not satisfy the needs of the people and the writing subject himself. The moment of this crisis and the product of it constitute an original text, as Cavell argues Walden is. In this sense, Walden represents writing as a form of labor. It is presented to us through a method of reading and responding to other texts. Thoreau writes about this in the chapter "Reading," where he writes that "I kept Homer's Iliad on my table through the summer, though I looked at his pages only now and then" (89). Although at the time, he focused on physical labor in order to establish his house, he "sustained himself by the prospects such reading in the future" (89). Hence, reading is equally a form of intellectual labor to be desired and achieved once fundamental needs are met. When one is able to fully engage with a given text, then the originality of ideas emerges through laboring with other texts and transforming those ideas into one's own thoughts. Through this process, the writing subject informs us that Walden is precisely a book about labor and how the prospect of reading the classics created the potential space to write his own American classic, in other words, the American novel. This writing subject, Cavell calls the "hero" of the book, and we are reading an account of what it takes to write the book itself. He writes that "It is hard to keep in mind that the hero of this book is its writer. I do not mean

that it is about Henry David Thoreau, a writer, who lies buried in Concord, Massachusetts—though that is true enough. I mean that the "I" of the book declares himself to be a writer" (23). What Cavell calls the "I" of the book, this chapter argues, is the writing subject. Moreover, one could argue that laboring with language in this way, and the kind of labor Thoreau privileges, goes at the heart of his vision of what it means to be an American and an American writer. Cavell's arguments also extend what it means to write an American novel, as the hero of the book declares to be an American writer. This is why Thoreau is physically close to a place which is an integral part of American history, the Concord Battle Ground. The writing subject writes that he began his experiment on a pivotal day in American history; "When I first took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my night as well as days there, which, by accident, was Independence Day, or the Fourth of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter" (*Walden,*74). When one takes into context how The United States of America came to be, which was when the Pilgrim Fathers first came to take their abode in the woods, established a colony which then, through a revolution, declared its independence, Thoreau is reenacting that same experiment, but with one significant change: that his labor is not only physical but intellectual as well. Cavell writes that "Any American writer, any American, is apt to respond to that event in one way or another; to the knowledge that America exists only in its discovery and its discovery was always an accident; and to the obsession with freedom, and with building new structures and forming new human beings with new minds to inhabit them; and to the presentiment that this unparalleled opportunity has been lost forever" (*The Senses of Walden,* 27).

Equally so, it is important to acknowledge that Thoreau's choice of his habitat does not only serve a historical and philosophical position but also for the rather simple reason of reveling in nature and its beauty. He undertakes his experiment to learn knowledge that cannot be found in books but has to be experienced. This is precisely why the writing subject

is a laborer. Judith P. Saunders writes about Thoreau's love of nature in her essay and the knowledge it gives him. She writes that “Frequently Thoreau suggests no immediate practical purpose to be served by the knowledge he acquires. He assumes that accumulating a store of information about the natural world, or at least the portion of it he inhabits, is interesting and valuable in and of itself” (“Biophilia in Thoreau’s Walden, 5). Even though Saunders’ account of Thoreau’s biophilia is useful for understanding the choices the writing subject makes, one point of departure is that the knowledge he acquires not only has practical purpose, but it also informs his very way of life. It is precisely why it is interesting and valuable. Such love of nature influences Thoreau’s philosophy to the extent that shortly before Darwin, he recognizes that human beings are part of a larger system, one that is shared with all life forms. What is beautiful about Thoreau's choice to be one of the artists who represent the literary demonstration of the writing subject is that his way of thinking naturally extends to the argument that the writing subject is an agent who is embodied with language as much as people are embodied with nature. The author could never be a vehicle for such an interpretation, given his or her etymologically burdensome history. Saunders recognizes nature as being important to Thoreau. She writes that it is “Foundational to Thoreau’s natural philosophy is the conviction that he is biologically connected to all life forms. He expresses in the language of his day the idea, soon to be articulated systematically by Darwin, that humans are neither central nor special as a species, but part of a vast, global network of kinship” (8). How the writing subject emerges through Thoreau’s language can be seen in how Walden Pond is described, which is as a living system and an important companion. As Thoreau builds his abode near Walden Pond, nature becomes his physical companion, while Homer, whom he keeps in his mind’s eye, is an intellectual one. In Thoreau’s book A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (1849), he writes that “It is enough if Homer but say the sun sets. He is as serene as nature, and we can hardly detect the enthusiasm of the bard. It

is as if nature spoke" (75). Being in dialogue with the classics, and the language of The Iliad being synonymous with nature, then the American classic Thoreau aspires to write a novel whose language emerges from nature and the writing subject, a laboring agent who seeks not to dominate the natural land but coexist with it. What is more, to return to the image of the orator at the beginning of this chapter, it is the skills of the orator combined with the language of Homer that make the words come alive. Thoreau does the same with his language and words because he lived them. This is why he reminds us that the "I" is the one who speaks at the beginning of the novel. The writing subject invites us to have the image of the orator while reading the book and imagine him or her singing to us, thus engaging the reader, inviting them to ponder a different kind of life and reinvent themselves. The changes in season and their effect on the pond, the writing subject describes with onomatopoeic language, making the pond akin to a living organism. As he spends more time living his experiment, the pond takes on a metaphysical strength, "describing the annual thawing of the pond's water in terms of spiritual regeneration" (10). It is clear that Walden, as a novel, is not only important in terms of establishing American literature, its philosophical and historical genesis, but also for the beauty of the natural world and its effect on the subject, which is then reflected in the language and the writing subject. To further elucidate this point, Noah Webster's American Dictionary of the English Language, 1860 edition, which poet Susan Howe often describes as being written in blank verse, offers a beautiful description of what it means to write, which is as follows: "to perform the act of forming characters, letters, or figures, as representatives of sounds or ideas. Learn to write when young" (1522). Using the gerund form of the verbs speaks to the essence that when one is writing, one is doing an activity and laboring with language to communicate ideas and beauty. For Thoreau, among other things, this means to also cultivate crops that help sustain him and provide some income

for his simple life. Through such labors, the writing subject speaks of the beauty in simplicity.

The chapter “Bean Field” speaks much of Thoreau’s project of the book. On the opening page, he writes that “Meanwhile my beans, the length of whose rows, added together, was seven miles already planted, were impatient to be hoed, for the earliest had grown considerably before the latest were in the ground; indeed, they were not easily to be put off. What was the meaning of this so steady and self-respecting, this small Herculean labour, I knew not” (Walden, 138). Thoreau’s description of his gradual work with the bean field extends to how he came to enjoy his experiment, which became much larger than that—a way of life. His abode in the woods brings up memories of his childhood and gives a sense that his life has, in some sense, come full circle. Of this he writes that “When I was four years old, as I well remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. It is one of the oldest scenes stamped on my memory. And now tonight my flute has wakened the echoes over that very water” (138-139). At this point in the writing subject's journey, he becomes an *agricola laboriosus*, which means a hardworking farmer, but most importantly a laborer whose tools were then hoes and similar items but are now language. But what is this language? It is the one that reflects his way of life. Cavell writes of this:

> To realize where we are and what we are living for, the conditions of our present, the angle at which we stand to the world, the writer calls "improving the time," using a preacher's phrase and giving his kind of turn to it. No one's occasions are exactly those of another, but our conditions of improvement are the same, especially our outsideness and, hence, the world's presence to us. And our conditions are to be realized within each calling, whatever that happens to be. Each calling-what the writer means (and what anyone means, more or less) by a "field" of action or labor-is isomorphic with every other. This is why building a house and hoeing and writing and reading (and we could add, walking and preparing food and receiving visitors and giving charity and hammering a nail and surveying the ice) are allegories and measures of one another. All and only true building is edifying. All and only edifying actions are fit for human habitation. Otherwise they do not earn life. If your action, in its field, cannot stand such measurement, it is a sign that the field is not yours. This is

> the writer's assurance that his writing is not a substitute for his life, but his way of prosecuting it. He writes because he is a writer. (*The Senses of Walden*, 79-80)

Hence, the "Bean Field" is a metaphor for a field of labor, a field where the writing subject gradually becomes embodied with each new activity. As the writing subject roots himself in land, so does he in language. For the writing subject, working in the field is synonymous with the singing of the bards. He is adopting the aesthetics of the epics to the aesthetics of his time, which he wants to communicate to his readers as being one of a simpler life, laboring only to the extent that it is necessary and then devoting one's time to reading and intellectual pursuits. The writing subject warns us of extremes. Either too much labor and no intellectual work, or too much intellectual work and not enough physical labor are good. There has to be a combination of both; being in that middle, that potential space, lays the essence of what it means to lead an American life and write an American classic. In a sense, every activity presented in the book is an activity whose purpose is not only to sustain life but to enable subjective becoming. Another representation of this is that when Thoreau speaks of his expenses and profits, he uses the Latin phrase "patrem familias vendacem, non emacem esse oportet," which means "the head of a household should be a seller, not a buyer," meaning that labor in Walden should be understood as productive and practical, simplifying their lives to the extent that it satisfies their needs. Thoreau is meticulous in this, as when he notes certain expenses, he adds that it is "too much," meaning that he learned as he went through his experiment. Language in this context is used as a tool for communicating to his reader how his experiment was successful and changed his life. In this sense, the writing subject is an agent who helps us see Thoreau's vision.

Another way we can see how Thoreau can challenge Arendt is in the Chapter "Baker Farm." Even though "Baker" here would be the surname, it is interesting to think of the word as meaning "the one who makes bread." Hence, we connect both kinds of labor in one chapter name. On one hand, we have a person who uses a furnace to produce an object to be

consumed, while on the other, a place where people labor with animals that sustain them. Let us see how Thoreau opens the chapter, which speaks much of the overall project of his book.

> SOMETIMES I rambled to pine groves, standing like temples, or like fleets at sea, full-rigged, with wavy boughs, and rippling with light, so soft, and green, and shady, that the Druids would have forsaken their oaks to worship in them, or to the cedar wood beyond Flint's Pond, where the trees, covered with hoary blueberries, spring higher and higher, are to fit stand before Valhalla… (179)

Combining the natural world with manmade objects such as ships and conjuring up Druids, who celebrate the natural world for their rituals, and finally ending with Valhalla, the Viking bright gold hall where warriors enjoy their bravery in life, speaks to how Thoreau echoes the ancient cultures, which understood the natural world as being synonymous with their culture. For example, in *The Iliad*, Homer describes warriors and armies using natural metaphors such as a "swarm of flies." As for Thoreau, nature gives the means of forming a conceptual vocabulary where human life becomes understandable. Here again, we have the importance of labor and how it is there only to then be able to celebrate the natural world. It is why Thoreau writes that "Instead of calling on some scholar, I paid many a visit to particular trees, of kinds which are in this neighborhood, standing far away in the middle of some pasture" (179). Scholar here could represent the institution which gave the author his authority in the first chapter. But Thoreau does not go to him or her but to nature and the different beautiful trees to experience them firsthand. In the same way, we learn that the writing subject gives us the experience of the book firsthand and that we do not need the author to tell us what that experience should be. This is where we come to the most important part of the chapter, where Thoreau tells us why the chapter is titled the way it is. He walks through Pleasant Meadow, which is part of Baker Farm and a poem written by William Ellery Channing. It is part of the pastoral tradition, which celebrates the natural landscape, and Thoreau quotes part of the aforementioned poem. Thoreau says that "I thought of living there before I went to Walden" (181) but, in the end, made a different choice. Using Channing as a kind of literary doorway

into “Baker Farm,” Thoreau, and therefore the reader, expects to see the kind of beauty depicted in the poem. However, once he enters, he sees a certain John Field who now dwells there and struggles with his family. A family that came to America seeking a better life.

Instead, Thoreau tells us that his host tells him “his story, how hard he worked ‘bogging’ for a neighbouring farmer, turning up a meadow with a spade or bog hoe at the rate of ten dollars an acre, and the use of the land with manure for one year, and his little broad-faced son worked cheerfully at his father’s side the while, not knowing how poor a bargain the latter had made” (182). The labor done by this family is barely sustaining them while Thoreau tells him that there is more to life than this, and that the labor in the amount that one needs can bring a much more fulfilling life. Here, our writing subject breaks the longstanding American myth that the country offers riches and that one needs only to come to take them. This is not enough. Returning to the beginning of the book, one must live and labor deliberately in order to achieve the life one wants. It is why the writing subject tells us that “as I did not work hard, I did not have to eat hard” (182-183); again, we return to the importance of laboring simply. The writing subject finally tells us what America is: a country where “you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do without these, and where the state does not endeavor to compel you to sustain the slavery, and war” (183). To better explicate and contextualize this quote, it is important to refer to Thoreau’s “On Civil Disobedience,” as it exemplifies his project and how the writing subject can help us understand and appreciate his work. Thoreau’s essay gives us a theoretical framework which is then embodied and actualized in *Walden.* For example, in the essay he writes that “If the injustice has a spring, or a pulley, or a rope, or a crank, exclusively for itself, then perhaps you may consider whether the remedy will not be worse than the evil; but if it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say, break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine” (“Civil Disobedience,” 14). Here we

have important vocabulary such as "agent" and the phrase "let your life be," as it directly relates to the experiment the writing subject undertakes in the novel. To further establish why it is a novel is that in the essay, Thoreau writes that "The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right" (2); in *Walden,* the writing subject conveys what is right. It is not a simple instruction but a direct communication of what it means to live an American life and be an American subject. This is the true vision of America, and where Thoreau, through the writing subject, compares the life of the family to his own and showcases what living a simple life means.

*A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers (*1849*)* is an additional example of his books that is very much about labor and writing as an embodied creative act. Before the journey even begins, the very construction of the boat represents a form of labor, which Thoreau describes on the opening page of the chapter "Saturday." He writes that "Our boat, which had cost us a week's labor in the spring was in form like a fisherman's dory…" (14). It is fruitful to compare how the house beside Walden Pond, as well as the boat which serves as a home on their voyage, represent anchors through which Thoreau grounds his life and uses the experience of living as a creative engine for his writing. Each object is a product of labor, which directly influences his prose; hence, a connection can easily be made. Besides the product of his labor, he focuses on others as well. In the chapter "Sunday," he explicitly writes about a connection between intellectual and physical labor. In the paragraph, he first begins to critique Ben Jonson and writes that "Men have a respect for scholarship and learning greatly out of proportion to the use they commonly serve. We are amused to read how Ben Jonson engage that dull masks which the royal family and nobility were to be entertained should be 'grounded upon antiquity and solid learning.' Can there be any great reproach than an idle learning? Learn to split wood, at least" (85). Like in W*alden*, Thoreau is weary of pure intellectual learning, his fear for the young scholars, who are the future of

any nation, is expressed as much here as it is in his heroes' journey as the rising writing subject. He then goes on to argue that physical labor improves writing, while focusing only one's intellect makes writing simply overly emotional. This can also be evident in Thoreau's deliberate use of poems throughout both books. For Thoreau, "the necessity of labor and conversation which many men and things, for the scholar is rarely remembered; steady labor with the hands, which engrosses the attention also, is unquestionably the best method of removing palaver and sentimentality out of one's style, both of speaking and writing" (86). When the body is affected by the labor, and one develops sore and firm hands, can that same energy translate into sentences, into deliberate living and writing. Labor and mind are inextricably linked and "indeed, the mind never makes a great and successful effort, without a corresponding energy of the body" (86). Finally, arguably the most important sentence for our discussion of labor is that "the scholar requires hard and serious labor to give an impetus to his thought" (108). Even then, Thoreau begins to question and challenge the scholars of his time, and for us it would be the author. If one had to choose, Thoreau would turn to the farmer to boost his spirit after the record of the farmer's weekly labor. Putting it more succinctly, embodied being and writing for Thoreau is a primary concern, and he is equally wary of the authorial presence of the scholar as this thesis questions the author's authority. Thoreau writes that the "scholar might frequently emulate the propriety and emphasis of the farmer's call to his team, and confess that if it were written it would surpass his labored sentences. Whose are the truly labored sentences? From the weak and flimsy periods of the politicians and literary man, we are glad to turn even to the description of work, the simple record of the month's labor in the farmer's almanac to restore our tone and spirits" (86).

When Thoreau writes about labor, it is important to mention that it should be paired with periods of rest and contemplation. There is a sense of balance that one must achieve in order to live a truly fulfilling life and realize his or her potential. Such a balance is present in

W*alden* as well, where there are many passages where Thoreau simply appreciates nature or receives guests, although they can also be quite cumbersome at times. In chapter "Monday," he writes that "there are moments when all anxiety and stated toil are becalmed in the infinite leisure and repose of nature. All laborers must have their nooning, and at this season of the day, we are all, more or less, Asiatics, and given over all work and reform" (). As Thoreau travels alongside the river, the way it has been transformed and appropriated by industrial work and manufacturing plants begins to be increasingly more akin to how an author through work transforms a manuscript into a book. One particular passage reflects this: "Unfitted to some extent for the purposes of commerce by the sand— bar at its mouth, see how this river was devoted from the first to the service of manufacturers" (70). When he describes the industrial cities, he does so as a "busy colony of human beaver around every fall" (71). Using beavers as they construct a dam through collective work is not accidental. Working in such a way completely transforms the river, and once the cities stay behind, the river becomes truly free once again. If we imagine the river as a metaphor for embodied writing, then only labor that obstructs it minimally enables writing to be creative. Collective industrial work only transforms writing into a book, emptying it of its embodied nature and account of subjective becoming.

This is why Stanley Cavell writes that the "writer of *Walden* proposes himself many times and in many ways as the creator of his world. 'I have my horizon…. I have, as it were, my own sun and moon and stars, and a little world all to myself '" (*Senses of Walden,* 129). Although Cavell in his book treats the book as a kind of scripture, which this chapter does not argue it is, it is instead a testament to the rise of the writing subject, who builds his own world through the necessary and deliberate labor. The final paragraph of the book achieves and represents this subject most succinctly. He writes that "I do not say that John or Johnatan will realise all this; such is the character of that morrow which mere laps of time can never

make to dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star" (*Walden,* 295). The paragraph communicates the relationship between writing and labor, which is there to wake the reader up. Morning star, the very last two words, provide the most beautiful image of the book and the writing subject as a literary agent. It does not give a finished answer to the question of how to live, but presents the possibility of seeing it differently. Hence the experiment is there precisely because it is indeed an "experiment," a successful one which now comes to us in the form that it does. It awakens our consciousness to more possibilities and gives rise to the writing subject, which Gertrude Stein, through different means, gives another perspective on subject becoming.

Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) has been equally praised and challenged as a modernist writer for her pieces that test the limits of language and its communicative power. On one hand, we have poets such as Susan Howe, who praises her, alongside Emily Dickinson, as a writer whose "work refuses to conform to the Anglo-American literary traditions" (*My Emily Dickinson,* 1). On the other hand, literary scholars such as Melanie Taylor challenge Stein and her work *The Making of Americans (1925)* on whether the book should be considered a novel and on Stein's laboring with language by deliberately breaking syntax and insisting on repetition. Taylor writes that Stein's "anti-novel is notable for its distinctive textual practices and material effects: its juxtaposition of the grammatical with the ungrammatical and constant awkwardness of syntax, even in its more conventional interludes; presentation of the meaningless as meaningful; and its recycling of limited range of words and phrases in what poses as a continuing citation of the present" ("A Poetics of Difference: The Making of Americans and Unreadable Subjects," 27). Nevertheless, Stein's monumental work offers a unique insight into Stein's contribution to the question of the American novel and literary identity. Taylor's critique represents the continued discussion and debate on not only what a

novel is but also what an American novel is. This line of thinking is not new and has been asked and thought about by Stanley Cavell and T.S. Eliot, among others. One that is particularly relevant for the argument of this chapter is René Wellek, who in *Theory of Literature* wrote that "It is not very easy to determine the point at which literature written in America ceased to be 'colonial English' and became an independent national literature" (*Theory of Literature*, 44). Wellek's argument points to the necessity of establishing categories for understanding national literatures that can go beyond the geographical and linguistic categories. Having said that, one point of contention is that this need not be done in order to participate and interact with the European tradition, which he deems necessary. This need to measure one's literature against the European is something Gertrude Stein, among other American writers, actively tried to oppose, as this chapter will demonstrate.

A book, *Gertrude Stein and the Making of Literature (1988)*, which is a collection of essays on Stein's relationship with literature and modernism, exemplifies her ever-evolving focus on reimagining it. The introductory notes the extent of her influence on the literary world of the 20th century.

> From 1902 -3, when she began drafting passages of *The Making of Americans* and writing *Q.E.D.*, to 1946, when she completed *The Mother of Us All*, Gertrude Stein made literature: many portraits (and perhaps an occasional prayer), short stories, children's stories and detective stories, novels, poems, operas and plays, essays and lectures, geography, art criticism, autobiographies and diaries, and even a nightclub skit and a valentine. (xvii)

Stein's prolific writing career and the aura she exerted among her contemporaries speak of her vivacious intellect. Her influence on writers such as Ernest Hemingway cannot be understated, as she was a respected thinker and writer. Equally so, the likes of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce acknowledged her influence on modernism. This is all to say that Stein is and continues to be worthy of discussion, especially today as the question of subjectivity and the writing subject is of special importance. The years when the majority of these essays were written, which are the 1970s and 1980s, speak to the critical focus of that time, which this

chapter will argue is the question of subjectivity. Roland Barthes' essay discussed in chapter one was published in 1967, while Kristeva's R*evolution in Poetic Language was published* in 1974. This is to say that Stein features an important place in our discussion of the writing subject. In today's American literary and political landscape, the question of American identity and what it means to be American is as present as ever. Therefore, this chapter represents a contribution to this discussion as well as championing the eclectic writing subject which aims to represent and praise subjectivity.

Debating American literature represents a longstanding tradition and an active conversation where many American writers have offered their thoughts. One such example is Melville's "Hawthorne and his Moses." Through the image of Hawthorne, Melville ponders the meaning of genius and American literature and what it is supposed to represent. Championing "the American Genius" is of particular interest because it will provide a vehicle through which we can understand the writing subject. Melville writes that "American genius needs patronage in order to expand. For that explosive sort of stuff will expand though screwed up in a vice, and burst it, though it were triple steel. It is for the nation's sake, and for her authors' sake, that I would have Americans be heedful of the increasing greatness among her writers" (Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and his Moses," 1163). We will see that Gertrude Stein, through the character of David Hersland and through the language, offers the image of the writing subject. Melville sees in Hawthorne his originality and thus equally champions the originality of American literature. So, he writes that "the very popular and amiable writer, however good, and self-reliant in many things, perhaps owes his chief reputation to the self-acknowledged imitation of a foreign model, and to the studied avoidance of all topics but smooth ones. But it is better to fail in originality than to succeed in imitation" (1164). Rejecting the necessity that American literature needs to copy English is a

main thesis of Melville's essay. Arguably, the clearest example of his rejection and attack can be seen in the following passage:

> And we want no American Goldsmith; nay, we want no American Miltons. It were the vilest thing you could say of a true American author, that he were an American Tompkins. Call him an American, and have done for you can say a nobler thing of him.—But it is not meant that all American writers should studiously cleave to nationality in their writings; only this, no American writer should write like an Englishman, or a Frenchman; let him write like a man, for then he will be sure to write like an American. (1164)

Melville's rejection of the "national" element in literature, which he argues makes a French a French or an English an English, strengthens the universality of American literature. Let us not forget the Latin phrase "e pluribus unum," or "out of many, one," which can be found on US coins and is attributed to the founding principle of the United States. This essay represents what Jauss describes as the aesthetic preferences of Melville's time not conforming to the aesthetic needs of the European continent. Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* follows this sentiment in the American literary mind and production. David Hersland represents the character embodiment of the writing subject whose troubling decision aims to represent the rise and championing of unique American identity. Another important point that needs unpacking is the question of subjectivity and the American thinker. David Hersland, who is one of the main characters of the novel, serves as Gertrude Stein's means of demonstrating the rise of the writing subject. Choices that David makes exemplify Stein's attempt at privileging a unique American subject, which ushers in a new way of thinking and interacting with the world. Like Thoreau before, Stein's novel aims at redefining what it means to write an American novel. This chapter utilizes Kristeva's writing subject, which champions language as the main axis upon which subjectivity is expressed. Stein's understanding of American literature is of critical importance, as one of the aims of her monumental novel was to reinvent it. In the essay "American Language and Literature," she writes that.

> …. tell the American story and not the English story at all, so different that it has been having its effect on the way the English tell their English story, it is making to a certain extent the English tell their English story in the American way to a certain extent and so we have the history of American literature, Washington Irving, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Henry James Gertrude Stein Sherwood Anderson and then the first world war. (229)

By including herself in the list, she firmly asserts herself as belonging to an American literary canon, which she tried to evolve. Stein positions the development of the American language and literature according to the four major wars which marked its history. The first was the American Revolutionary War, the American Civil War, the Spanish-American War, and World War I. The Second World War was nearing its end. In her view, each war had freed some part of American identity and language. Firstly, the Revolutionary War not only separated the United States from England, but the writers themselves started to feel that their language had hardly anything to do with England. Names she mentions are Patrick Henry, Jefferson, Franklin, and Emerson, and "they knew they had a story to write that had nothing whatsoever to do with England and yet many of them had been born English and still felt English and certainly to a certain extent wrote as if they were English, but gradually they began to put pressure on the language of which I have spoken and it began to feel different" (230). The conscious willingness with which the early American writers and thinkers shaped the language in order to be distinctly American is shared with all the following generations that followed the Revolutionary War. Wishing to be freed and reject the fathers is built into the American language from its very inception. A more traumatic war was the American Civil War, which was fought to end slavery. In this war, Stein says that "the orators of the South who will continued to feel partly English and the orators of the north who practically did not feel English at all ending up with Abraham Lincoln who although still feeling the weight of English literature upon him nevertheless did force the language to tell an American story in such a way that the word English could hardly be said to be there at all" (23). Using

the word “orators” to describe the early American literary history, Stein seemingly wants to put forth an American mythos which gave birth to the language and literature itself.

An idea of the American mythos can be equally seen in the book *Four in America,* more specifically the chapter “George Washington. Or a History of the United States of America.” The essay begins with Stein detailing the American mythology.

> He asked me to tell him why he loved me so, and the reason was clearly this: that the United States of America is a nation. What is the United States of America? It is a country of a great size, in the center of which is a great deal of land. Upon this land live those who can do and do whatever they have to do. He asked him to do what they did. Let me tell about the character of the people of the United States of America and what they say/ Let me tell you one thing, what they say has a great deal to do with what they do, and what they do they do do, as what they were was part of what they did, as by the time, this time, they are what they are. How do they know what they are? They know it by looking at what they do. This is why the United States of America is important. (*Four in America*, 167)

Throughout the remainder of the chapter, Stein tells the history of America through George Washington as if he were a writer. That America itself is a novel. She writes that“He wrote a novel every day” (168). Through this description, Stein equates the history of America with the history of American literature, which is why she details its development and language through each war. Hence, the novel *The Making of Americans* is precisely the making of American literature as Stein saw it, ending with David Hersland as the writing subject who is the American thinker and who is made by the history of American literature. On her genesis as a writer, Stein notes that it was after the Spanish-American War of 1899 that she began writing. For her, this was a particularly important part of the development of American literature and language. It was a “big step in making Americans American. We then knew that we could do what we wanted to do and we did not need Europe to tell us to do what we wanted to do, we did not any longer feel that were attached to Europe at all except of course pleasantly not at all as anything to dominate us” (231). Needing to feel free and unpressured by the weight of European tradition is a strand in American literary subject that Stein found important. For her it was a “decided liberation, that was when I began to write, and I found

myself plunged into a water of words, having words choosing words liberating words feeling words and the words were all our ours and it enough that we held them in our hands to play with them whatever you can play with us is yours and this was the beginning of knowing of all America knowing that it could play and play and play with words and the words were all ours all ours" (231). For Stein, the history of America is the history of words and playing with words and realizing that the American language means playing with words. Hence, we can now look at Stein's own authorial development and how The *Making of Americans* is in fact a testament to the making of American literature and language, which is equated with the nation itself.

The title of the book, *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress,* already has a rich depository of semantic fields that will be expanded upon and transformed as the novel progresses. The verb "making" suggests that to be an American means becoming one rather than being one. Gertrude Stein, with this book, portrayed a strong and unique sense of American identity that is to be distinguished from the European one. Additionally, the "American" quality is equated to a family unit, and the progress of a single family, the Herslands, is meant to stand for the development of the American identity in the 20th century. As we have seen in the previous section, this period was marked by wars. This will be somewhat contextualized and transformed as the novel progresses and as the focus from the Herslands slowly shifts towards the individual members of the family, such as Martha and David, to ultimately being the history of "everyone." Lastly, the novel stands for the rise of a new kind of subjectivity that is meant to be understood outside the context of a single national identity. This identity is being marked by the development of the American language. Furthermore, as we have seen in Melville, to be an American means to be a "man," without any elements of a national identity.

In the introduction to the Third American Edition of the novel, Steven Mayer points out that Stein's completion of the book parallels the "ever-increasing emphasis on the positive nature of the 'disembodied quality of the American character '" (xiv). The introduction depicts the genesis of the novel, which started as "a 35-page narrative entitled 'The Making of Americans: Being the History of a Family's Progress,' which would serve as the nucleus of the much longer account bearing the same name" (xiv). Stein started writing this piece as a response to her travel in Europe, more specifically the United Kingdom, with her brother. The contact with the former colonizers of the New World sparked an intense reflection on what it means to be American. In her reflections, she wrote: "It has always seemed to me a rare privilege, this of being an American, a real American and yet one whose tradition it has taken scarcely sixty years to create" (xv). Being an American for Stein means being connected to the land and connected to the language, which is influenced by the land. To be a "real American" means playing with words and with language. It is the true expression of the "individualistic" quality of being an American, an individual who is marked by language. To be an American writing subject means being the naked and embodied individual that experiences language, its sounds and ideas, and singing them outward into the world. In the early composition of the novel, there seems to be tension between the family unit and the individual, and Stein herself sensed a cultural tension between the "old world" and the United States. Meyer, on this point, writes in the introduction: "Stein had observed 'though the country is most lovely and the galleries and the book stores all that tone could for I am not yet enamored of those institutions that have made Englishmen what they are '" (xv). However, there is also a sense of the "impoverished American environment." This suggests a certain level of tension that exists within an "American" who visits Europe and begins to reflect on his or her identity as an American. Meyer observes:

> the direct consequence of the impoverished American environment – and the resulting inhospitability to any 'strain of singularity' that doesn't keep within the limits of

> conventional respectability' – Americans who exhibit traces of 'vital singularity' are obliged to 'fly to the kindly comfort of an older world accustomed to take all manner of strange forms into its bosom.' Although the narrator laments this state of affairs, it remains true that only such cultural impoverishment makes possible the rapid formation of the 'real Americans,' complete with traditionally American family histories, in little more than sixty years. (xv)

Consequently, it seems that an American identity begins as a foil against the old world and in that reflection attains its own individual meaning. We have seen this through Stein tracing the American authors from American inception all the way to her present time. This is reflected in the language itself that Stein breathes into existence in her novel. Kristeva's argument that the "Name-of-the-Father" must be rejected for one to find subjectivity in a given text can be reflected in what Stein described as "feeling" the weight of language. Stein, too, rejects her literary predecessors to write a uniquely American novel that energizes the writing subject as its generative force. Writers such as Thoreau and Melville felt the same urge as we have explored in the previous sections of this work.

An American becoming which Stein depicts meticulously in the novel evolved as its writing subject did throughout the narrative. Mayer's argues that the "making" verb in the title can be understood as an "objective or a subjective genitive: as the process whereby Americans are made (*The making of what? The making of Americans?)* or the process whereby Americans make anything (*The what of Americans? The Making of Americans?*)" (xvi). Stein was very much interested in what constitutes her being identified and perceived as an American, one that is defined by abstraction that is "not, however, the product of American family history; rather the form that American family histories generally take, the peculiar 'progress' recorded in *The Making of Americans,* is itself a product of American abstraction, an abstraction rooted in what Stein characterized as 'the geographical history of America" (xvi). When Meyer defines "American abstraction," it is important to return again to the moment of crisis, which in the context of Jauss, represents the rejection of inherited aesthetic forms from Europe. Stein consciously and deliberately rejects these forms and

invents her own through the language made up of repetitions and unique syntax. To put this more concretely, the writing subject tells us that by describing many men and women, one can understand the singular subject. Gertrude Stein in the lecture "The Gradual Making of The Making of Americans describes this process by saying that "I was filled with an active vocalizing idea of describing every one, of giving a full description of every kind of human being, their beginnings their middles and their endings, ... I was making a continuous attempt to give the total feeling of each one, but to do this I had to describe every one" (*Lectures in America,* 138). By understanding the history, or rather the "progress," of the family that one can understand a particular member of that family. Through the description of the family progress as well as the specific subject's progress, Stein is laboring through the relationship between the individual and the collective. In the following quote, this refers to Martha Hersland but can equally be applied to David Hersland as well: "This is now a little of what I love and how I write it. Later there will be much more of it. There are many ways of making kinds of men and women. Now there will be descriptions of every kind of way every one can be a kind of men and women. This is now a history of Martha Hersland" (291). Looking at the novel, its language and the way it exists on the page support this idea. The "being of every one" is abstracted through the language, its grammar, syntax, and repetition. The writing subject energizes and holds the novel together through its aim at connecting Americans with their environment through the language itself. As we have seen, language is influenced by one's environment; hence, there seems to be a cyclical connection. Mayer states that "The narrator of 'The Making of Americans' expressed similar sentiments concerning the harmony between a people and their land,' with the proviso that in the case of Americans the harmony had yet to be achieved" (xvi).

Gertrude Stein's development as a writer is an example of how the turn to the subjective experience in fiction has enabled the writing subject to become the main vehicle

through which meaning can be communicated. The Martha Hersland chapter of the book begins with the quote "I am writing for myself and strangers…" (*The Making of Americans,* 289), thus championing the intense feeling of subjectivity the book is supposed to evoke. Subjectivity is felt through the language itself, as Americans had to liberate themselves from the English language and create their own, influenced by the American environment and landscape. Moreover, as the narrative progresses, the focus on the family moves more and more to the individual members of the family, culminating in the chapters dedicated to Martha Hersland and David Hersland. In fact, Stein's intense fascination with the individual has been part of her creative focus and project of the novel. She would describe the process of writing and what it involved as in the 1935 lecture:

> You start in, and you take everyone that you know, and then when you see anybody who has a certain expression or turn of the face that reminds you of someone, you find out where agree[s] or disagrees with the character, until you build up the whole scheme. I got to the point where I didn't know whether I knew people or not. I made so many charts that when I used to go down the streets of Paris, I wondered whether they were people I knew or ones I didn't. (Stein qtd, in the introduction, xxv)

Fascination with facial expressions as precursors or waypoints towards apprehending someone's character can be reflected in the language Stein uses in the novel. Its repetitions, breaking of syntax, and other features transform the language on its surface, as much as one believes that the face is a surface to the person's inner life. Many of Stein's writings focus on the individual in one form or another, such as *Three Lives.* Having said that, her works are also a reflection of her own development as an author. Meyers suggests that Stein had several ideas for a novel that would eventually metamorphose into *Three Lives* that focused on the figure of the author. One such title is "Making of an author/being a/ History of one woman and many others" (xvi). Stein saw herself as an eclectic writer who recognized that American Literature is the history of the American language. Hence, she thought of the writing subject in the form of David Hersland as a conceptualization of the language itself and the American self.

Meyers equally discusses the critical outlook on the differentiation between Stein the writer and the narrator. In this respect, works such as *Three Lives* and *The Making of Americans* are paramount for the intellectual concern Stein had. At one point, she considered publishing the novel *Three Lives* under a different name but ultimately decided against it. Meyers comments on this, "Stein ultimately published *Three Lives* under her own name, yet she did so at the risk of having readers confuse the narrator with herself, a risk compounded in *The Making of Americans* where the narrator isn't just the speaker" (xvi). Those concerns and the question of what it means to be a writer, more so an American writer, weighed heavily on her mind. To achieve this project, Stein aimed to convey the full subjectivity of the individual through language. Such an author is not the one Barthes sought to dismantle, the one who is weighed down by Western institutions. Stein, as an author, more specifically, the writing subject exists entirely in the language and therefore in the book itself. Complexities of subjectivity, an American subjectivity that Stein aimed to convey, can be seen in the story of the novel itself: the evolution from the history of a family's progress to the history of "every one." This evolution is borne out of her understanding of what it means to be an American: "it has always seemed to me a rare privilege, this, of being American… The old people in a new world, the new people made of the old, that is the story that I mean to tell" (xvi). People being made of the old is the old language, being part of the language marked by a unique landscape. Therefore, being an American for Stein means being made up of a liberated language, and loving words.

Language is equally important in our understanding of the novel, Stein, and the writing subject. In her 1935 lecture "Portraits and Repetition," we see the essence of her understanding of what it means to be an American and how this is reflected in her use of language in her work. She writes about her generation:

> In shot this generation has conceived an intensity of movement so great that it has not to be see against something else to be known, and therefore, this generation does not

> connect itself with anything, that is what makes this generation what it is and that is why it is American, and this is very important in connection with portraits of anything. I say portraits and not description, and I will gradually explain why. (*Lectures in America*, 288).

Language is inextricably connected to movement for Stein, and she also makes a creative move towards portraits as well. When Stein writes "this generation does not connect itself with anything," she means that it consciously rejects anything European and wants to think of itself as wholly independent. Hence, portraits are an American invention as opposed to description, which belongs to Europe. This is why Stein felt that although Henry James was a 19th-century writer, he felt the method of the 20th century. The method being writing portraits of people, feeling their movement, and expressing that movement through language. Additionally, her focus on the importance of language can be seen in how the "portraits of men and women and children are written, by written I mean made. And by made I mean felt." (287). The relationship between feeling and language is of paramount importance for understanding Stein's novels, but also how the writing subject operates. In the lecture, she described carefully how her language, thought, and work evolved along the lines of thinking about portraits. From *The Making of Americans* to different poems which were portraits of people and places she knew and visited, her focus on the individual and how it can be evoked through language speaks of her intense love for words and what words can do. Thoreau does very much the same, as can be seen in the following quote:

> A written word is the choicest of relics. It is something at once more intimate with us and more universal than any other work of art. It is the work of art nearest to life itself. It may be translated into every language, and not only be read but actually breathed from all human lips;—not be represented on canvas or in marble only, but be carved out of the breath of life itself. (*Walden*,)

Stein's language, its beauty and syntax, revolve around repetition and insistence on certain words. The movement of her language reflects the movement she saw in her generation. In the lecture, she spoke at length about this observation and how it influenced the novel and her focus on portraying the universal human experience, moving from a family to "every one."

Additionally, she makes a distinction between repetition and insistence, which she began to understand early in her life.

> When I first realized the inevitable repetition in human expression that was not repetition but insistence when I first began to be really conscious of it was when at seventeen years of age, I left the more or less internal and solitary and concentrated life I led in California and came to Baltimore and lived with a lot my relations and principally with a whole group of very lively aunts who had to know anything. (289)

The repetition in her language is really a reflection of the insistence on knowing everything and hearing everything she observed in the behavior of her aunts. She began to listen to what people were saying and gradually, repetition turned into insistence. Psychology and observing human beings, Stein learned through her education. Such an approach to people certainly influenced her understanding of how to translate that into her language.

> I began to consciously listen to what anybody was saying and what they did say while they were saying what they were saying. This was not yet the beginning of writing, but it was the beginning of knowing what there was that made there be no repetition. No matter how often what happened had happened, any time anyone told anything, there was no repetition. This is what William James calls the Will to Live. If anybody would live. And so I began to find out then by listening to the difference between repetition and insisting, and it is a very important knowledge. You listen as you know. (289)

Focusing on repetition and insistence reflects Stein's own personal philosophy of life. Olson, in his essay "Gertrude Stein, William James, and Habit in the Shadow of War," quotes Paul Bowles in saying that Stein's habits were "run-of-the-mill" (3), meaning that she was a very disciplined writer and person. What is more, Olson argues that "Stein (like Wallace Stevens) deflated the myth of the eccentric writer; she was rooted in domestic habits, and, more to the point, made these habits the subject matter of her work" (3).

Conversely, knowledge seems to be of critical importance to the genesis of Stein's unique style and consequently the novel itself. Through curiosity about people and wanting to know what they know and think, her idea of writing portraits began to germinate. An intense curiosity breathes life into her language, which started to mimic life itself and its movement.

Here, William James's influence is important as Olson states that "James's beliefs about habit, and how these particular beliefs may have influenced Stein, have received only passing attention" (4). James argues that people control their own behavior and create their own habits by "selecting from a 'world of pure experience '" (5). Such experience, we could say, is what Stein's language evokes. By constructing long sentences and insisting on repetition in her language, Stein conveys a conscious choice on the side of the individual, who privileges a complete experience. In order for Stein to take control of this energy and turn it into language, she relies on habits in her life, which Olson writes, "allow individuals to filter external stimuli, to choose how to respond to these stimuli, to limit the chaos of experience, and to cultivate constructive behaviors" (5). Stein achieves this discipline by putting a great deal of importance on movement and argues that "it would be necessary to see it moving against anything to know that it is moving. That is what we mean by life, and in my way I have tried to make portraits of this thing always have tried always may try to make portraits of this thing" (*Lectures in America,* 290). Stein's reflections on the relationship between movement, life, and portraits speak to her writing style in *The Making of Americans* and how the writing subject evolved throughout the narrative of the book, reaching its full expressive potential in the David Hersland chapter and portrait. Meyers argues that Stein's novel and the process of its construction reflect that "writing, in sum, is a form of experience, not simply a way of coming to term with experience" (xxxi). William James's influence is undoubtedly present, as Stein's writing is her approach to conveying a stream of consciousness that marked major novels of the 20th century. It is why, by the time we as readers arrive at the David Hersland chapter, the "narrator ceases defining herself wholly as one 'loving listening, hearing, always repeating,' and starts to identify herself as someone who 'likes conversation '" (xxxi). Through David Hersland, Stein converses with her present and influences that defined her writing style and subject. She converses with Henry James, William James, and

her writing predecessors as Thoreau chooses to do with Homer and other ancient texts, hence seeking to overcome the fathers by making her language fully embody the subjective experience of the self through the character of David Hersland. Experiencing the First World War brought further liberation to the American language, and so Stein writes that "came the world war and what produced a further liberation. We were now the arbiters we had that strength and so was born a new generation of writers who did not have to think about the American language it was theirs and they had it and was all there was to it..." (*Gertrude Stein and the Making of Literature*, 231) The American language was fully Stein's to play with, and so she made the most of that potential. Once we arrive at the David Hersland chapter, the writing subject is fully present with the novel and announces and champions its subjectivity through conversing with other subjectivities. As Kristeva argues, subjectivity is an evolving process, and we can observe the same evolution in Stein's novel. The rise of the writing subject in *The Making of Americans* also marked a shift in Stein's composition of her other work that was produced around the same time. Other writing, such as *Three Lives* and poems/portraits of Matisse and Picasso, champion subjectivity and make language its main form of expression: the expression of habits. On this point, Olson writes that Stein relied "on habits as a way to reveal the motivations and energies of her characters. For instance, Jeff Campbell, the young African–American doctor in Stein's story 'Melanctha,' represents a certain kind of pragmatic habituation…" (34).

Before we explore the David Hersland chapter in great detail and analyze how the "writing subject" operates and makes itself visible in language, let us first look towards the very beginning of the novel. The first two pages of the book set two important themes that would then be expanded upon and evolve later in the novel. The first is breaking away from the fathers and rejecting what Kristeva observed, which is "the name of the father," in other words, one's predecessors. In Stein's case, this would be the Pilgrim Fathers and the culture

this founding American myth established. The novel begins with "Once an angry man dragged his father along the ground through his own orchard. 'Stop!' cried the groaning old man at last, 'Stop!' I did not drag my father beyond this tree" (3). Starting the novel with a parable establishes, firstly, the break with tradition. The novel that Stein composed, and that we as readers are now experiencing, is meant to break away from the tradition of 19th-century literature. What is more, it also establishes both a focus on characters and family tradition through the sentence "It is hard living down the tempers we are born with" (3). The first portion of the novel indeed focuses primarily on the Hersland and Dehning family and their move to Gossols and how the two family histories intertwine. A major shift towards individual characters through the focus on David Hersland, Martha Hersland, and Julia Dehning would come afterwards. This evolution suggests that Stein's novel, as much as her language, is alive and subject to evolution.

The first short paragraph is equally a meditation on the individual's development. From fighting one's nature to embracing it as what makes a person unique, "We all begin well, for in our youth there is nothing we are more intolerant of than our own sins writ large in others and we fight them fiercely in ourselves; but we grow old and we see that these our sins are of all sins the really harmless ones to own, nay that they give a charm to any character, and so our struggle with them dies away" (3). Additionally, it is important to draw the attention to the usage of the collective "we" in the mentioned paragraph. At this point the focus is still primarily on the collective identity which is to be distinguished from the usage of "every one" later in the novel. In the latter stages of the novel, the rise of the writing subject explored through the character of David Hersland ushers in the need to establish the sameness in the individual identity of every person, while in the first pages of the novel, the focus is rather on the collective and shared experience of coming into and accepting one's temper. What marks the initial pages of the novel is the occasional address the narrator would

make to her readers. A reminder that the initial portion of the narrative is dedicated to recording a family's progress, that is, the formation and development of an American family. On page 33. we have on such address.

> Bear it your mind my reader, but truly I never feel it that there even can be for me any such a creature, no it is this scribbled and dirty and lined paper that is really to be to me always my receiver,--but anyhow reader, bear it in your mind— will there be for me ever any such a creature,--what I have said always before to you, that this that I write down a little each day here on my scraps of paper for you is not just an ordinary kind of novel with a plot and conversation to amuse you, but a record of a decent family progress respectably lived by us and our fathers and our mothers and our grand-fathers… (33/34)

The narrator's need to communicate and acknowledge the reader speaks to the intent to reestablish what it means to have an American novel. The new American novel is not simply one with plot and conversations for the purposes of entertainment, but also one which records and represents fatherhood and the rise of the American family. Equally so, the narrator acknowledges that the "scribbled and dirty and lined paper" is a meditative space where she is able to think and reflect. Language and syntax, which will progressively get more broken and repetitive, reflect this need for the narrator to reflect and think on the identity of the individual, American individual, and "every one" individually. Finally, the narrator seeks support from the reader to follow her on this journey of exploring the self as the member of a collective, whether that be a family or country, "And so listen while I tell you all about us, and wait while I hasten slowly forwards, and love, please, this history of this decent family's progress" (34).

One important scene in the narrative of the novel which necessitates the gradual movement towards the individual and prepares the ground for the rise of the writing subject is David and Martha's movement to the "new world."Interestingly enough, this movement is not initiated by the father but rather by the mother of the family: "Yes it was she who lead them all out of the old world into the new one. The father was not man ever to do any such leading" (37). Following pages detailing the movement to America can be understood both in

terms of the narrative but also metatextually, meaning that Gertrude Stein, as a writer, ushers in the new American novel. What belongs to the man of the family is nostalgia towards the old world. Consider how the narrative describes him: “He was a butcher by trade. He was a very gentle creature in his nature. He loved to sit and think, and he loved to be important in religion. He was a small man, well enough made, with a nice face, blue eyes, and a little lightish colored beard. He loved his eating and a quiet life; he loved his Martha and his children, and mostly he liked all the world” (37). In contemporary terms, we would describe such an individual as cosmopolitan, one who enjoys the fruits of his labor and is connected to his land. As we have seen earlier, being connected to one’s land means being connected to one’s language, which means becoming a writer and thinker. Now, how the narrative describes the mother is different: “Always this strong foreign woman was great and good and directing. She led her family out of the old world into the new one, and there they learned through her and by themselves, almost every one of them, how to make for themselves each on a sufficient fortune” (36). The mother is described as a leader, an educator, one who empowers and shows her children how to become individuals. She is a quintessential American, one that makes the most of the land and takes control over it, meaning over the language as well. Furthermore, the movement is partly because of economic betterment of the family and future generations, that is, the children, “yes it would be nice to have all of them get rich there” (37).In the following pages, it is Martha who takes the first step and begins to sell everything. The father watches passively as this is happening with a tinge of sadness and nostalgia. When they begin their journey, he returns multiple times to see the town one last time: “I just stopped here to see it. It's just I wanted to see what way it looked so I would get it right, not to forget it. Alright, Martha, I come; you go on. I be with you in a minute. I just look to see I got it fixed right so I don’t forget it. Alright, Martha, I come now. I got it fixed now I can’t forget it” (40). Once they finally arrived in the new world, the father was content,

and thus the financial betterment of the family could begin. The previously mentioned section is an important one in the narrative story of the novel, as it prepares the ground for the move towards the individual and his or her experience.

This experience is explored through characters such as young David Hersland, who represents the rise of the writing subject. His history is one that is shared by many, "In the slow history of three of those who are to be always in this history of us young grown men and women to us, in the slow history of Martha Alfred and young David Hersland, of how they came each one to have their kind of important individual feeling inside them in them" (67). Once the narrative establishes the family's movement to America and the detailed history of the parents and how they raised their children, on page 149 of the novel, we can finally delve into the individual and detail the intricate complexities that constitute an individual.

> Many men have sometime in their living the important feeling of themselves to themselves inside them, some men have always this feeling inside them, most men have such a feeling more or less in them, perhaps all men and mostly all women have sometime in them a feeling of themselves to themselves inside them; this comes sometimes from a mixture in them of the kind of natures in them, this comes sometimes from the bottom nature of them, this comes sometimes from the natures in them that are mixed up with the bottom natures of them, sometimes in some of them the other nature or natures in them are not mixed with the bottom nature in them,. Many of such of them have the important feeling of themselves inside them coming from the other natures, not from the bottom nature of them. (149)

The bottom nature" of men will become the principal concern for the narrator with the beginning of detailing the histories of Martha and David Hersland. In this chapter, we will focus on David Hersland, as the choices he makes and the epiphanies that come as a result of said choices constitute the rise of the writing subject as Gertrude Stein envisions it. The beginning of the chapter immediately explores subjectivity as one of the themes that belong to David Hersland. Subjectivity and its importance in how a person thinks of themselves concerns the narrator, "I do ask some, I would ask every one, I do not ask some because I am quite certain that they would not like me to ask it, I do ask some if they would mind it if they found out that they did have the name they had then and had been having been born not in the

family living they are then living, if they had been born illegitimate" (723). Interestingly enough, the question of subjectivity begins with curiosity about how a person would reflect on discovering that the family they grew up in is not their biological family. Continuing on this line of thinking, the narrator reflects on that people would not like to think of themselves in such a way and would reject such a thought wholeheartedly, "I ask some and I would ask every one only I am quite certain very many would not like to have me ask it if they would like it, if they would very much dislike it, if they would make a tragedy of it, if they would make a joke of it, if they found they had in them blood of some kind of a being that was a low kind to them" (723). There seems to be active thinking on the nature of individuality and whether it is linked to one's family of origin. Whether finding out later in life that one is actually adopted would cause instability in one's identity. The narrator's thinking that people would not like to think about such things seems to suggest that it would have a negative impact; hence, they decide not to even ask the question. From the very beginning of the novel to its later stages, there is always a tension between "family living" and individual living. David Hersland, as the narrator tells us, did not think about his family origins in his younger life but would only later in life begin to ask such questions: "In his younger living he never thought about any such thing as that about which I have just been telling. In his later living he liked thinking about feeling such things, thinking such things being in men and women" (723). As the rising thinker and writing subject, David Hersland begins thinking about himself but then extrapolates such thought to other people. This suggests thinking about human nature and that there is something fundamental to it that we all share. History is another important word for us; that is, the history of the individual and how the individual develops. The first paragraph ends with "This is not to be now a history of him" (723), meaning that we will learn of the history of David Hersland. How he becomes the ideal writing subject that Gertrude Stein has in mind.

The initial pages of the chapter are dedicated to the uncertainty that the narrator feels about living, "I am not certain that I am knowing everything about being living" (724). Action and camaraderie are of equal importance, reflecting on the action the narrator and other people would or would not take for someone else. The thinking and reflection that the narrator experiences is reflected in the language. How the sentences are constructed and the repetition of words. As discussed earlier in the chapter, this kind of language was borne out of Stein's own experiences of listening to her aunts and seeing people on the street. The language with which she writes captures the essential life of the individual,

> I know that I am not certain about what I would do for some one, what I would not do for some one. No one is certain, so that acting by them shows it to any one what they would for some one, what they would not do for someone. Each one then would do something for some one, would not do something for some one, would do something for any one, would not do something for any one. Some are quite certain about themselves in this thing. Some are quite not certain about themselves in this thing. Some are quite not certain about themselves in this thing. Not anyone is rightly certain about themselves about this thing. Perhaps not anyone is really certain about themselves about this thing. Perhaps one is certain about that one about this thing. I know I am not certain about what I would do for someone, what I would not do for someone. (724)

The uncertainty that follows the narrator's reflection on the action or inaction of other individuals is further reinforced by the lack of confidence that the narrator would do or not do. In her 1926 lecture "Composition as Explanation," Stein addresses an important feature of individuality, which is thinking about oneself and others. The lecture begins with reflecting on what makes a generation a generation: "There is singularly nothing that makes a difference a difference in beginning and in the middle and in ending except that each generation has something different at which they are all looking. By this I mean so simply that anybody knows it that composition is the difference which makes each and all of them then different…." (*The Selected Writings of Gertrude Stein,* 453). Individuality is one of the key themes of the lecture, and Stein approaches the question of individuality through the question of composition. Firstly, she acknowledges that what is within one person does not

change, that the inner life of the individual remains constant through history: “It is very interesting that nothing inside in them, that is when they consider the very long history of how every one ever acted or has felt, it is very interesting that nothing inside in them in all of them makes It connectedly different” (453). Therefore, the question that Stein raises concerns the way in which a writer can convey the individuality of the people of her time. The answer she discovered is in the way people do things, say things. As stated before, her experience of seeing her aunts and their insistence upon repeating things profoundly impacted her language. Therefore, differentiation between one time and another depends upon how one approaches doing things, which is influenced by how one sees things: “The only thing that is different from one time to another is what is seen, and what is seen depends upon how everybody is doing everything” (453). Now, a writer does not simply retell his or her time to his or her contemporaries; the writer transforms it into composition: “This makes the thing we are looking at very different and this makes what those who describe it make of it, it makes a composition, it confuses, it shows, it is, it looks, it likes it as it is, and this makes what is seen as it is seen” (453).To return to the passage from the novel, the narrative voice at this point, in question of what one would do or would not do, is yet to discover the individuality, the composition of his or her time. The undecidedness, the lack of certainty, is evidence that the composition has not yet been found. It exemplifies the process of discovering subjectivity, the making of the “writing subject.”What makes this line of thinking provocative is that the following paragraph then goes on to question the nature of being a “dead one.”

> Being a “dead one” in this context does not necessarily mean a biological death but is connected to the action or inaction towards the other discussed in the previous paragraph: “Some one having some one who was with them become a dead one could be saying, when some one was saying something, that one does not know he is a dead one, he will never know that thing” (724). Following the same progression of thought, the narrator ponders whether an individual would know to be a “dead one” or would know that other people around him or her are a “dead one.” Ultimately, the paragraph ends on “Some have been certain that every one who is a dead one does not then know that that one is a dead one” (724).

The initial two pages of the chapter are solely dedicated to reflecting on the nature of certainty and whether individuals can be certain of themselves and others in the world. We then learn that the following pages will be dedicated to the history of David Hersland before he became a "dead one": "This will soon now be the beginning of a description of living that David Hersland did before he came to be a dead one" (724). Notice how living here is an action; it is not a state, something that he "is," but rather what he "did."Finally, the age of David Hersland is important, meaning that his death in his relative youth: "David Hersland was a dead one before he was a middle aged one. He was then never in his living an old one. He was dead before he came to the middle of his middle living" (725). This prompts the writing subject into a series of reflections that culminate in an understanding that there is a connection between the life of an individual and the stages of life with respect to age, "I know now how quite a number of groups that there are of men and women are ones existing when they are young ones, that is young women and young men, that is just ending their beginning living, just beginning their middle living" (726). Furthermore, there is a difference in being in the world as a young one, middle-aged one, and old one, that your body reflects these differences: "I am beginning to know of some groups in men and women, what they have as hands and faces and ears and bodies to them and being in them, and ways of acting in them when they are young men and young women, older young men and young women, middle aged men and women, old men and women" (726). In short, these are the reflections of the narrator on the nature of being an individual, all prompted by the life of David Hersland and the choices he makes.

What makes David Hersland an example of the "writing subject" is that, in essence, he wills his own death by choosing what to eat and what not. One such passage is the following:

> Eating one thing is a way of living for some. Deciding to be eating one thing is a way of living for some. Deciding anything about eating is a way of living for some. Eating

> one thing, deciding to eat one thing is all being living for some. David Hersland was one deciding about eating something. David Hersland was one sometimes deciding to be eating only one thing. Deciding about eating one thing, deciding about eating, eating one thing, eating some thing was not all of living for him. He was then one living all his living that is to say until he was not any longer living. (985)

A fully free, realized, and embodied subject is the one who is thinking and embodies his or her thoughts in the world. It is crucial to focus on the gerund verb "deciding," meaning it is a conscious choice. Language here becomes increasingly repetitive because it aims to convey a sense of a kind of singularity in the being of David Hersland. When an active decision starts to be made, one becomes a unique singular subject and leads an active life. As one is reading, it is clear that there is thinking and reflecting on the page here. For Stein, life is language; for David Hersland, life is thinking, and his choice is to fully embody this decision. That is why he decides to stop eating: "He was needing to be sometimes deciding that he would not be eating everything. And this was a natural thing. He was needing to be one being living. He was needing to be understanding that thing that he was one being living" (888). The bodily discipline the writing subject reflect his is reminiscent of Thoreau's own discipline but perhaps in a much more extreme way. For example, he writes that "I learned from my two years' experience that it would cost incredibly little trouble to obtain one's necessary food … that a man may use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength" (*Walden,68).* Thoreau equally thinks about the food, and like the discipline in labor, so does the discipline in eating equally contribute to an embodied life. Putting it more concretely, Thoreau writes that "He who distinguishes the true savor of his food can never be a glutton; he who does cannot be otherwise" (218). And these choices are a natural thing that leads to the life the writing subjects sing us and aims to convey. As Stein writes, "He was needing to be one being living. He was needing to be understanding that thing that he was one being living" (*The Making of Americans,* 888). The conviction with which David makes this decision makes him a unique character, one that wants to fully embody his living. His

conversations with the rest of his family and other people speak to David not needing that they understand. One such example is with Mr. Dehning: "He was telling something about such a thing and telling it very clearly to Mr. Dehning and Mr. Dehning was listening and David Hersland was not completely needing that Mr. Dehning should be listening and he was not completely needing that Mr. Dehning should be understanding this thing" (888). It is David's own understanding that it is important to him and around which he orients his life. The conviction with which he goes into the world with his newfound epiphany could be seen in the following quote:

> He was not excited in understanding, he was not eager in understanding, he was not gay in understanding, he was not solemn in understanding, he was not persistent in understanding, he was no violent in understanding, he was not expository in understanding, he was not continuous in understanding and clearer in understanding and he was almost firm in understanding and he was not repeating his understanding and he was strongly advising some to go on with his understanding. He might have been brilliant in understanding, and he went on being understanding. (889)

Understanding is an important state of being for David Hersland, which is why the paragraph continues on qualifying and dissecting what it means to understand and embody understanding. Additionally, it speaks to the complexities of thought and reflection in an individual being. The paragraph concludes with his realization that "He was not really repeating anything, he was clearly not repeating anything" (889). The breaking of repetition in behavior and solely dedicating one's energies to one thing is an important essence of the individual. In the same respect, the "writing subject" dedicates the language and embodied subjectivity fully to the narrative and the characters in a novel, short story, or a poem. Gertrude Stein engages us with her characters through the language and thus communicates the importance of being a fully realized subject which can act in a world. A fully embodied and thinking subject is the one who thinks and reflects on his or her actions in the world. One who is fully committed to living and reflecting on the nature of living. Thoreau's experiment and abode near Walden Pond is a physical manifestation of it while the writing subject in *The*

Making of Americans leads us through this journey through the language and the "progress" of the family histories of the Herslands and the Dehnings.

Looking again to the lecture "Composition as Explanation" will further illuminate what it means to be the "writing subject." Stein, in explaining her process and the way she approaches the composition of her pieces, spoke of the continuous present. When one reads *The Making of Americans,* it soon becomes clear that the novel is almost entirely constructed out of continuous present. It is not solely related to time, but to the way one approaches acting in the world and, in Stein's case, writing. She explained it as "beginning again and again and again" (457). David Hersland, in this respect, is a crucial character as the "writing subject," because in his choice to abstain from eating and dedicate his life solely to thinking, he creates his own time. If we were to imagine a ship, unmooring it and letting the tides carry it across the sea would be the equivalent of creating time for yourself and dedicating it to attaining subjectivity. Once the writing subject in Thoreau made the decision to live beside Walden Pond and live by the "labor of his hands only," he departs from society to experience and embody a subjectivity that leads to a more fulfilling life. The writing subject tells us that once David unmoored himself from the Dehning and Hersland living, he became an actualized and embodied subject, the writing subject Thoreau writes of in his vision of life, what is supposed to be:

> He had come to quite completely not eating anything but one thing. He was strong then, he was strong in completely clearly thinking then. He was completely clearly thinking then. He was strong then in that thing, in completely clearly thinking. He was then beginning being one going to be succeeding in living. He was then not living in Dehning family living. He was then not living in Hersland living, almost not in any Hersland living. He was living then in being living. (1081)

Living in being living is the image of unmoored ship as it does not seek to command the sea but lets it lead it. Similarly, the writing subject in *Walden* tells us that "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach" (72). As Thoreau wants to teach us, so does Stein speak of this,

albeit with respect to the writer himself or herself: "No one is ahead of his time, it is only that the particular variety of creating his time is the one that his contemporaries who are also creating their own time refuse to accept" (454). There seems to be a connection between time and individuality, that is, how the individual incorporates time into the perception of his or her own identity, which frees the individual to be wholly himself or herself. Kristeva, in her tracking of the developmental trajectory of the child, sought to reconcile individuality and time. She writes that "the unitary subject discovered by psychoanalysis is only one moment, a time of arrest, a stasis, exceeded and threatened by this movement" ("The Subject in Process", 134). When we think about a unitary subject, it is not one of a stable identity moving chronologically through time but rather a continuous process of subjectivation and becoming; hence Thoreau creates his own time by doing his experiment, and David Hersland abstains from particular food to experience "being living." The writing subject as a literary agent helps us appreciate that being a subject means being always in development, always learning and becoming. Stein helps us understand this by writing that it is "beginning again and again and again" (457). The signifying practice itself is an act of this. Hence, Stein breathed life into the "writing I" by discovering the continuous present in the composition of her novel, which in turn transformed her language into the poetic language that Kristeva praised and championed. In short, the tension between time and individuality is the problematic center of this thesis. David Hersland, as Stein envisioned him, is a potential solution to this problem. Therefore, what does his choice tell us about individuality? It seems that the willing act to suppress one's own biological drive, the drive to eat, is the ultimate expression of one's individuality, as it transcends the body itself. Stein encapsulates his life in this short description: "He was one being living; he was clearly feeling what he was feeling, he was almost completely thinking about everything. He was one being living. He was one being living until he was not any longer a young one beginning being living, and then he was

not any longer being living" (854). There is an equivalence between "thinking" and "living," and David Hersland embodied it fully until his death. To live fully and think entirely, thus transcending the body itself and becoming an actualized subject and the "writing subject," is conveyed here – "He had come to quite completely not eating anything but one thing. He was strong then; he was strong in completely clearly thinking then; he was completely clearly thinking then. He was strong then in that thing, in completely clearly thinking" (889). The continuous present here further reinforces and conveys the essence of his life at every single individual instance of time. David Hersland's death and the conclusion of his chapter usher in the final chapter of the novel, which is titled "History of a family's progress," which is in fact a history of an individual. His discovery of the self and his choice of what it means to be a fully embodied subject paves the way towards depicting the life of "everyone" in the final chapter of the book. The question of subjectivity and what it means to be a fully embodied subject can be understood in the following lines:

> Some were not certain that he would have been one coming to be beginning succeeding in living. Some were certain that he might then not have come to be a dead one. Some were quite certain that he might then not have come to be a dead one. Some were quite certain about this thing. Some were not certain that there was any difference in anything in his being a dead one. Some were certain that he was then a dead one and were certain that it was an important thing. Some were certain that he was then a dead one and were not certain that it was an important thing that he was then one not being a living one. Any one could be one not very constantly remembering his being a dead one, his having been a living one. Any one could remember this thing, his having been a dead one, his having been a living one. (904)

To talk about David Hersland is to talk about other people's perception of him. That in the choice Gertrude Stein made in closing his history and beginning the next chapter in describing the individuality of "every one." As she spoke about in her lecture, no one is ahead of his or her time. David Hersland succeeded in creating his own time, which in turn means also having the ability to choose one's death–the end of one's time. This enables one to be a fully realized subject, a fully realized self. Stein communicates what it means to be a fully realized self through the use of the continuous present.

The relationship between the mind and the body as it relates to the creation of the individual and therefore the "writing subject" is also discussed in the paper which Catherine R. Stimpson wrote, titled "The Mind, the Body, and Gertrude Stein." In the paper, Stimpson, from the feminist perspective, wrestles with the implications of Gertrude Stein's writing. In the paper, she argues that Stein sought to disrupt the existing relationship between how a patriarchal and male-dominated society negotiated the relationship females have between their minds and bodies: "Stein, in the late 1890s, though unmarried and childless, enthusiastically endorsed the concept of the superwoman who would unite the new mind and old body. So doing, she explicitly acknowledged the influence of 'Charlotte Perkins Stetson.' The role of women, Stein proclaimed, had to change" (490). Through the language and the creation of herself as a writer, she hoped to transcend the boundaries of sex and gender. Such questions were to remain in the sphere of her private life as an individual. This is why the problematic question of the novel is, in fact, the subject, the history of "every one." Subjectivity therefore seems to be of critical importance to the critical outlook on Gertrude Stein's body of work. From feminist to other perspectives, different thinkers more or less critically look toward her body of work as an experiment on language. However, there is still space to be carved out in this respect. Here I would like to again turn to Julia Kristeva and her notion of the text as a body. When one reads the David Hersland chapter as well as other portions of the book, one is confronted with the body and the intense energies and subjectivity it contains. Stein has chosen language to be an avenue upon which this relationship with the text is negotiated and the "writing subject" as the main negotiator with the subjectivity of the reader. In the book, *The Anxiety of Influence*: *A Theory on Poetry (*1973*),* Harold Bloom speaks of the misreading that a poet (in our case the writer) needs to do in order to create something of meaning that can stand the test of time. Bloom presents the thesis of his book as follows:

> *Poetic Influence – when it involves two strong, authentic poets, --- always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist. (Italics in the original, 30)*

In this respect, the question of "misreading" or reading in general is intensely connected to the problem of subjectivity. The consequence of Bloom's book begs the question: What does to read/misread properly mean? Gertrude Stein has read her predecessors and has found that in the modern age the language of the past does not effectively represent the subjectivity of her time. Equally so, Thoreau's deliberate reading can challenge and complement Bloom's arguments. In short, Bloom's contribution enables us to question whether the author as a figure can properly encompass the subjectivity a book as an object contains. The writing subject, as a literary agent, can, if only we listen.

Conclusion

The word "text," etymologically, means something which is woven, joined, fit together, braided, and interwoven. In ancient times, people conceived of a thought as a thread and a storyteller or a poet—a weaver. Thinking of a text in this way lends itself to how the writing subject, through his or her labor, plays with it and expresses a unique form of creativity. However, sometimes through history and etymological development, some meanings become more privileged while others become side noted. In Chapter I, Roland Barthes' seminal essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) destabilized the author's authority and privileged position and then sought a different kind of agent throughout his theoretical work. When one explores the etymological history of the word "author" and its development, one discovers that it is inextricably linked with "authority." Conversely, in the 14th century, a "text" became understood as "an authoritative writing" or a document; Christian doctrine, a passage of the Bible; the letter of the Scriptures. Authors, or *auctores*, as they were known in the Middle Ages, produced "texts" and through them gained authority. A conceptual link between the word author and authority became the strongest through "The Republic of Letters," an intellectual movement in different European countries which sought to give authors sole privilege and copyright ownership of their product. Hence, the author could be understood as a worker, a *homo faber*, a person who produces an object. However, such a conception does not properly encapsulate the inherent subjectivity a given literary piece possesses. Labeling the author as a worker can perhaps finally enable us to move beyond the problematic word. In order for the subjectivity of language to be properly expressed and understood, a new literary agent must arise, one that is grounded through Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytic theory of language—the writing subject, who is a laborer. Kristeva reminds us that subjectivity and what the body experiences lie at the foundation of how poetic language is formed and shaped. The most important revelations she makes are that political theory has

its limits and that those who do not take the body into consideration ultimately fail. Hence, when we think of literature, if one only thinks of the author, then the inherent subjectivity in the creative act of writing dooms us to debate whether one should refer to authorial intention or the subjective experience of the reader. On the other hand, the writing subject, conceived as a laborer, moves our attention from the question of authorial intention to the embodied act of writing itself. Here, subjectivity is not merely represented but expressed through the labor of writing the text. In Chapter III, we have analyzed *Walden* and *The Making of Americans* as literary demonstrations of the writing subject as a laborer. Each writer exemplifies how labor becomes the central axis upon which subjectivity is formed and simultaneously expressed in language. Replacing the authoritative figure of the author with the laboring writing subject, literature can be understood not simply as a creative activity written by an individual but as a process through which subjectivity itself is produced.

Both novels invite us to think of becoming an embodied being in a completely new way and form a relationship with the world and our environments, which enables us to become agents of positive change. Hence, the writing subject can become an avenue for further research that not only transforms how we think about language but also about a book as a physical object. As the writing subject becomes a new literary agent that enables us to reconceptualize literature as a space where a novel subjectivity can be expressed, it has the potential to transform how we conceive of a book as an object. In Chapter I, such questions were already being asked in the eighteenth century, but with a greater concern over ownership and intellectual property. In contemporary literature, there are poets and writers who have begun to challenge what a book and language can do for the reader. Those that stand out are Anne Carson, with her book *Nox* (2010), whose pages unfold like an accordion. It is a memoir and elegy for her brother, whom she hasn't seen for a considerable amount of time, but then discovers that he has passed away. Another important poet is Susan Howe,

whose books and poetry incorporate photographs, facsimiles, historical documents, and broken typography. She would often describe her poetry as "frolic architecture," which she takes from Ralph Waldo Emerson's poem "The Snow Storm" and uses as a title for one of the sections of her book *That This* (2010). These are some of the many writers who challenge what literature and books can do for the contemporary reader. Hence, it would be fitting to propose new avenues of literary research and criticism that would explore these writers in the context of the writing subject, which can be both visually and physically manifested.

When beginning to talk about the writing subject, literature can become a vehicle for genuine change that will enable us to move towards a future where one person can better understand another. Literature becomes a dynamic practice that enables us to reflect on history, how we remember, and how we perceive the world around us. The writing subject invites readers into a book, which the artists mentioned earlier have created into a conceptual space where text, image, archive, memory, and materiality converge. Readers become active participants in a construction of meaning that can enable them to become active agents. When the book becomes a place of memory, a physically transforming object, a fragmented encounter with the past, literature can then go beyond representation and become an experience capable of changing how readers think and remember. It is a powerful venue for research, which this thesis hopefully aspires to inspire. At this point, we return to the introduction of this thesis. The tragic event that partly inspired the arguments that are presented urges us to reconsider how to engage with our present and, through literature, forge a more equitable world. The writing subject enables us to position literature at the forefront of discourse around subjectivity and to lay the groundwork for individual actions that inspire gradual change rather than hoping for faceless political institutions to be the agents of positive transformation.

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