

Biblical Exegesis without Authorial Intention?

*Interdisciplinary Approaches to Authorship
and Meaning*

Edited by

Clarissa Breu



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Contents

Acknowledgements IX
Notes on Contributors X

Introduction: Authors Dead and Resurrected 1
Clarissa Breu

- 1 Exegesis without Authorial Intention? On the Role of the “Author Construct” in Text Interpretation 7
Sandra Heinen
- 2 Author – Text – Intention: A Case Study on the Letter of James 24
Oda Wischmeyer
- 3 “And God Was the Text”: An Essay on *intentio operis* and the Bible as the Word of God 43
Jochen Flebbe
- 4 Authorship and/as Intertext – Julia Kristeva and Paul de Man 56
Peter Clar
- 5 Between Intention and Reception: Textual Meaning-Making in Intersubjective Perspective 72
Michal Beth Dinkler
- 6 Born-Again Bibles: Biblical Studies after the “Death of the Author” 94
Hannah M. Strømmen
- 7 A Bible That Expresses Everything While Communicating Nothing: Deleuze and Guattari’s Cure for Interpretosis 108
Stephen D. Moore
- 8 #John: Author-Names in Revelation and Other New Testament Texts 126
Clarissa Breu
- 9 Dying and Rising with the Author: Specters of Paul and the Material Text 149
Gregory Peter Fewster

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Authorship and/as Intertext – Julia Kristeva and Paul de Man

Peter Clar

1 Julia Kristeva's Concept of Intertextuality

1.1 *Subverting Binary Oppositions*

In debates about the theorization of authorship, Julia Kristeva is often mentioned in connection with “feminine writing” (*écriture féminine*) and thus with Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray. This label has often been problematized and so have the differences between the theories of the three scholars mentioned, as well as those of various other scholars and philosophers who are often subsumed under the popular but vague term “feminist.”

Anna Babka, for example, shows how these attempts differ significantly,¹ especially between Kristeva, on the one hand and, on the other, Cixous and Irigaray, who both find their own specific ways to define but moreover to *do* what they call “feminine writing.” The former “does not believe in a theory of femininity, but rather in a theory of subversion, of marginal groups, of dissidence [...] which is realized in the new, revolutionary language [...] of avant-garde literature.”²

Kristeva's ideas emanate from the elusiveness of the feminine (and the masculine). She therefore rejects “concepts such as the *écriture féminine* (Cixous) and the *parler femme* (Irigaray)”³ and Elfriede Jelinek's work. Babka proposes the concept of an “allo-écriture (féminine),” which could be defined as a reconceptualization of the former concept that is now characterized by putting the

1 Anna Babka, “Feministische Literaturtheorien,” in *Einführung in die Literaturtheorie*, ed. Martin Sexl (Wien: WUV, 2004), 191–222; see also Anna Babka, “Frauen.Schreiben – Jelinek. Lesen: Aspekte einer allo-écriture (féminine) in Texten Elfriede Jelineks (nach Hélène Cixous, Luce Irigaray und Julia Kristeva),” in *Frauen.Schreiben*, ed. Liu Wei and Julian Müller, Österreichische Literatur in China 2 (Wien: Präsenz, 2014), 15–50.

2 Babka, “Literaturtheorien,” 205. My translation; German original: “Eher als an eine Theorie der Weiblichkeit glaubt Kristeva jedoch an eine Theorie der Subversion, der Randgruppen, der Dissidenz [...], die sich in der neue[n], revolutionäre[n] Zeichenpraxis [...] der Avantgardeliteratur realisiert.”

3 Babka, “Frauen.Schreiben,” 42. My translation; German original: “[...] Konzepte wie die der *écriture féminine* (Cixous) und des *parler femme* (Irigaray) [...]”

term *fémminine* into brackets, or the more radical option of “other” (*allo*), which is nonetheless still closely connected to the concepts of *écriture féminine*. This specific move addresses *écriture féminine*’s tendencies to re-produce or remain within the logic of gender difference and tries instead to deconstruct the feminine/masculine opposition in general.

In the same way, I will question and undermine binary oppositions with respect to Kristeva’s understanding of authorship and gender. However, I will reach these conclusions without further stressing either her explanations regarding “feminine writing” or her concept of “abject,” although the latter can be regarded as close to deconstructive movement of thoughts. Kristeva defines the abject as the opposite of the subject but

not in the sense of an object that presents a counterpart as the other, weaker side of a pair of opposites, an external edge, a constitutive exterior which assures the subject of itself within a “fragile texture of a desire for meaning” but, on the contrary – the abject is radically excluded “and draws me towards the place, where meaning collapses,” disturbs identity, systems and orders, disregards borders, positions, rules. It is the “in-between; the ambiguous; the composite.”⁴

Instead, I would like to write about another famous concept of Kristeva’s, that of intertextuality, to examine it in terms of its impact on the author’s position, before merging it with deconstruction as conceptualized by Paul de Man. His theoretical approach subverts binary oppositions, and thus hierarchies, such as author (especially the concept of the genius, the godlike creator, who of course is masculine)/reader, man/woman, good/evil, before/after, etc.

The way in which the aspect of gender has played or will play a role in my paper⁵ – although only on the margins, virtually as a by-product of the dissolution of binary oppositions in general – is therefore one that opposes the

4 Babka, “Frauen.Schreiben,” 45. My translation; German original: “Dies jedoch nicht in dem Sinne, wie ein Objekt ein Gegenüber darstellt, als die andere Seite des Oppositionspaars, als äußerer Rand, als konstitutives Außen, dass das Subjekt seiner selbst versichert innerhalb einer ‘fragile texture of a desire for meaning,’ sondern, im Gegenteil – das Abjekt ist radikal ausgeschlossen ‘and draws me towards the place where meaning collapses.’ Das Abjekt stört, verstört Identität, Systeme und Ordnungen, es respektiert keine Grenzen, Positionen, Regeln. Es ist das ‘in-between; the ambiguous; the composite.’” Babka quotes from Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1–2, 4.

5 These introductory words seem to precede the text, although they were written *a posteriori*; these introductory words are simultaneously prior and subsequent to the text. Additionally, to subsequently constitute this introduction, the knowledge of its precedence is necessary,

concept of “feminine writing.” Deconstruction does not seek to simply replace one concept by another or to merely reverse the hierarchy within binary oppositions. Instead, the strategy of deconstructive theories – including, for instance, Judith Butler’s gender-theory – is essentially

the strategy of the “double gesture.” [...] The first part of the strategic double is relatively easy to comprehend, since it aims at the reversal (*renversement*) of the binary oppositions. The second part is more difficult but lies in the logical transformation of the first. Now it is essential to question the basis of the opposition. To this end, the distance between the reversed opposition and the arrival of a new concept, which can no longer be included within the borders of the previous constellation, should be highlighted. The objective is to exceed and positively shift (*déplacement positif*) the given framework.⁶

1.2 *Intertextuality and Authorship*

Kristeva first develops her concept of intertextuality – a term which she later replaces “with the term transposition, which has the advantage to generally denote the ‘transition from one character-system to another’”⁷ – in “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” thereby extending Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogical character of a word or statement to the dialogical character of texts in general: “My concept of intertextuality thus goes back to Bakhtin’s dialogism and Barthes’ text theory. At that time, I contributed by replacing Bakhtin’s ideas of several voices inside an utterance with the notion of several texts within a text.”⁸

which is of course already part of my argument; antecedence and subsequence are mutually dependent.

6 Johanna Bossinade, *Poststrukturalistische Literaturtheorie* (Stuttgart and Weimar: Metzler, 2000), 178. My translation; German original: “Es ist die Strategie der ‘doppelten Geste.’ [...] Der erste Teil des strategischen Doppels ist relativ leicht zu fassen, da er auf die Umkehrung (*renversement*) der zweiwertigen Oppositionen zielt. Der zweite Teil ist schwieriger, liegt aber in der logischen Veränderung des ersten. Jetzt kommt es darauf an, die Grundlage der Opposition anzutasten. Hierzu soll der Abstand zwischen der umgedrehten Opposition und der Heraufkunft eines neuen, in den Grenzen der vorigen Konstellation nicht mehr einschließbaren Konzepts markiert werden. Das Ziel ist die Überschreitung und positive Verschiebung (*déplacement positif*) des gegebenen Rahmens.”

7 Frauke Berndt and Lily Tonger-Erk, *Intertextualität: Eine Einführung*, Grundlagen der Germanistik 53 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2013), 40. My translation; German original: “[...] durch den der Transposition ersetzt, der den Vorteil hat, ganz allgemein den ‘Übergang von einem Zeichensystem zu einem anderen’ [...] zu bezeichnen.”

8 Julia Kristeva, “‘Nous deux’ or a (Hi)story of Intertextuality,” *Romanic Review* 93, no. 1–2 (2002): 8.

Thus, a text is always already dialogically polyphonic, “constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double.”⁹

Two points have to be made in connection with this famous quote: First, one has to take into account that Kristeva’s concept of “text” goes far beyond the concept of “text as (written) language,” so that one can even conceive of Kristeva’s model as a “model of a universal intertext,”¹⁰ as Müller-Dannhausen claims. Not only language but all other sign systems presuppose/influence/merge into one another. This, of course, has great impact on the concept of the author and extends it – an extension which makes the concept fragile (or emphasizes its existing fragility more clearly). Secondly, it seems important that the phrase “as at least double” implies that “poetic language” can be not only two-dimensional but even multi-dimensional.

The distinction between poetic and non-poetic language that Kristeva draws, however, suggests that she remains within binary thinking patterns, which theorists of deconstruction avoid, as, for instance, Paul de Man: “Literature as well as criticism – the difference between them being delusive.”¹¹ For him the difference between “literature as the language most explicitly grounded in rhetoric”¹² and criticism is at most a quantitative (and therefore scientifically useless) one. Literature and criticism are necessarily interwoven. Even scientific texts are, like every other text, literary (by virtue of being rhetorically constructed).

But let us return to Kristeva and her concept of intertextuality by considering the misleading term “mosaic.” Shortly before she introduces the term, she locates “poetic analysis at the sensitive centre of contemporary ‘human’ sciences – at the intersection of language (the true practice of thought) with space (the volume within which signification, through a joining of differences articulates itself).”¹³ And almost at the end of her famous article, she goes even

9 Julia Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue and Novel,” in *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 37.

10 Lea Müller-Dannhausen, *Zwischen Pop und Politik: Elfriede Jelineks Intertextuelle Poetik in “wir sind lockvögel baby!”* *Literaturwissenschaft* 24 (Berlin: Frank&Timme, 2011), 14. My translation; German original: “[...] Modell eines universalen Intertextes [...]”

11 Paul de Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric,” in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 19.

12 Paul de Man, “Rhetoric of Tropes (Nietzsche),” in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 109.

13 Kristeva, “Word,” 36.

further, stating that “[i]f there is a model for poetic language, it no longer involves lines or surfaces, but rather, space and infinity – concepts amenable to formalization through set theory and the new mathematics.”¹⁴

The text can thus be described as a space rather than a “mosaic.” The extension of the representation of texts as text-surfaces to potentially relational, ever-changing text-spaces also has an impact on the concept of authorship. The author changes from being an instance preceding and/or transcending the text, an extratextual instance, to a figure within the text-space; he/she turns out to be “nothing more than the *linking* of [...] centers.”¹⁵

Although not becoming entirely meaningless, the author loses his/her outstanding importance *for* the text, as he/she becomes part *of* the text, especially if the definition of text is based on Kristeva’s expanded concept, in which everything is (in the) text or, as Derrida puts it, “there is nothing outside of the text (there is no outside-text [...]).”¹⁶ At the same time, however, he/she retains an extraordinary position as a link between the centers, whereby this “he”/“she,” the author – or, as Kristeva calls him/her, the “writing subject”¹⁷ – is even more thoroughly deconstructed. Furthermore, this position is questioned, insofar as there can be no center (at least no spatial center) in a (potentially) infinite space (albeit one that can be described with transfinite numbers).

The text thus exists in the form of a three-dimensional space, namely, according to Kristeva, as the “writing subject [i.e., the author], [the] addressee and [the] exterior texts.”¹⁸ But not only are the texts already “plural,” but also the subject in Kristeva’s further argumentation does not remain undivided (does not remain an in-dividuum). Rather, the subject a) is at least two-fold (Sr and Sd)¹⁹ and b) does not only coincide with the addressees but first of all exists precisely because of the possibility of coinciding with the addressees.²⁰ The argument that the text is readable as a space (though a very complex

14 Ibid., 58.

15 Ibid., 61, note 18. Emphasis original.

16 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 158.

17 Kristeva, “Word,” 36.

18 Kristeva, “Word,” 36.

19 Sr stands for “subject of enunciation,” Sd for “subject of utterance”; *ibid.*, 57.

20 *Ibid.*, 45: “The writer is thus the subject of narration transformed by his having included himself within the narrative system; he is neither nothingness nor anybody, but the possibility of permutation from S [= subject of narration; author’s note] to A [= addressee; author’s note], from story to discourse and from discourse to story.” See also A. K. M. Adam’s contribution to this volume on psychological exegesis, 186. The theory of the unconscious also assumes a divided self: “The entire field of psychological theory, science, practice and research rests on the premise that we are to a greater or lesser extent strangers to ourselves.”

one) is established by referring to Bakhtin, who introduces the “specific word status.”²¹ “By introducing 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.”²²

Thus, the writer is always also a reader when he/she writes, which “first of all [raises] writing and reading to the same level.” At the same time, the text turns from being a product to being a “productivity (*productivité*)’ [...], which does not depend on a subjectivity,”²³ because the author “is neither nothingness nor anybody, but the possibility of permutation from”²⁴ the author to the reader – and vice versa.

The author, however, not only *is* also a reader, but he/she exists because he/she is created by the reader. Still, the author does not disappear completely in favor of the reader, due to the fact that the reader is just as dependent on the author as the other way around: “I speak and you hear me, therefore we are,” Julia Kristeva quotes Francis Ponge, thus recalling Nietzsche’s writer-wanderer and his shadow. As the shadow is cast by the wanderer and is thus constituted, it likewise posits the wanderer by giving him a voice: “As it is so long since I heard your voice, I would like to give you an opportunity of speaking.”²⁵ As the wanderer speaks, however, he posits himself: “It almost seems as though it were I myself speaking, though in an even weaker voice than mine.”²⁶ What is clearly indicated here is the rhetorical mode of *prosopopeia*,²⁷ as defined by Paul de Man: The author only comes into existence within/through dialogue (through the other to whom he/she responds but whom he/she also creates); the author is created simultaneously with the text but is also dissolved (splintered into many authors, as in Kristeva’s text into Sr and Sd, which are mixed with the readers and the texts). This means that precisely what threatens to deconstruct the author at the same time constructs him/her; the author cannot completely disappear because with him/her the reader and the text would

21 Kristeva, “Word,” 36.

22 Ibid.

23 Berndt and Tonger-Erk, *Intertextualität*, 39. My translation; German original: “[...] zunächst einmal Schreiben und Lesen auf eine Stufe [...]”; “[...] ‘Produktivität (*productivité*)’ [...], die nicht von einer Subjektivität abhängt [...]”

24 Kristeva, “Word,” 45.

25 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human: A Book of Free Spirits*, Cambridge Texts in History and Philosophy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 301.

26 Ibid.

27 Cf. also Oda Wischmeyers’s use of *prosopopeia*, in this volume, 35, as the authorial technique of speaking as another person (derived from Greek *prósopon*, “face,” “person” and *poíein*, “to make”).

disappear – and thus the basis of his/her disappearances *and* of his/her being. Author, reader and text are indissolubly linked:

The writer's interlocutor, then, is the writer himself, but as reader of another text. The one who writes is the same as the one who reads. Since his interlocutor is a text, he himself is no more than a text re-reading itself as it rewrites itself. The dialogical structure, therefore, appears only in the light of the text elaborating itself as ambivalent in relation to another text.²⁸

The author is “multipliiert”²⁹ (multiplied), to cite Bärbel Lücke, who coined this concept – a neologism merging the word *multiplied* with Derrida's *pli* – with regard to the writings of Elfriede Jelinek. The author is writer, reader, interlocutor and text (and is none of them); he is neither author nor non-author (in the sense of a creative, independent authority). Author, reader and text, understood as a form of text-space, as intertext (and thus its authors, readers and texts as text-spaces, as intertexts, not only ad infinitum but transfinite, beyond finite), become indistinguishable. At stake is not the abolition of the concepts of author-reader-text but the abolition of the separability of those concepts, a theoretical trait in which Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, interpreted and modified by Kristeva, becomes visible – a notion of dialogism that, although owing

much to Hegel, must not be confused with Hegelian dialectics, based on a triad and thus on struggle and projection (a movement of transcendence), which does not transgress the Aristotelian tradition founded on substance and causality. Dialogism replaces these concepts by absorbing them within the concept of relation. It does not strive towards transcendence but rather toward harmony, all the while implying an idea of rupture (of opposition and analogy) as a modality of transformation.³⁰

28 Kristeva, “Word,” 56–57.

29 Bärbel Lücke, “Elfriede Jelineks Ästhetische Verfahren und das Theater der Dekonstruktion: Von ‘Bambiland/Babel’ über ‘Parsifal (Laß o Welt o Schreck laß nach)’ (für Christoph Schlingensiefel’s ‘Area 7’) zum Königinnendrama ‘Ulrike Maria Stuart,’” in *Elfriede Jelinek: “ICH WILL KEIN THEATER”: Mediale Überschreitungen*, ed. Pia Janke et al., DISKURSE. KONTEXTE.IMPULSE: Publikationen des Elfriede-Jelinek-Forschungszentrums 3 (Wien: Praesens, 2007), 62.

30 Kristeva, “Word,” 58.

The logic operating within the system of binary oppositions, the “logic of codified discourse”³¹ “based on the 0–1 interval,”³² is exceeded not least because every word – and thus every text – subverts it. Kristeva attributes dialogism to poetic language,³³ in the same way that she generally attempts to separate science and poetry, polyphonic and monologic novels, etc. This very approach turns out to be one of the most outstanding differences between her theoretical understanding of this matter and that of de Man or Derrida.

Closely interwoven with the notion of dialogue (and not clearly distinguishable from it)³⁴ is Bakhtin’s term “ambivalence,” which Kristeva also adopts. The fact that oppositions cannot be clearly separated from each other, that the “double structures [are] overlapping,”³⁵ that dyads (binary oppositions) become describable and negotiable, “in the sense [...] of *one and other*”³⁶ and not in the logic of “either/or,” holds a deeply political potential: “Disputing the laws of language based on the 0–1 interval, the carnival challenges god, authority and social law; in so far as it is dialogical, it is rebellious.”³⁷ By subverting the prevailing logic (which actually is the logic of the dominating discursive regime) by replacing³⁸ it by the logic of dialogism – which is firstly “the logic of distance and relationship between the different units of a sentence or narrative structure, indicating a becoming,” secondly “a logic of analogy and non-exclusive opposition, opposed to monologic levels of causality and identifying

31 Ibid., 36.

32 Ibid., 49.

33 See inter alia *ibid.*, 58: “[I]f there is a model for *poetic* language, it no longer involves lines or surfaces, but rather, space and infinity – concepts amenable to formalization through set theory and the new mathematics.” Emphasis added.

34 Ibid., 37: “In Bakhtin’s work, these two axes, which he calls dialogue and ambivalence, are not clearly distinguished. Yet, what appears as a lack of rigour is in fact an insight first introduced into literary theory by Bakhtin [...]”

35 Ibid., 39.

36 Ibid., 40.

37 Ibid., 49.

38 Whether the logic of 0–1 can actually be replaced by the logic of dialogism remains questionable, although Kristeva is quite optimistic: “The path charted between the two poles of dialogue radically abolishes problems of causality, finality, etc., from our philosophical arena. It suggests the importance of the dialogical principle for a space of thought much larger than that of the novel. More than binarism, dialogism may well become the basis of our time’s intellectual structure. The predominance of the novel and other ambivalent literary structures; the communal, carnivalesque phenomena attracting young people; quantum exchanges; and current interest in the correlational symbolism of Chinese philosophy – to cite only a few striking elements of modern thought – all confirm this hypothesis.” However, it is acknowledged that “one of the fundamental problems facing contemporary semiotics is precisely to describe this ‘other logic’ without denaturing it” (*ibid.*, 59).

determination,” and finally “a logic of the ‘transfinite’”³⁹ – the notion of the (usually masculine) godlike author preceding the text (and thus the reader) is brought under question. This may cause quite awkward feelings in the readers, who are accustomed to “apostrophize” the author in order to ultimately understand what his/her text “actually means”; the discomfort is increased for those exegetes who believe that this author is actually God himself/herself.

2 Julia Kristeva and Paul de Man

It is not by accident that I choose the term “apostrophize” in reference to Paul de Man, which is, so to say, an intertextual anachronism, since Paul de Man’s text changes Kristeva’s text although it was written later. This intertextual anachronism is the result of Peter Clar’s interpretation, appearing after both of these texts and in some sense created out of Kristeva’s text (which already embraces and broadens Bakhtin’s idea of dialogism), and which is also influenced by Frauke Berndt and Lily Tonger-Erk’s interpretation of Kristeva’s approach. According to Berndt and Tonger-Erk, Kristeva’s theoretical approach “allows productive readings of literary texts, which not only include earlier, but also later texts [...]”⁴⁰ just as Bakhtin already opens the “dialogical word not only for earlier words, but also for future answers.”⁴¹ To “apostrophize” the opposite, following Paul de Man, is not simply to question or address it. Apostrophizing the opposite and thereby giving it a voice means creating the opposite and at the same time creating oneself. To describe this phenomenon theoretically, de Man uses the rhetorical figure *prosopopeia*, which, as he claims, is “the trope of autobiography.”⁴² De Man’s definition of *prosopopeia* is a decisive basis for my own reflections about the author, as I have shown already in “*Ich bleibe, aber weg*: Dekonstruktion der AutorInnenfigur(en) bei Elfriede Jelinek*.”⁴³ Coming

39 Ibid., 43.

40 Berndt and Tonger-Erk, *Intertextualität*, 48. My translation; German original: “[...] produktive Lektüren von literarischen Texten, die nicht nur frühere, sondern auch spätere Texte [...] einbeziehen [...]”

41 Ibid., 33. My translation; German original: “[...] dialogische Wort eben nicht nur auf frühere Wörter, sondern auch auf zukünftige Antworten hin geöffnet [...]”

42 Paul de Man, “Autobiography as De-Facement,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 76.

43 Peter Clar, “*Ich bleibe, aber weg*: Dekonstruktion der AutorInnenfigur(en) bei Elfriede Jelinek* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2017).”

On Paul de Man’s definition of *prosopopeia*, see inter alia: Anna Babka, *Unterbrochen: Gender und die Tropen der Autobiographie*, Passagen Literaturtheorie (Wien: Passagen, 2002); Bettine Menke, “De Mans ‘Prosopopöie’ der Lektüre: Die Entleerung des

towards the end of my remarks, allow me to take a quick look at Paul de Man's reflections on authorship, without losing sight of Kristeva, whose theory of intertextuality overlaps at some points with the ideas of deconstruction. The parallels range from the decentralization of the subject, the merging of author and reader (the "process of reading-writing"⁴⁴) and the extension of the concept of "text" to the conception of language as a character-system which is always already divided and ambivalent – an ambivalence which provides subversive (and creative) potential. Nevertheless, deconstructive reading strategies and Kristeva's ideas do at points also differ, although it seems that some of those differences can be traced back not to the approaches themselves but to the consequences drawn from those approaches.

2.1 *Paul de Man's Concept of Authorship*

In "Rhetoric of Blindness," Paul de Man describes three main ways in which modern literary scholarship answers the question of the characteristics of literary language. One answer, according to de Man, introduces the category of "temporality," another the category of "form," and the third is based on "a perspective [...] centered in a self, in the subjectivity of the author or of the author-reader relationship."⁴⁵ This last category states the fragmentation, duplication, problematization and disappearance of the "I,"⁴⁶ as can be seen in the texts of Maurice Blanchot and Georges Poulet:

Monuments," in *Ästhetik und Rhetorik: Lektüren zu Paul de Man*, ed. Karl Heinz Bohrer, Aesthetica (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), 34–78; Bettine Menke, "Memnon's Bild: Stimme aus dem Dunkel," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 68 (1994), 125–144; Bettine Menke, *Prosopopöia: Stimme und Text bei Brentano, Hoffmann, Kleist und Kafka* (München: Fink, 2000).

44 Kristeva, "Word," 36.

45 Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida's Reading of Rousseau," in *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism*, Theory and History of Literature 7 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 105.

46 Most of the important theories of the twentieth century dealing with the concept of authorship either assume that the (author-) subject is split and/or introduce various authors. Wayne C. Booth, e.g., distinguishes between the real author, the implicit author and the fictive narrator; Boris Tomaševsky distinguishes not only the author with and without biography but also differentiates between cultural-historical and literary-scientific research; and Michel Foucault splits the author into four different functions. Even Sigmund Freud, whose concept of authorship is still strongly connected with the poet as a person, differentiates "part-egos" into which "a modern writer split[s] up his ego by self-observation" (Sigmund Freud, "Creative Writers and Daydreams," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), 9: 150.

For excerpts from all of the aforementioned texts, with short introductions (in German), see Fotis Jannidis et al., eds., *Texte zur Theorie der Autorschaft* (Stuttgart:

Whereas it seems impossible to assert the presence of a self without in fact recording its absence, the thematic assertion of this absence reintroduces a form of selfhood, albeit in the highly reductive and specialized form of a self-reading. And if the act of reading, potential or actual, is indeed a constitutive part of literary language, then it presupposes a confrontation between a text and another entity that seems to exist prior to the elaboration of a subsequent text and that, for all its impersonality and anonymity, still tends to be designated by metaphors derived from selfhood. [...] It turns out, however, that what is here claimed to be an origin always depends on the prior existence of an entity that lies beyond reach of the self, though not beyond the reach of a language that destroys the possibility of origin.⁴⁷

De Man points out that Blanchot's and Poulet's texts are establishing an entity that precedes the texts. This entity, which is strictly literary but capable of producing space and time, is not "always-already-existing." On the contrary, it is one which has to come into existence and has to be described, "for all its impersonality and anonymity," by means of "metaphors derived from selfhood," metaphors such as "author." The entity preceding the text is an empty space, a space which is filled by all those who are dealing with the text, the readers as well as the author, namely, the author-reader – the author who is, as Kristeva put it, his/her own "interlocutor." Thus, this "author," who seems to be metaphysically related to the text (but at the same time depends on another entity that is "beyond reach of the self, though not beyond the reach of a language"), is a literary, constructed figure. This "author-figure" is constructed because the recipient creates a description intended to break "impersonality and anonymity," a description which of course is dependent upon language, a language that "destroys the possibility of an origin." The author is created by language (in the broadest sense), which itself originates in the author (but the possibility of the origin is destroyed). In order to save itself, to make sure "that it really is language after all,"⁴⁸ language must seek a consciousness outside of itself, an outside that can only be found, however, by means of language and thus never outside of it – an unsolvable paradox.

Reclam, 2000). For English translations see Seán Burke, ed., *Authorship: From Plato to the Postmodern: A Reader* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995).

47 de Man, "Rhetoric of Blindness," 105.

48 Werner Hamacher, "Lectio: De Mans Imperativ," in *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1996), 186.

Paul de Man continues: “Poulet’s belief in the power of an original *cogito*” and “Blanchot’s claim of meta-Mallarméan impersonality [... are] defeated by their own critical results.”⁴⁹ It is above all Derrida who questions these “metaphors derived from selfhood,” with which the entity preceding the text is described as breaking its anonymity. Based on Derrida’s reading of Rousseau, de Man shows that Derrida aims to discredit the

absolute value [from presence and absence, here referring to the author; author’s note] as a base for metaphysical insight [...]. Terms such as “passive,” “conscious,” “deliberate,” etc., all of which postulate a notion of the self as self-presence, turn out to be equally relevant or irrelevant when used on either side of the differential scale. [...] The key to the status of Rousseau’s language is not to be found in his consciousness, in his greater or lesser awareness or control over the cognitive value of his language. It can only be found in the knowledge that this language, as language, conveys about itself, thereby asserting the priority of the category of language over that of presence [...].⁵⁰

It is language (thus the text) itself that communicates knowledge about itself; it is language (thus the text), which already contains its own deconstruction.⁵¹ If, however, language is prioritized over presence, as it at least “asserts”, does this mean that the discussion about the author is obsolete? No, because at the same time as the author is posited by language, language is dependent on the author in the same way. It is not about erasing the category of the author simply because the author can never be completely erased without causing the reason for his disappearance (the text/the language/the reader) also to disappear – again a parallel to Kristeva. The author remains present, however, “at the expense of literal truth.”⁵² As a side note, and despite all critique regarding the search for the “intention” of the author (“[T]he only irreducible, ‘intention’ of a text is that of its constitution”⁵³), de Man is not denying the existence of intention but instead shows that the question of the author’s intention remains

49 de Man, “Rhetoric of Blindness,” 106.

50 *Ibid.*, 118–119.

51 Exactly this “dimension of critical knowledge of their own constitution,” which literary texts contain *necessarily*, is the reason why “literary scholarship” exists in the first place (Hamacher, “Lectio,” 182).

52 de Man, “Rhetoric of Tropes,” 112.

53 Paul de Man, “Reading (Proust),” in *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke and Proust* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1979), 65.

unanswerable.⁵⁴ For even though there is no word or sign which does not forfeit “its strict semantic intention at the instant it is posited and exposed to the possibility of being understood,” the possibility that a text (word/sign) tells the truth can never be ruled out, simply because “the contention, that the utterance, once liberated from all referential relations, is a free play of signifiers, would itself necessarily be referential.” Therefore, one could claim that something like truth, like intention, etc., does exist. One can never fix it, however, since all those aspects that would suggest that the assertion of its opposite, of pure subjectivity, of the text “as the will to itself,”⁵⁵ etc., do indeed exist would only exist as already fragmented.

2.2 *Julia Kristeva und Paul de Man*

De Man's disapproval of autobiographical readings is clearer than his criticism of the question of intention. Referring to autobiographical interpretations of Heinrich von Kleist's *Der Zerbrochene Krug*, he states ironically:

But he may just as well have selected this date at random, as he wrote city of M-----, like Mainz, although he was to go to Mainz only in 1803. Who is to say that this notation is random while the other isn't? Who can tell what terrible secrets may be hidden behind this harmless looking letter M? Kleist himself is probably the one least able to tell us and, if he did, we would be well-advised not to take his word for it. To decide whether or not Kleist knew his text to be autobiographical or pure fiction is like deciding whether or not Kleist's destiny, as a person and as a writer, was sealed by the fact that a certain doctor of philosophy happened to bear the ridiculous name of Krug.⁵⁶

Consequently, Paul de Man not only critically revises the concept of “autobiography,” but encodes it and defines the term – radically diverging from common definitions – as “a figure of reading or of understanding that occurs, to some degree, in all texts.”⁵⁷ However, like Paul de Man's radical deconstruction of autobiographical reading, many aspects of the theories of authorship from

54 See A. K. M. Adam's statement about authorial intention, in this volume, 204: “[....] It is often opaque even to the author-agent, and how much more to a critical observer relatively distant from the agent-author!”

55 Hamacher, “Lectio,” 196.

56 Paul de Man, “Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater*,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 284.

57 de Man, “Autobiography,” 70.

both him and Julia Kristeva cannot be further discussed here. And yet, in view of the few aspects that I have tried to elucidate, it becomes evident that both theoretical conceptions (both “text-spaces”) are similar in many respects, especially in their political implications.

The assumption of the posited author, as outlined above, deeply affects the traditional oppositions of author/reader or author/text. However, this assumption does not simply reverse these oppositions, since the assumption can never be fully implemented (because the reader/text is as dependent on the author as vice versa). The concept of binary oppositions itself is shaken, thus subverting all binary-structured (and therefore hierarchical) categories, whether temporal (before/after), political (master/servant), gender (man/woman) or religious (god/creation).

The main difference between Kristeva and de Man is – simply put – that Kristeva still seems to believe in the possibility of logic in/through language since, as she argues, the carnivalesque “frees speech from historical constraints.”⁵⁸ Paul de Man, on the other hand, like Derrida, denies the possibility of this freedom. Johanna Bossinade’s notion – that Judith Butler “by using the theorem of the performance, shook the claim to an original position of identity,” “while Kristeva leaves no doubt that every new design is intended to claim an original, meaningful, albeit always vulnerable, position of identity”⁵⁹ – can be applied to the difference between de Man and Kristeva in a similar way. Both “models”⁶⁰ use the already existing ambivalent structure of language to undermine every construction of identity and in particular the construction of the author. But the consequence – the radicalism that characterizes deconstruction, which claims that meaning is never more than momentarily valid – exceeds, in my view, the concept of intertextuality developed by Kristeva. Either way, both approaches can facilitate scrutiny of perceived structures, structures that are hierarchical, violent and ultimately to be rejected.

58 Kristeva, “Word,” 52.

59 Bossinade, *Literaturtheorie*, 100. My translation; German original: “[...] mit Hilfe des Theorems der Performanz den Anspruch auf eine originale Identitätsposition zu erschüttern gesucht,” “während Kristeva keinen Zweifel daran [lässt], dass jeder neue Entwurf doch wieder auf eine, wenngleich stets angreifbare, sinnhafte Setzung hinausläuft.”

60 At various times, Derrida denies calling deconstruction a method or model; see, e.g., Jacques Derrida, “Letter to a Japanese Friend,” in *Derrida and Différance*, ed. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood, *Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy* (Warwick: Parousia Press, 1985), 1–5.

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