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### Explication Paper

Post-structuralism is a literary theory that emerged within the 1960s that rejects structuralist beliefs. Due to this, post-structuralist critics believe that the meaning of a text is derived from the reader, and personal comprehension of experiences that occur in society. *The Death of The Author* by Roland Barthes, illustrates the idea that the meaning of a text is not predetermined but instead is created through the reading done by the audience. Barthes explains how a text's meaning has already been predetermined and should not be sought from the author. This is because literary work is not original but instead is a criticism of other works. It should, however, be taken as the literal sense of the text. However, this does not coincide with readers being able to do as they please with a text. Alternatively readers are able to develop the reading into a concept that better associates with the society in which they are a part of as explained by post-structuralism.

Barthes emphasized how writing is only given definition when acted upon by the reader. This is because through the action of reading, it is the only time that words are given significance; the author is not the end all be all of a text. In addition to this a text is not a secular creation, instead it is malleable by the reader along with the society of which the work belongs to. Emphasis of Barthes belief is throughout the essay and how literary works are not original. Instead, a work is a critique on others' work and a reader constantly adds meaning to a piece. This is because words hold a stagnant definition and an author's explanation of their work can

only be so fluid. However, oftentimes there is no hidden meaning to a text that an author created. By removing the author from a text, readers are given creative freedom for interpretation. Likewise, by removing expectations from the creator it also withdraws the divine responsibility that is given to them. This is because oftentimes what an author has written is the literal definition of their work.

This isn't to say that an author's creativity is not limited to outside sources, however, the meaning of their work is limited to the words defined by the author. Therefore, any future definition that leads to literary transcendence is created by the reader. As post-structuralism removes the mystery of a text and belief that authors have hidden meanings to their work, a reversal occurs; "We know that to restore to writing its future, we must reverse its myth: the birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the author" (Barthes 6). When the need to decipher the myth of the author, the rise of the reader begins because the need for the origin of a text is eliminated. Additionally, the reader becomes the embodiment of new interpretation to a text; "The reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted" (Barthes 6). A text passes through the mind of the reader and regroups as their definition and creativity. For that reason, a reader is the element that motions to the beginning of multiple interpretations because within post-structuralism, there is no concrete definition, due to the theory of no centralized structure.

Written text is not a linear concept. Instead, it is a thought with many meanings that is created by a person in opposition to beliefs from someone that came before them. However, readers view the author as a creator despite the understanding that words are not structuralized and do not hold a concise meaning; "We know that a text does not consist of a line of words,

releasing a single “theological” meaning (the “message” of the Author-God), but is a space of many dimensions” (Barthes 4). No piece of writing is truly original. Within post-structuralism it is, however, something that was created from the observation of others and its critique.

Furthermore, it is a creation of likelihood from opposition that is then further interpreted by the audience. Additionally, further supported with the thought that the imagination of the author being stunted. Therefore, in relation to post-structuralism portions of other writings are taken for inspiration and then deconstructed by other authors. Additionally, leading to the creation of an author being limited to this, “The writer can only imitate a gesture forever anterior, never original; his only power is to combine the different kinds of writing, to oppose some by others” (Barthes 4). The original thought of an author does end eventually, further supporting the idea of readers being the new route for creativity. In support of post-structuralism, an author has an agenda within their work as a critic for those who came before them. On the other hand, however, the reader is one in which there is no opposition to a work.

Moving forward, these quotes support the meaning from the prior paragraph due to the discussion of the position of the author. In addition to the previous supporting paragraph, the idea of definition being with the reader is further supported on page six; “The unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal.” The referral to the destination no longer being personal supports the literary theory of post-structuralism. For example, when readers rebirth an author’s work they are adding meaning to the text because of the time period in which they are living. This highly supports the philosophical outlook of post-structuralism, that all that is done towards a piece of literature is because of the influence society has had on the reader. The meaning within the text has no true reality, instead it is a connection constructed from a contrast within a work. Such as the contrast between an author

and reader. Both are similar and different in like ways, both being dependent on the creativity of each other while one objectively grasps onto the definition of the other. However, only one is seen as truthful because they can further explain their reasoning, this being the reader, and the author being viewed as factual because they are the creator of the work.

By being asked to only view the text as such and nothing more through the post-structuralist lens then critiques previous forms of analysis. Additionally, it leads to the acknowledgement that an author has no more knowledge of a work than a reader; they are both equal to an extent. This is different from other forms of analysis because post-structuralism is meant to enforce that all is relative within literature. Also, post-structuralism is the work that all is permitted, that in order to understand a work everything prior to it must be removed. It is no longer the study of linguistics behind the language of a work, hence, it has become a cultural based movement. One that relies on the society and century of which a work is introduced. Therefore, all within a work is a question presented by the audience and then answered not through the author but through the philosophical beliefs of the readers.

Post-structuralism is the deconstruction of previous literary works with original rendering. The deconstruction of a work begins by removing the author, this allows the reader to create their own interpretation of a text. Additionally, the removal of responsibility to the author supports for the text to stand on its own. Therefore, exceeding the society of which it was developed within and being able to continue gathering meaning. Acknowledging that an author is not the definitive factor of a work also creates a connection between a reader and the concept of deconstruction. As deconstruction became the centralized idea of post-structuralism the need for the author dissipated as the philosophical perception of literature further developed. Barthes centralized this idea by collecting the key points of literature and explaining its removal.

