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SPECIAL ISSUE ON ROLAND BARTHES

GUEST EDITORS
Betty R. McGraw-Steven Ungar

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Abstract. This article traces the metaphor of the body through all of Barthes's works in order to clarify a further view of Barthes as writer, critic, and reader. Though it is only disclosed in his autobiography as the «manaword» of his vocabulary, it appears as early as *Writing Degree Zero* in a discussion of 'style' as the literary element that Barthes cannot easily describe or define.

The indescribability of style will later be located in such notions as the writerly text, the text of bliss, the unsayable, the disreal. It is the body, the flesh, the idiosyncratic which hides within these categories which elude Barthes, the systematizer of the early structuralist years. Yet in his later works this unnameable aspect of literariness and narrative structure becomes the locus of fascination for Barthes as reader. Through the work of language the Imaginary still speaks, but resists translation into easily serviceable theoretical fictions.

In *The Lover's Discourse* the morality of Barthes's entire project of reading and criticizing narrative is transformed into a desire not to seize at meaning, interpretation or translation. It is through a discussion of the three gardens of his childhood home that one can recreate the itinerary of Barthes slowly passing from easily formalized structures to those that increasingly resist formalism, and his own pleasure in letting go of the wish to read form into that which may not be tamed. (FB)

A Message Without a Code?

Tom Conley 147

Abstract. The photographic paradox is said to be that of a message without a code, a communication lacking a relay or gap essential to the process of communication. Tracing the recurrence of Barthes's definition in the essays included in *Image/Music/Text* and in *La Chambre claire*, this paper argues that Barthes's definition is platonic in its will to dematerialize the troubling — graphic — immediacy of the photograph. He writes of the image in order to flee its signature. As a function of media, his categories are written in order to be insufficient and inadequate; to maintain an ineluctable difference between language heard and letters seen; to protect an idiom of loss which the photograph disallows. The article studies the strategies of his definition in «The Photographic Paradox» as instrument of abstraction, opposes the notion of code, in an aural sense, to audio-visual markers of closed relay in advertising, and critiques the layout and order of *La Chambre claire* in respect to Barthes's ideology of absence. (TC)

Barthes's Imaginary Voyages

Lynn A. Higgins 157

Abstract. Reading *L'Empire des signes* and *Alors la Chine* as points of departure, the article explores a network of reciprocal images of the text as voyage and the voyage as text. with Barthes as a self-styled, disinherited ethnographer/traveler. (LH)

Narrative Finality

Armine Kotin Mortiner 175

Abstract. The clotal device of narration as salvation represents the lack of finality in three novels. In De Beauvoir's *Tous les hommes sont mortels* an immortal character turns his story to account, but the novel makes a mockery of the historical sense by which men define themselves. In the closing pages of Butor's *La Modification*, the hero plans to write a book to save himself. Through the thrice-considered portrayal of the Paris-Rome relationship, the ending shows the reader how to bring about closure, but this collective critique written by readers will always be a future book. Simon's *La Bataille de Pharsale*, the most radical attempt to destroy finality, is an infinite text. No new text can be written. This extreme of perversion guarantees bliss

(jouissance). If the ending of De Beauvoir's novel transfers the burden of non-final world onto a new victim, Butor's non-finality lies in the deferral to a future writing, while Simon's writer is stuck in a writing loop, in which writing has become its own end and hence can have no end. The deconstructive and tragic form of contemporary novels proclaims the loss of belief in a finality inherent in the written text, to the profit of writing itself. (AK)

Roland Barthes: Recollections in Gratitude

Leon S. Roudiez 197

Abstract. An informal homage in which I recall personal and professional encounters with Roland Barthes and his texts over a period of some twenty-five years, during which I developed increasing respect for the man and interest in his critical practice. (LR)

Sensationalism

Jean-Jacques Thomas 205

Abstract. Roland Barthes's fascination with discourse is usually considered a glorification of intellectual exchanges, the parade of a virtuoso eager to display his unalloyed dedication to logocentrism. As a consequence, scholars tend to rely on his writings as if they were principally a catalogue for the functional concepts of modernity.

The purpose of this article is to show through a close reading of Barthes's latter-day texts that his exhilarating verbal *brio* is first and foremost a sensuous relationship between the speaking subject and the verbal substance. In his case, this particular relationship generates a discourse akin to physical heroism, thanks to which the subject is able to postpone the debilitating irruption of «intractable reality.» Barthes, as writing subject, transforms what is a mere tool of communication and argumentation into an overwhelming sensuous machine producing a symbolic make-believe, which, in turn, makes him «more and better alive.» (JJT)

Barthes's Body of Knowledge

Gregory L. Ulmer 219

Abstract. Roland Barthes invites a reading of his own texts in terms of the same methodologies he employs in his criticism. The «Biographeme»—those

few details, preferences, inflections—which Barthes identified in his favorite authors, may be sought in Barthes as well. Barthes's biographeme, for me, consists of a glutinous effect associated with the organs of the mouth and throat as presented in several images, some of which belong to his tutor texts (Poe and Rêquichot). An analysis of this biographeme reveals Barthes's strategy for disseminating the subject of knowledge—the author's fantasmatic body—through the signifiers of writing, fusing the heterogeneous singularities of the knower and the object of study. The metaphorical discourse that results opposes normal academic preoccupations in favor of knowledge of/as desire.

Knowledge itself in Barthes becomes a second order signifier caught up in a catachretic process for naming the real. Barthes's procedure for exploring the real affectively, in terms of the body as it is defined in psychoanalysis, imposes on the reader a similar obligation to bring his or her own body into play in the learning experience. Barthes offers a model for a new genre of academic writing, combining science with autobiography, that has important implications for teaching and research in the humanities and social sciences. (GU)

A Musical Note

Steven Ungar 237

Abstract. Frequent references to musical terms in Barthes's writings since 1970 suggest a progression beyond a standard semiological inquiry. A text on the «grain» of the voice, another on *musica practica*, and a third on Romantic song develop a model of figuration Barthes explores actively in the *Fragments d'un discours amoureux (A Lover's Discourse)* and *La Chambre claire*. (SU)