



# The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978-1979 and 1979-1980) (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought & Cultural Criticism (Paperback))

By Roland Barthes

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**The Preparation of the Novel: Lecture Courses and Seminars at the Collège de France (1978-1979 and 1979-1980) (European Perspectives: A Series in Social Thought & Cultural Criticism (Paperback))** By Roland Barthes

Completed just weeks before his death, the lectures in this volume mark a critical juncture in the career of Roland Barthes, in which he declared the intention, deeply felt, to write a novel. Unfolding over the course of two years, Barthes engaged in a unique pedagogical experiment: he combined teaching and writing to "simulate" the trial of novel-writing, exploring every step of the creative process along the way.

Barthes's lectures move from the desire to write to the actual decision making, planning, and material act of producing a novel. He meets the difficulty of transitioning from short, concise notations (exemplified by his favorite literary form, haiku) to longer, uninterrupted flows of narrative, and he encounters a number of setbacks. Barthes takes solace in a diverse group of writers, including Dante, whose *La Vita Nuova* was similarly inspired by the death of a loved one, and he turns to classical philosophy, Taoism, and the works of François-René Chateaubriand, Gustave Flaubert, Franz Kafka, and Marcel Proust.

This book uniquely includes eight elliptical plans for Barthes's unwritten novel, which he titled *Vita Nova*, and lecture notes that sketch the critic's views on photography. Following on *The Neutral: Lecture Course at the Collège de France (1977-1978)* and a third forthcoming collection of Barthes lectures, this volume provides an intensely personal account of the labor and love of writing.

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## **Editorial Review**

Review

(I)ntriguingly eclectic. It is fascinating to see this formidable, malleable intellect applied to such a wide range of topics, and with more spontaneity than is evident in most of Barthes' publications. *The Prague Post*

*(The Prague Post)*

*The Preparation of the Novel* will generate some *jouissance* indeed.

*(Spencer Dew Rain Taxi)*

The reader is afforded a genuine look behind the enigmatic curtain of Barthes' writings; here the physical, spacial, vocal Roland Barthes is arrested - captured - for all to experience.

*(Nicholas P. Greco, Providence University College, Otterburne Philosophy In Review)*

Review

Roland Barthes repeatedly compared teaching to play, reading to eros, writing to seduction. His voice became more and more personal, more full of grain, as he called it; his intellectual art more openly a performance, like that of the other great anti-systematizers.... All of Barthes's work is an exploration of the histrionic or lucidic; in many ingenious modes, a plea for savor, for a festive (rather than dogmatic or credulous) relation to ideas. For Barthes, the point is to make us bold, agile, subtle, intelligent, detached. And to give pleasure.

*(Susan Sontag)*

About the Author

Roland Barthes (1915-1980) was one of the most influential critics and philosophers of the twentieth century. His works include *The Neutral*, *Mythologies*, *S/Z*, *A Lover's Discourse*, and *Camera Lucida*.

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