



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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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

(Intriguingly 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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