Call for Papers: “Loving Roland Barthes”
October 14-16, 2027

> Loving [Barthes], doing so in a certain fashion *against* the age [. . .], can only be a responsible way of living: it inevitably leads the subject who does so and says so to posit himself in his time according to the injunctions of his desire and not according to those of his sociality.
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> —Roland Barthes, “Loving Schumann”

Proposals for panels and papers are invited for an interdisciplinary conference entitled “Loving Roland Barthes: Celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Publication of *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*.” This conference will be hosted by Becky McLaughlin (South Alabama) and Eric Daffron (Ramapo College), and held in downtown Mobile, city of the oldest Mardi Gras in the U.S. As conference organizers, we envision a relatively concentrated event in which scholars working in various disciplines and artists working in various genres will present new ideas about Roland Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, and Barthes’s adjacent texts.

This conference celebrates a peculiar form of love: an amorousness that compels the one faithful to “the specialty of [one’s] desire” (*Lover’s Discourse* 20) to return again and again to *Fragments d’un discours amoureux.* Published in 1977 and translated a year later by Richard Howard as *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*, Roland Barthes’s tortured love song retains a strong attachment for scholars and artists alike. We might be tempted to call those strange lovers “amateurs.” For, as Barthes reminded us, the word derives from “*amator*: one who loves and loves again” (*Roland Barthes* 52). Across the last five decades, the book has inspired not only articles and artwork but also autotheory, “an emergent discourse with historical precedents” (McLaughlin et al., *Autotheory and Its Others* 15). Often recognizable by its copious citations, autotheoretical practice pays homage to *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments* as one way of loving Barthes. Yet there is no limit to the modes of loving Barthes. For some, it might be collage, an assemblage of the very fragments that Barthes favored. For others, it might be singing a song (such as Annie Lennox’s “No More ‘I Love You’s’”) or writing notations (one of Barthes’s preferred activities). For still others, it might be searching for “a *little corner of sloth*,” “twiddl[ing one’s] wound,” or accepting “[t]he lover’s fatal identity [. . .]: *I am the one who waits*” (*Lover’s Discourse* 64, 161, 40).

Whatever one’s manner of loving Barthes, this conference invites scholars and artists to a celebration of *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*. Contributions can take the form of traditional papers as well as of visual art, short film, skits, songs, and other Barthesian types of work or play. Possible topics include but are not limited to the following:

- Figures and images in *A Lover’s Discourse: Fragments*;
- Fragments and citations;
- “[C]ontrolled accident” (“An Almost Obsessive Relation to Writing Instruments” 182) and the text’s other structural and organizational features;
- Barthes’s use of Goethe’s *Werther*;
- “[T]he history of tears,” “a scenography of waiting,” and other extrapolations from the text (180, 37);
- Relationships between this text and other works by Barthes, especially from the 1970s;
- Barthes’s (post)structuralist discussions of substitution, replication, and supplement;

- Translation and differences between the French and English versions of the text;
- Autotheory and other experimental, creative-critical practices inspired by Barthes;
- (Loving) parodies of *A Lover's Discourse*;
- Anachronism in *A Lover's Discourse* both at the point of publication and now.

As much as we trust that this conference will generate exciting new art and scholarship, we also hope to foster a substantial exchange of ideas and perspectives among all participants as well as personal interaction among scheduled presentations. Therefore, conference panels will be scheduled sequentially rather than concurrently so that all participants will be able to attend all panels, and we strongly encourage participants to stay for the duration of the conference. We believe that much good work will come from the conference, and we hope to assemble a collection of that work in the months following the conference in order to share it with the widest possible audience. Kicking off the conference will be a keynote address by Tufts professor John Lurz, author of *The Barthes Fantastic: Literature, Criticism, and the Practice of Language*.

Please submit proposals of 350-500 words by email to Becky McLaughlin (email address: bmclaugh@southalabama.edu) and Eric Daffron (email address: edaffron@ramapo.edu) or by snail mail to Becky McLaughlin, Department of English, HUMB 240, University of South Alabama, Mobile, AL 36688. Due date: January 15, 2027.