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Brunton: My Life as Roland Barthes: Nuit/Night

MY LIFE AS ROLAND BARTHES: *NUIT/NIGHT*

Jaime Brunton

Barthes types his lecture notes. He is concerned that his students do not see any social function in their work. Yet they continue to present poems to workshop (a captive audience). This vanity is beginning to trouble, even depress him. *The text you write must prove that it desires me.* He says this to the cat, who blinks its narrowed eyes twice, stands up, and walks out of the room. This gesture breaks his concentration, and he begins lightly pressing the typewriter keys two at a time, as if playing a piano. It's cold in the apartment tonight. Flannel pajama weather, he's decided. The radiator steams oddly in the corner. All evening, this noise has unsettled the cat. Now it unsettles him, so he gets up from his desk, puts on a Smiths record, and goes to make tea. His mother has not called in over a week. Though not unusual, it remains disappointing. Across the alley he can see into the neighbors' kitchen window. Someone is often at the sink when he is at his. Sometimes the teenaged son does the dishes. But tonight is a school night and the house is dark. From the living room, Morrissey sings "I wear black on the outside 'cause black is how I feel on the inside." Full of mocking and meaning, Barthes thinks. *A seam. What pleasure wants is the site of a loss...* Water steams in the kettle, without sound.