

Editorial

S/Z/L: Fifty Years of S/Z

Neil Badmington

On 22 March 1970, Jacques Derrida wrote to Roland Barthes:

I very simply want to express my gratitude and admiration for *S/Z*. And with regard to no other text do I now find myself as absolutely in agreement, engaged. Everything in the arrangement of the page, in the production, should constitute what would be called, in the old code, a model, or a method, or an exemplary reference. In any case, to design, to multiply, to 'free' a new space for reading and writing. I'm sure that *S/Z* does this and will do so for a long time to come.¹

The essays in this year's volume of *Barthes Studies* confirm and consider Derrida's foresight: fifty years on from the penning of his letter in response to the publication of Barthes's book, *S/Z* continues to conjure new spaces for reading, for writing, and for resisting the fatal faith in binaries.

The 'L' in the title of the volume is the ancient Roman rendering of fifty and recalls the fondness for such numbering in *S/Z*. In section L of Barthes's analysis, meanwhile, there is a reference to the way in which Sarrasine reduces La Zambinella to 'a kind of dictionary of fetish objects'.² The project here in marking half a century of Barthes's book is neither to fetishize nor to assemble a dictionary-like A-Z of *S/Z*. The aim, rather, is to address where *S/Z* has taken us and where it might still lead its readers – undoubtedly, in Derrida's words, 'for a long time to come'.

S/Z is, in part, about what Barthes calls '[p]andemic castration' (p. 202). *S/Z/L* has been prepared in the shadow of a rather different form of pandemic, and the impact of COVID-19 upon academic life and labour means that *Barthes Studies* is a little thinner than anticipated this year. We hope to be able to feature in a future issue the work of those whose personal

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circumstances led them to withdraw from contributing to the present collection. The ongoing effects of the virus make any form of planning difficult, but the goal as I write these words is to publish a general, un-themed volume in 2021 and then to devote our eighth annual offering in 2022 to a special issue on Roland Barthes and Angela Carter, guest-edited by Marine Furet.

Neil Badmington
12 November 2020, Cardiff.

Notes

¹ Letter to Roland Barthes, 22 March 1970, in Roland Barthes, *Album: Unpublished Correspondence and Texts*, trans. by Jody Gladding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), p. 275.

² Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. by Richard Miller (London: Jonathan Cape, 1975), p. 112.