

SYMPOSIUM REPORT

‘Global Barthes’ — An Early Career Researchers’ Symposium University of Leeds, 27–28 June 2025

Andy Stafford

Following Tokyo in May 2024, this symposium was the second in the ‘Global Roland Barthes’ project and which brought together early career researchers (post-docs and PhD students) working in the four corners of the globe on different aspects of Barthes’s *oeuvre*. In bright Leeds sunshine, speakers from China, Brazil, Germany, USA, Morocco and the UK gave papers on a wide range of topics. Gisela Bergonzoni (Campinas, Brazil) described her current research on the late Argentinian literary theorist Ricardo Piglia and his adoption and implementation in his work of the Barthesian *biographemantic*; this was neatly complemented by Maria Römer (SOAS) whose paper ‘Translating Hasumi Translating Barthes’ placed both critics in relation to Japanese cultural and literary theory. Ruiqi Wang (Tongji/EPHE Paris) spoke on Barthes’s reception in China since the 1980s and widened the purview to Barthes’s 1967 seminal piece ‘The Discourse of History’ by looking at its references to the Chinese Cultural Revolution that had begun the year before. Emily Ainley-Zoll (Leeds) used *A Lover’s Discourse* to analyse F. Scott Fitzgerald’s 1925 classic novel *The Great Gatsby*; before Michael Regan (independent researcher based in York) gave a taste of his creative-writing PhD (Lancaster 2021) which used Barthes to analyse Remembrance Day culture in the UK. Rising novelist and Moroccan academic Khalid Lyamlahy (Chicago) covered Barthes in Morocco mainly since his death; and Salomon Kpodo (Siegen, Germany) the same for Barthes in Germany.

These post-doctoral and PhD researchers showed clearly and impressively the vitality of Barthes studies for Early Career Researchers, and offered new and exciting analyses of both his works and his influences across the world and in many different disciplines. The Symposium was blessed also by the presence of two established scholars. Fabien Arribert-

Narce (Edinburgh) gave a splendid opening paper on what it means to look at Barthes as ‘global’; Claudia Amigo Pino (São Paulo) closed the event with a fascinating account of three women writers from the Americas—Leyla Perrone-Moisés, Beatriz Sarlo and Susan Sontag—who have been crucial in maintaining and perpetuating Barthesian thought across the world. We were grateful also for the input and support of colleagues from Leeds, Richard Hibbitt and Adina Stroia, and London-based PhD student Flávia Miotto.

The Symposium was kindly supported by the British Academy, the Sino-British Fellowship Trust, and the University of Leeds. We hope to announce soon more events for 2026.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andy Stafford has recently published *Roland Barthes Writing the Political: History, Dialectics, Self* (Anthem Press, 2023) and co-edited with Claire Lozier and Jivitesh Vashisht a special number of *Paragraph* on ‘Samuel Beckett and Roland Barthes: Unspoken Dialogues’ (July 2022). He is Professor of French and Critical Theory at the University of Leeds (UK).

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