

ROLAND BARTHES  
INCIDENTS



TRANSLATED BY  
RICHARD HOWARD

## Incidents

*Roland Barthes , Richard Howard (Translator)*

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# Incidents

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## Incidents Roland Barthes , Richard Howard (Translator)

In 1979, just after having written skeptically on the question of whether a journal was worth keeping "with a view to publication," Roland Barthes began to keep an intimate journal called "Soirées de Paris" in which he gave direct notation to his gay desire in its various states of excitation, panic, and despair. Together with three other uncollected texts by Barthes, including an earlier journal he kept in Morocco, this remarkable document was published in France after its author's death under the title of *Incidents*. Richard Howard's translation now makes the volume available to readers of English.

*"I gave him some money, he promised to be at the rendezvous an hour later, and of course never showed up. I asked myself if I was really so mistaken (the received wisdom about giving money to a hustler in advance!) and concluded that since I really didn't want him all that much (nor even to make love), the result was the same: sex or no sex, at eight o'clock I would find myself back at the same point in my life."*—from Incidents

## Incidents Details

Date : Published September 4th 1992 by University of California Press

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Author : Roland Barthes , Richard Howard (Translator)

Format : Paperback 73 pages

Genre : Literature, 20th Century, Lgbt, Autobiography, Memoir, Cultural, France, Glbt, Queer, Philosophy

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## From Reader Review Incidents for online ebook

### DB says

Barthes' observations, so succinctly tuned to the particular. This detail, and that. Recalling Morocco, Paris. And this edition! The photographs! Modernity! The very paper it's printed on!

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### sevdah says

Extremely beautiful, graceful, exquisite, and bringing acute, almost physical pleasure (like anything Barthes has written).

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### Shashwat Dutta says

It's a book that's only for the feels.

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### Christopherseelie says

A selection of diaries primarily focused on the author's unfulfilled relationships with younger men. Written with an imagist attention to detail and delivery. It is almost a introduction to eroticism, by that I mean, a mode of sensuality that is devoid of physicality. This is a romance of interiority. I was quite surprised to read Barthes in a non-Theory way. This books was beautiful.

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### Felicia Edens says

“Incidents” by Roland Barthes is a book containing excerpts of deeply personal journal entries written by the French philosopher in Morocco and France during the 1960s and 1970s. They were published posthumously, and provide unique insight into the uninhibited mind of this thinker. His work is mostly academic, but “Incidents” reminds us that he was not only a theorist, but he was human, too.

Barthes - \*you creep\* - ran through my head many times as I read this – for all his looking he doesn't seem to feel shame at watching others either, particularly others who may not have as sharp faculties as he had. That being said, I never once felt awkward or uncomfortable reading “Incidents”. Perhaps he did feel, if not shame, than a frustration at his addiction to watching, to yes, I would even say judging, people by their actions as well as appearances – this one dirty, this one handsome, this one knew what he was talking about, this one lying... keep in mind that Barthes was “studying” – with a very, very sharp eye - what some may call the oppressed. But - I will admit that many, many parts made me smile wide and laugh, like an active participant in his actual life:

“The ‘head accountant’ (a sweet-looking teenager), in a serious tone, declares: ‘Civilization is when people

know their rights and are aware of their duties.' After which, like all of us, he bursts out laughing."

And this, I definitely laughed at this:

“The little Marrakesh schoolteacher: ‘I’ll do anything you like,’ he says effusively, his eyes full of kindness and complicity. And this means: \*I will fuck you\*, and nothing else.”

And it is laughter all the more sweet because it is tinged heavily with sadness. My favorite parts of “Incidents” were the rare, keen descriptions of objects and place, and even people, but not his interactions with them. Barthes struggles with his almost uncontrollable homosexual desire. And it seemed to me that Barthes had a deep fear of being alone, so when he did write about scenes without people there was something very clarifying about it.

I'll end with something he wrote in the chapter: "The Light Of The Southwest" (France): "I believe the writer exists in this vestibule of knowledge and analysis: having more awareness than experience, aware of the very cracks in experience."

Also:

“...don’t try to photograph it: to judge it, to love it; you have to come and stay, so you can experience the range of places, seasons, weather and light.”

**Gabriela says**

Flashes of life, Polaroid pictures of loneliness, melancholy, boredom, all the things R.B. thinks he could get away from if he just fell in love with ONE boy.

**Siv30 says**

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### **Joseph Schreiber says**

A selection of four texts, two essay/memoir, one travel fragments, and one series of journal entries highlight Barthes' powers of observation and open a door into his longings away from theoretical design. Very moving. Accompanied in this edition from Seagull Books by photographs by Bishan Samaddar. For my full review please see: <https://roughghosts.com/2016/05/20/im...>

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### **Ramona says**

Obsesiv, repetitiv, plictisitor. Dacă ar fi postat fragmentele ca statusuri pe Facebook, nu numai că nu ar fi meritat nici un share, dar după primele 5 î-a fi dat și unfollow.

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### **belisa says**

?imdi yer yer s?k?ld?m, yazar? Barthes olmasayd? (Barthes'ın beynimi uyuşturan metinlerin yazar? olarak hayat?mda bir yeri olmasayd?) bitiremezdim bile belki;  
gündelik hayat hakk?nda içten bir tav?rı ve ya?ama dair notlar söz konusu...  
bu kitab?ndan çok derin ?eyler beklememek laz?m...

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### **Maurizio Mancò says**

"La fanciullezza è la via regia attraverso cui conosciamo al meglio una terra. In fondo, non c'è altra Terra che quella dell'infanzia." (La luce del Sud-Ovest, p. 15)

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**James says**

I just finished this collection of impressions, sketches, and snapshots. The first section is a reflection on the southwestern part of France, where Barthes spent his early childhood. The second, and longest section, consists of observations from his Moroccan travels. There is a lovely analysis, almost absurd in its scholarly gravity, of a Parisian nightclub, and the book is rounded out with a rather depressing journal of a few weeks of Barthes's life as a middle-aged gay man in Paris.

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**Robert says**

intimate and beautiful. little notes that are audible and ephemeral, sound and touch. i would read this in relation to Camera Lucida and Mourning Diary.

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**Lucie says**

A la façon des Haïkus qu'il aime tant, Barthes offre un chant d'amour au Maroc, à ses petites rues sinuées, à ses passants mal rasés, à ses étudiants rêveurs, à ses enfants prostitués... Puis dans une seconde partie il évoque - cette fois-ci dans le genre du journal - ses soirées parisiennes. Décidément je l'aime bien ce Roland, même quand il s'adonne à la facilité...

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**Wendy smith says**

it was so disappointing that this was published posthumously, and was so different from anything barthes had written and published with full permission

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