

# Abstracts

**NEIL MURPHY**

**Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and a Tradition of Dissent**

Samuel Johnson's famous dismissal of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* ("Nothing odd will do long. *Tristram Shandy* did not last.") might well be one of the most short-sighted critical claims in literary history. In recent years, Sterne's novel has been successfully adapted as a film and as a graphic novel and has been repeatedly cited as a major influence on Modernism and Postmodernism, a forerunner to the major metafictional texts of the twentieth century, and Calvino's claim that *Tristram Shandy* is the "undoubted progenitor of all avant-garde novels of our century," offers an indication of the value in which it is held among many experimental fiction writers. This paper will present a case that it is precisely *Tristram Shandy*'s 'oddness' that has ensured its place in an alternative novelistic tradition in Europe, a tradition that finds ample correspondence with the non-realist tradition in the history of the Irish novel, a tradition that has formal and philosophical dissonance at its centre.

**JON HEGGLUND**

**"Objects in Bloom: The Agency of Things in *Ulysses*"**

Drawing upon Franco Moretti's reading of the early chapters of *Ulysses* as "stream-of-unconsciousness" narration, along with recent insights in object-oriented ontology and thing theory, my essay examines the ways in

which the characters of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom are created through contrasting methods in the first six chapters of Joyce's novel. Where many critics would point to the animation of objects in "Circe" or the detached, catechistic descriptions of "Ithaca" to discuss the role of nonhuman things in the novel, I look instead to the more "conventionally" modernist chapters, particularly the triad that introduces Leopold Bloom: "Calypso," "Lotos-Eaters," and "Hades." In contrast to a style that organizes narration around Stephen Dedalus' sense perception in the first three chapters, the chapters that introduce Bloom place him, both narratively and syntactically, among a world of nonhuman objects and entities. Through a focus both on Bloom's immersion within objects, and indeed his own object-nature, Joyce advances a new model of character – one that is not an essence but instead a contingent material aggregation of things that must be constantly made anew.

**ELISABETTA MENGALDO**

**"Sanft ist der Amsel Klage". Motivstrukturen bei Georg Trakl.**

The essay examines the leitmotif-technique in the lyric poetry of the expressionist Austrian poet Georg Trakl (1887-1914). This term, which is common in musicology (for example to describe Wagner's usual technique) and in literary studies (to delineate both narrative techniques and techniques of psychological characterisation, such as in Tolstoj's and Thomas Mann's texts), is here applied to Trakl's poetry to describe images which feature recursivity, strongly connotative meaning and semantic open-endedness.

In his poetry the leitmotif-technique appears to contribute to the formation of a private language, the opacity of which descends not so much from a programmatic intransitivity of the poetical language (as typified by Mallarmé), but rather from the need for a broken, dismembered, non-transparent communication. This linguistic obscurity develops as an existential feature before turning into aesthetic intention and poetic programme. Such construction of intratextual, 'private' semantic networks through leitmotifs is part of a progressive reduction of the semantic range and increasing ambiguity of the syntactic links, especially in Trakl's late poetry.

**EVA KOCZISCKY**

***Vocis Imago. Zur archäologischen Dichtung Durs Grünbeins***

The article investigates Durs Grünbein's love for ruins. This passion for archaeology is not only reflected in Grünbein's poetic imagination but also in his poetic and aesthetic agenda, with its recourse to the great classics of German literature. On the whole, it can be stated that archeology itself and the archaeological object paradoxically acquire their materiality and sensory presence through the poetic activity, whereby it is the poetic word itself which is excavated through language, or retrieved among the waste and the débris of our European culture.

**ULISSE DOGÀ**

**Dall'orlo estremo di un'età sepolta: il "Valéry" di Walter Benjamin**

The article aims to analyze the presence of the French poet and writer Paul Valéry in the work of German philosopher Walter Benjamin. For many reasons – that will be investigated in detail – no interpreter seems to be more akin to Valéry than Walter Benjamin. Benjamin paid particular attention to Valéry: he followed his development, admired his greatness and reserved him special praise, that of having acquired the authority of a classic author. The article aims to show that Valéry remains for Benjamin intrinsically linked to the heroic period of the European bourgeoisie and that he is one of the most noble examples of what Benjamin calls "the old European humanism", of which Benjamin himself is one of the greatest protagonists, but also a disillusioned interpreter and relentless critic. The interpreter Benjamin recognized in Valéry was undoubtedly an "allied", as he found in his vision of the world a poetic image full of wit and melancholy. This image was also Benjamin's own, and he remained paradoxically faithful to it even in times of more fervent political and revolutionary passion. These are the principal points from which the article will start to rebuild and rethink the elective affinity between the French poet and the great German critic.

**CRISTINA FOSSALUZZA**

**Psychology and power in E. M. Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues*. A reading through Freud.**

In 1915, a few months after the outbreak of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, Sigmund Freud writes the essay *Zeitgemäßes über Krieg und Tod*, in which he

reflects about the reason why war is still possible in a cultural advanced society like the western one, and about the relation of modernity with the problem of “evil”, violence and death.

This article takes its cue from this essay in order to analyse Erich Maria Remarque’s novel *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1928-29) from an innovative point of view. Remarque himself argues in many interviews and articles that his book should neither be considered a historical report about the 1<sup>st</sup> World War nor merely an antiwar-novel about the dramatic experience of a lost generation, but rather a true *psychological* novel. As a matter of fact, *Im Westen nichts Neues* tells about the “human all too human” mechanisms of violence and power through an understated representation of the trauma of a generation which was thrown into a sort of “state of exception”, a state situated simultaneously outside and inside civil society. The essay aims to illustrate how Freud and Remarque take a very similar perspective in their works about the Great War when considering the complex relation between culture and war, civilisation and violence, psychology and power in western modern society.

**GIANMARIA FINARDI**

**Il romanzo *Loufoque* di Éric Chevillard: usare la lingua per leccarsi le dita dei baffi.**

The subject of this work is an analysis of the novels by Éric Chevillard published between 1987 and 2012 by Minuit. Chevillard, one of the most unique voices in the current panorama of French literature, is considered heir to authors like Beckett and Michaux by critics who incessantly search for a collocation for his “unnerving” texts. He progressively elaborates an incongruous aesthetics, aimed at involving the reader in the construction of a deep-seated sense that continuously eludes every attempt to categorize it, hovering between playfulness, linguistic inventiveness and the exposure of plausible fictions. This contribution aims at accepting the challenge offered by the novels themselves, offering a label which expresses both their nuances and elusiveness, able to communicate the infinite facades of their ambiguous poetics through incongruity: the *loufoque*.

This aesthetic category can also be related to principles of linguistic economy, in order to strengthen the analysis with a further purpose. On the one hand, the semiotic acceptance of *loufoque* enables to see the unexpected rigour of the texts, whose propensity to poke fun at the reader rep-

resents one of the most serious aims, whose almost nonsensical effects presume a logical criterion for writing. On the other hand, the reference to the *loufoque* itself allows to underline the intertextual dimension of such intriguing fictions and collocates them in the steps of a specific literary tradition.

**GENÉVIEVE HENROT SOSTERO**

**La Chambre noire du Voyageur**

What does it mean for Proust's hero to travel around Europe? Which kind of look does he give at foreign landscapes? A deep insight into the occurrences of the word "voyage" helps us to describe the conditions and nature of the traveller's vision. It appears that the hero perceives, for instance, Venice views through his many artistic and literary readings, and combines intellectual and phenomenological views by the means of metaphor. The description that comes out from his *camera oscura* is the pure expression of a personal, unique "vision".