

Abstracts

The “Art of mass” synonym for democratization of the work of art? The point of view from W. Benjamin

Federico Tarragoni

Between 1870 and 1913, democratic imaginary changes radically in the political and artistic field. Together with the transformation of 1830's glorious *démos* into dangerous classes and irrational crowd, a new name for the “people” appears in the artistic sphere: the mass. The “art of masses”, unlike the romantic manifests of the “art of people”, refers to some structural transformations of the collective artistic experience. As Benjamin shows it from a sociological analysis of the *roman-feuilleton*, photography and cinema, this radical transformation concerns the worship economy of art. Can we identify yet a new mass public? Under what conditions can we identify some artistic or cultural processes of democratization? Is the “art of masses” fundamentally the same thing of the totalitarian “mass aesthetization”? We'll try to answer to these different questions, crossing sociology and cultural history, in order to understand, through the Benjamin's analysis, the cultural field in which artistic avant-gardes and totalitarian politics were born after 1913.

Nietzsche reader of the writers of his time

Brigitte Krulic

The work of Nietzsche could not be understood out of two decades, between 1870 and 1890 historical and sociological context, marked by the “German crisis of the French thought”, the emergence of nationalisms and the antisemitism on bottom of diffusion of the universal suffrage and political and social democratisation. The analysis will concentrate on the appreciations related by Nietzsche to the authors of his time; but it goes without saying these readings also nourished its reflection; they also testify owing to the fact that Nietzsche drew, like much Antimodernes, in a Vulgate denouncing the loneliness of the individual exception in a disillusioned and levelled modernity.

On the *Introduction in the method of Léonard de Vinci*, “Valéry or the learning of the possible”

Athanase Voussaris

The abandonment of poetry by Valéry in the middle of the last decade of the 19th century is the symptom not only of one intellectual crisis, it also testifies to the crisis of its own time. In the solitude, the poet turns to one of the largest incarnations of the universal spirit, Léonard de Vinci, to seek the lights of his “method” (*Introduction to the method of Léonard de Vinci*) and to understand a practice of the writing which it is working out in his *Cahiers*. Of this meeting, a new conception of the offices of the spirit will be imperative upon Valéry, conception which he will observe for a

long time in the silence. And he conceived it as an antidote to the course that Modernity was going to take. But the History decided differently.

The “Merciless War” to the “Vague Things”, about *Monsieur Teste* by Paul Valéry

Serge Linkès

Written in 1894 and published in 1896, *An evening with Monsieur Teste* is one of the strangest books of Paul Valéry. With a personage deemed to be impossible, the author attempts to answer to the question: “What can a man?” This question has haunted his mind through out his career but will never have a firm answer. However, it will have the merit to allow Valéry to explore the workings of the mind, through its limitations and its potentials, at a time when all these issues were central to the concerns of science, medicine and nascent psychoanalysis. Valéry will be among the first to propose a literary approach, halfway between fiction and essay, on this central issue that always concern current science.

The Humor in the French music from 1870 till 1913: between exorcism and hedonism

Étienne Kippelen

To listen to certain composers, it still reigns today a particularly long-lived taboo about musical humor, resulting in having a low opinion of the productions causing the smile, as if the music, art of the tragedy par excellence, could not reasonably incline with humor, under penalty of losing its heart. However, years 1870 to 1913, the creation of Chabrier, Saint-Saëns, Debussy and other Satie often derived towards light or parodic pages, sometimes justified by a tenderized evocation of innocence child. *Memories of Bayreuth* by Fauré and Messenger, plastering the ride of the Valkyrie to simple squares, *Doctor Gradus ad Parnassum* by Debussy, making fun Clementi, via the puns; *Españaña* by Satie, all these humors, with the different challenges nevertheless, try to exorcize the defeat of 1870. In a context where religious hatreds and social conflicts exacerbate with a nationalism revanchist, the ruined mechanics of the caricature and the comic one sounds like a refusal for the musical world to abound the tragedy which is tied, at the same time she amuses a middle-class public in search of entertainment.

The Province in the test of the democratic modern world: France in *Histoire Contemporaine* by A. France and Prussia in *Der Stechlin* by T. Fontane

Charles Brion

This text does compare on the two sides of the Rhine two works perfectly contemporary: *The Stechlin* by Theodor Fontane published in 1899 and *Histoire contemporaine* by Anatole France published between 1897 and 1901, carrying at the same time a historic glance on the change of the society at the end of the XIXth century. Both located in province, these two works resemble each other formally: the intrigue is mean, the part of fiction small, great History prevails through a long narrative rich both of numerous references to actuality and multiple opinions on the historic events; the fragmentary composition, where thought gets the better on action, delivers a rich psycho-social table of the epoch, while Germany becomes an industrial nation of world stature and France seeks its democratic identity through the Affaire Dreyfus. The common confrontation between tradition and modernity presents nevertheless three major differences. At first, the geographical and patrimonial rooting is almost non-existent at France, whom province is fictive and abstract (a place that can incarnate the whole French Republic), whereas Fontane roots all its novel in the brandenburger soil while insisting on the weight of the prussian tradition at the time

of its twilight. Second difference, the political crisis owing to the entry into modernity strikes two countries whose stage of liberalization is not also advanced: in Germany, if the need for a real parliamentarism is felt after Bismarck, the political system remains deprived of any democratic tradition; in France on the contrary, the French Republic is still the third and it celebrated the centenary of the French Revolution, but the parliamentary democracy is in crisis. The Worms-Clavelin prefect incarnates at France a shabby pragmatic turn of the political system searching the order as much that the progress to overcome the dangers of anarchism like monarchism. The same disappointing but necessary synthesis is at Fontane the disillusioned figure of the old man Dubslav von Stechlin, traditionalist converting with repulsion with the creed of the democratic progress, and exceeded in this conversion by his son incarnating the new Germany. Lastly, the treatment of the religion is divergent, because, if France intends to show the basically antidemocratic attitude of the whole of the catholic clergy, Fontane, more moderate, shows the most pious characters like most hostile with democratic progress, except notable for the Pasteur Lorenzen, who proves with the final, by jointly refusing the conservatism of the *Junkertum* and the social democrat atheism, the true figure of the synthesis and continuity in the novel. The land ambivalence of these two works is precisely the translation of the crossbred movement of tradition and democracy which carries Europe then, too slowly according to France, too brutally according to Fontane.

The Home and the World:
cosmopolitanism and insularity in the pre-war english novel

Vincent Giroud

In the years preceding the First World War, the English novel was preoccupied with the condition of England. This preoccupation often took the form of a nostalgia for a mythical England of traditional values, threatened in its insularity by the cosmopolitanism associated with modernism. This chapter discusses the treatment of this theme in a few of the most significant novels of the period: *The Secret Agent* (1907) by Joseph Conrad, *Howards End* (1910) by E. M. Forster, and three by D. H. Lawrence: *The White Peacock* (1911), *Sons and Lovers* (1913), and *The Rainbow* (1915).

Rider Haggard and William Morris:
the image of the woman between tradition and modernity

Marc Rolland

Two British authors of the second half of the nineteenth century, Henry Rider Haggard (1856-1925) and William Morris (1834-1896), emplotted versions of the beautiful, semi-immortal and tragic queen in their works of imagination. Though these characters are redolent of the archetypal Femme Fatale, they nonetheless testify to their creators' intention to endow women with unusual might and autonomy. Rider Haggard's Ayesha (*She*, 1886) and Cleopatra (*Cleopatra*, 1889) are passionate to the extreme and bestow their love and their bodies freely, but they are also queens and assume the obligations of their rank. With William Morris, the hallmarks of the free women of his futurist utopia (*News From Nowhere*, 1890) – physical strength and courage, ease in their behavior with men, freedom to love as they wish – are to be found in two characters of *The Well at the World's End* (1896), the Lady of Abundance and Ursula. The former, enjoying a magically enhanced lifespan and wielding political power and martial prowess as well as a man, will nevertheless perish tragically like her sisters, Ayesha and Cleopatra. Is this to show that times weren't ripe yet, and that subversion of the patriarchal order, even in the works of a socialist such as Morris, is doomed to failure? A middle course seems to be suggested in the person of Ursula, who combines, independence, initiative et freedom of choice while observing marital proprieties like a number of pioneer feminists of the beginning of the twentieth century.