

PREFACE

The Rhetoric of the Sublime

“In the words of J.B. Twitchell, the sublime has always been a complicated and ambiguous category. Nevertheless, a tension between the knowable, familiar world and the constant pressure of the unknown, the incomprehensible and uncontrollable, analysed in Edmund Burke’s influential study, remains a significant attribute of the sublime. The view of the sublime as a loss of a meaningful relation between words and the intensity of individual experience of reality (reflected in particular rhetorical devices) permeates aesthetics from Romanticism to postmodern art. The seminar is concerned especially with the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries (the Gothic, Romantic and Victorian traditions) but also with their influence on modern literature. Aesthetical discussions (Burkean and Wordsworthean, Kantian, poststructuralist) are welcome as well.”¹

The above paragraph was circulated as a call for proposals for seminar 32, titled “The Sublime Rhetoric and the Rhetoric of the Sublime in British Literature since the 18th Century,” for the last ESSE conference. The idea of the “sublime seminar” was initiated by Kamila Vranková and together we undertook the task of organising it and co-convening its two sessions. In July 2016, a group of enthusiastic scholars and teachers of English literature from different European universities came together to discuss the concepts of the sublime in Galway, at the National University of Ireland (NUI). The present issue of the *Eger Journal of English Studies* offers a representative selection of the Galway seminar papers on the rich theories and exciting readings of the sublime. Zoltán Cora (Szeged University, Hungary) tackles the early 18th-century British literary aesthetics of the sublime, focussing on Alexander Pope’s interpretation. Antonella Braidà (Université de Lorraine, Nancy, France) moves from the male sublime to Mary Shel-

1 See <http://www.esse2016.org/seminars.html>

ley's female and natural reading of the concept in the author's two novels. Alice Sukdolová (University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic) elaborates on the special features of sublimity in Victorian Gothic fiction, exemplified by Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Christophe Den Tandt (Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium) discusses the aspects of the urban sublime in late Victorian fiction, in the context of H.G. Wells's early novels. While Kamila Vranková (University of South Bohemia, Czech Republic) presents the ethical aspects of the sublime in contemporary English fantasy fiction. Three more papers were presented in Ireland – by Eva Antal (Eszterhazy Karoly University, Hungary) on the Burkean sublime, by Nataliya Novikova (Moscow Lomonosov State University, Russia) on Thomas Carlyle's ironic and sublime reading of heroism and by Christin Hoene (University of Potsdam, Germany) on the interpretation of the postcolonial sublime in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* –, which, together with the present authors' related future articles and also enriched with others' writings, will hopefully be published in a separate volume, displaying the great variety of "the highest of the high" in literary, aesthetical and cultural studies.

Éva Antal