THE 2019 JAMIE BISHOP MEMORIAL AWARD
for an essay on the fantastic written in a language other than English

Winner

Alessandro Cabiati, “Arrigo Boito e la idée fixe: ritornelli, monomania e le rappresentazioni del fantastico” (“Arrigo Boito and the idée fixe: Refrains, Monomania, and the Representations of the Fantastic”)

Arrigo Boito (1842–1918) was a writer and composer, and one of the leading authors of Scapigliatura, the movement that introduced a modern notion of the fantastic into nineteenth-century Italian literature. Boito experimented artistically with the idée fixe, which in the 1860s–70s was considered, together with the clinical term “monomania”, as referring to a single maniacal fixation in the nascent field of psychiatry. In this paper I investigate Boito’s representation of fixed ideas, both in fiction with the novella L’Alfier nero and in poetry with the fairy tale Re Orso. Far from being treated solely on a psychopathological level, in Boito’s hands the idée fixe transcends its medical and scientific premises. On the one hand, it becomes a veritable aesthetic tool, poetic and musical; and on the other hand Boito’s depiction of fixed ideas opens up to a supernatural realm that puts into question the assumed technical-medical explanation of sensory hallucinations and nightmarish visions. The element that links what can be considered as representations of the fantastic in L’Alfier nero and Re Orso is, thus, the idée fixe, depicted thematically by means of the juxtaposition between the domains of the hallucinatory and the supernatural, and formally through the repetition of expressions and sentences, hence refrains that convey the obsessional feelings of Boito’s characters.
Finalists

Zofia Litwinowicz, “Le Fantastique huysmansien entre les synesthésies et les correspondances” (“The Fantastic According to J.K. Huysmans: In-Between Synesthesia and Correspondences”)

Juan C. Toledano Redondo, “Lo que se llevó ‘el Ciclón del 16’ en la Cuba ciberpunk de Habana underguater” (“What the ‘2016 Cyclone’ Took Away in the Cyberpunk Cuba of Habana underguater”)