# Whistling Lillabullero

For Sam Weber on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday

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Abstract: In a universe populated by singularities, is there room for accompaniment? Departing from Sam Weber's discussion of Kafka's story "Josefine the Songstress, or the People of Mice," in which "whistling" figures at every turn against interpretive expectation and at every overturning of conventional accounts of sociability and representational discourse, this essay explores the ground and consequences of literary singularity in and for broader claims about collectivity and impermanence, vulnerability and separation. To do so, the essay recovers the traces of another "whistling" that, as Weber reveals in a recent interview, "has accompanied [him] throughout [his] life": Uncle Toby's "whistling Lullabullero," which in *Tristram Shandy* meets any attempt to "pin things down" or extract general conclusions with the anti-performative and the absurd. Frustrating conventional divisions between voice, speech and discourse, Josefine's "fricative" whistling exposes the conventions of sociability as "situationally relative" and unable to fully erase their alternatives. Coyly attuning the interpretive process to the force of ambiguity, Toby's whistling musters another thinking altogether on the situational and the social, one that unsettles the settled for the sake of the ungrounded and keeps language and code alike constantly open to revision.

In the spirit of the occasion, I will begin my remarks with a personal recollection. Sam Weber has had the burden of knowing me since I was still in my teens, which means that he has had

to field all sorts of requests from me for a very long time—requests that he always obliges with a characteristic abundance of generosity, as anyone who knows him will attest. One of my earliest memories of Sam, in fact, has to do with one of these moments when I cornered him for advice: we were chatting after a pre-graduation event on the rooftop of what was probably Royce Hall at the University of California, Los Angeles, and I was about to depart the United States for my hometown of Hong Kong without a clue as to what lay ahead of me. We somehow got into talking about our shared interests in music and in opera in particular. I mentioned that while in secondary school, I was annoyed that I was never allowed on stage because as the only pianist in my year, I was perennially stuck with the task of providing the musical accompaniment from behind the scenes, most memorably for a production of Gilbert and Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* — upon mention of which, as I recall, both Sam and I spontaneously started to whistle the tune of the operetta's main theme.

As tempted as I am, I won't start whistling the tune right now (and as I write this up for publication after the fact, it seems to be no straightforward thing to do in print—though not always for the obvious reasons, as we shall see). I also do not recall exactly what else was said in that conversation. But the memory of this moment later became the reason why I stayed in touch with Sam, who then tried valiantly to get me a placement at the *Stuttgarter Staatsoper* where he himself had interned as a dramaturge many years before. Eventually, on his recommendation, I ended up at a doctoral program at Northwestern University, where Sam continued to share with me as with all others his advice, more so now in the form of drafts and pre-production versions of his talks and eventual book chapters. I revisit these texts from time to time; they are, as it were, the musical accompaniment that has become company of an altogether different sort. Indeed, they have, through the years, been an accompaniment to the thinking and writing that, without it, might never get done.

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It was in preparation for the celebration of Sam's 80th birthday that I revisited some of these drafts, one of which Sam had sent me for a graduate seminar he gave at my behest at Goldsmiths in Autumn 2017 on the singularity of literary cognition. In one of them, which is devoted to Franz Kafka's story "Josefine the Songstress, or the People of Mice," I noticed something I had not paid particular attention to previously.[1] The discussion of Josefine circles around the peculiarly ambiguous nature of her *Pfeifen*, that is, whistling: as the sound emitted by someone who, described as a "singer," whom one might expect to sing instead, the whistling upsets expectations. But moreover, the whistling is not even peculiar to her, but rather to all the mice people, who, against all expectations again, are nevertheless moved by it despite its unexceptional character. One might in turn expect the mice people to grant Josefine the exemption she seems to ardently demand, Sam writes, but instead we arrive at another turn: the mice firmly refuse her demand. No expectation is met with anything but its contrary, which is ultimately also echoed in the conjunctive-disjunction of the "or" in the title Kafka gives to his story: Josefine "or the story otherwise known as" the mice people, "either" Josefine "or" the mice people. Frustrating the demand to "interpret me," the "or" in the title reflects the extremely ambivalent relationship that binds Josefine to the mice people, the songstress to the *Mäusevolk*, each of whom, as Sam points out, is convinced they protect the other, but not a single one of which, according to the narrator, is convinced by what the one can accomplish over the other: specifically, Josefine is said to "whistle at" the very notion that the collective has a power greater than that of the singular individual. "Thus," Sam writes:

> … both the content of the response, in which Josephine challenges the conventional wisdom that renders the collective—the 'people'—more powerful and protective of the singular individuals who compose it, and even more its form demonstrate the way in which a *Redensart*—an idiomatic expression—is turned into a *Redewendung*—literally, into the turning of speech. Josephine, who, we are told shortly thereafter, 'says very

> little anyway' but nevertheless communicates what she doesn't say through 'flashes from her eyes, … her closed lips' render[ing] what she does not have to say 'plainly legible.' Here, the *Redensart* that emerges as in a certain sense the 'navel of the story,' in analogy with Freud's overdetermined 'navel of the dream,' is never even uttered explicitly and yet, through the narrative, made 'plainly legible' (Weber "Kafka's Josefine [correct version]" 12).

As Sam notes a couple of pages earlier, the *Redewendung*, which can lexically designate *idiom* as well, is "a form in which the writer subverts the consecrated, conventional names" of the ostensibly stable and generic idiom "not necessarily by effacing them but by making them enigmatically literal" (Weber "Kafka's Josefine [correct version]" 10). The *Redewendung*, literally the "turn-of-phrase," turns on the phrase and turns *as* phrase on and beyond reigning conventions of meaning by returning to the situatedness and uncontainable associativity once suggested by *idiom*'s etymology: being peculiar to a particular people, place, or language, and designating thereby a network of signifiers linked one to another as to everything each is not (Weber "Kafka's Josefine [correct version]" 9-10).

But what does it mean to whistle? The published version of Sam's text, which appears as the penultimate chapter of his 2021 book *Singularity: Politics and Poetics*, proceeds to discuss the problem posed to conventional accounts of sociability by Josefine's performance as an assembly point for a temporary collective composed of vulnerable and separated bodies (Weber "Kafka's Josephine, or How a Phrase Can Turn Out" 413-14). Looking through an earlier version of the chapter Sam had sent me, though, I was struck by its variation of the lines cited above: "Thus, if the content of Josephine's (imagined) response challenges the conventional wisdom that privileges the collective – the 'people' – as more powerful and protective, over the singular individuals who compose it, the form in which it is articulated is even more challenging to established conventions of representational discourse" (Weber

"Kafka's Josefine: The Turning of a Phrase" 11). Inserted immediately afterward, moreover, is the following comment: "I am reminded of Uncle Toby in [Laurence] Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, who, whenever anything unpleasant arises in the Shandy Household, which is often enough, responds by whistling 'Lillabullero,' a march dating from the English civil war" (Weber "Kafka's Josefine: The Turning of a Phrase" 11). The text ends there. In the later (also unpublished) version, this comment no longer appears; instead, the text concludes with the observation that, in frustrating conventional divisions between voice, speech and discourse, Josefine's "fricative" whistling exposes the conventions of sociability as "situationally relative" and unable to fully erase their alternatives (Weber "Kafka's Josefine [correct version]" 19). In what way might the unerased comment on "whistling Lillabullero" in this interval between versions invite us to take another look at Sam's thinking on the situational and the social?

In the first instance, I was immediately reminded of something Sam had been telling me all along, and which is certainly no secret, especially ever since he was interviewed on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the Peter Szondi Institute for Comparative and General Literature at the Freie Universität in Berlin: *Tristram Shandy*, Sam says in that interview, "has accompanied [him] throughout [his] life."[2] The accompaniment afforded by the novel's "overarching importance" (Weber, Albers and Reinisch 272) can also be seen in connection with one of Sam's most memorable writings on theatricality, namely his reading in *Theatricality as Medium* of the off-scene appearance of the Ghost in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* I.1. In this scene, Marcellus and Horatio try in vain to pin down the exact location of the specter. It is followed, in I.5, by a scene in which the Ghost admonishes Hamlet from beneath the floorboards to "swear," again as it were, in what Sam calls an "antiperformative" undoing of the executive authority of oath-taking altogether by virtue of the very repetition that in conventional terms is meant to shore up that authority in the present (Weber "'Ibi et ubique':

The Incontinent Plot (*Hamlet*)" 184). In a preliminary and pre-publication version of this chapter, "Ibi et ubique [Theatricality as Medium]," Sam prefaces his entire discussion of *Hamlet* with a general introduction on "theatricality," which itself opens with this reminder: "It is always dangerous, and especially so when dealing with literary texts, to draw general conclusions. For such generalizations are difficult to evaluate and have the tendency of taking on a life of their own. The critic then risks resembling Walter Shandy, Tristram's father, who was always ready to sacrifice everything in the world, and indeed the world itself, on the altar of his favorite hypothesis, with the consequences that the reader of *Tristram Shandy* comes to experience on almost every page" (Weber "Ibi et ubique [Theatricality as Medium]" 1). Sam then continues: it is when contrasted to Walter Shandy that another Walter, namely Walter Benjamin, demonstrates the necessary open-endedness of reading and revision. "The temptation to place at the outset a hypothesis," Benjamin writes in a footnote to his 1916 essay on language as cited by Sam, "[might constitute] an abyss for all philosophizing" (Benjamin "On Language as Such and on the Language of Man" 74). This staged disagreement between the "two Walters" on the process of revision then issues—via an extended meditation on the mediacy and thus irreducible incontinence of all thinking that depends in one way or the other on presentation, utterance, transmission, and immediacy *qua* "liveness"—into the discussion of the necessity of ghosts to appear and take place in what is presented to us as the "immediate," in an interval that is therefore inherently unstable and where the ghost, which, as Horatio says, "will not stand," represents the very essence of that which is difficult to pin down.[3]

As it "turns out," though, Walter Shandy's readiness to sacrifice all on the altar of the hypothesis is also the occasion of the first mention in the novel of Uncle Toby's predilection for "whistling Lillabullero." For, in the face of Walter's never-ending philosophizing, Tristram the narrator remarks in Volume 1, Chapter 21, "[m]y uncle *Toby* would never offer

to answer this by any other kind of argument, than that of whistling half a dozen bars of *Lillabullero*. ———You must know it was the usual channel thro' which his passions got vent, when any thing shocked or surprised him; ——but especially when any thing, which he deem'd very absurd, was offered" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 50). In this comment unerased and retrieved from that accompaniment of overarching importance, it is Toby's "whistling Lillabullero" that exposes the situational relativity of discursive conventions and meets attempts to "pin things down" once and for all with the absurd.

But what, once again, is the meaning of this whistling? The tune itself is from an anti-papist ballad that originated in Ireland around 1687 as a rallying cry against James II and Richard Talbot, his Roman Catholic lord deputy for Ireland, whose appointment was feared to portend dire consequences for the Protestant community (Sterne *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* 113). According to a contemporaneous source, the name of the ballad was a portmanteau of made-up "Irish" words—lero, lero, lillibulero—meant to inspire its singers to mock its subject.[4] Wildly popular with the English regiments, the tune was on occasion even described by contemporaries to have "lillabullero'd" James II and the "Popery" out of the Kingdom during the so-called Glorious Revolution (Collins 35; cited in Sterne *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* 113). By 1730, the tune had detached itself from the ballad and acquired an afterlife of its own, providing the musical medium for a song in Henry Fielding's ballad opera *The Author's Farce* (Act III, air VIII) and then again for an "anti-Pretender" song of Fielding's own creation in 1745, as well as for songs in at least eleven other ballad operas of the first half of the eighteenth century (Sterne *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* 113-14). In the places where it manifests untethered from the original song, the tune provides a medium for pointing out the ridiculous in any subject whatsoever by virtue of the nonsense words—words distilled down to sheer sound—in its name-turned-verb. In *Tristram Shandy*, Uncle Toby whistles

Lillabullero whenever he appears unable to provide an answer, prompting Tristram the narrator to baptize it the "*Argumentum Fistulatorium*," which roughly translates as "argument by whistling" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 51). This impression is reinforced in Volume 9, Chapter 17, where, after digressing on matters concerning political economy and Rousseau, the narrating Tristram interrupts himself with the remark: "True philosophy——but there is no treating the subject whilst my uncle is whistling Lillabullero" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 437). In some apocryphal editions from the nineteenth century onwards, this mention of Toby's whistling is followed by a reproduction of the score and an explanatory text concerning the song's provenance.[5] In Sterne's original as well as the standard editions, it is succeeded immediately by two "blank" chapters, 18 and 19, in the "duration" of which we are led to surmise that Uncle Toby and his sidekick Corporal Trim "go into the house" of the Widow Wadman to finally show her once and for all "whereabouts" he was wounded—while we, the readers, are apparently left lurking just outside the door with only the lingering notes of Toby's whistling Lillabullero as accompaniment (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 438-39).

What follows is the well-known and much beloved episode in which Uncle Toby endeavors, with the help of a map, to help Widow Wadman put a finger on "whereabouts" he was wounded at the Battle of Namur—much to Widow Wadman's consternation, of course, whose own designs to discover whether Toby would satisfy her requirements as a future father and sexual partner are foiled, seemingly, by the ambiguity of the word "whereabouts."[6] But is it just so? We can more closely examine the nature of this modesty: the Widow Wadman declines out of modesty (*viz.* "Decency" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 450)) to further pursue the question of "whereabouts" Toby received his wound. By the conventional narrative logic with which Sterne teases his reader, the collapse of the courtship between Toby and Mrs. Wadman ensues from the impossibility, *viz*. incapacity, of Toby to resolve this ambiguity in an unambiguous manner.[7] But in the prefatory chapters to this episode, Toby

"begins," as it were, whistling already a couple of doors down, in Volume 9's Chapter 16, where, in a demonstration of a different kind of "modesty" altogether, Uncle Toby seems to show a momentary faint-heartedness and tries in vain to stop Corporal Trim in time from knocking on the door and announcing their presence. Failing to do so and noting that Trim had "let fall the rapper," Toby, "perceiving all hopes of [another] conference [with Trim] were knock'd on the head by it———whistled Lillabullero" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 437).

The manifestation of this other kind of modesty returns the reader to the novel's first mention of Toby's whistling and Tristram's offer of an explanation of what occasions it in Volume 1, Chapter 21. Walter Shandy, we learn there, was in the irrepressible habit of aggravating Toby by retelling the story of their Aunt Dinah's affair with the coachman in the name of servicing truth. Toby, being "a gentleman of unparallel'd modesty," "could never bear to hear the affair ... touched upon, but with the greatest emotion" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 48-49). Toby's emotion, as "usual," was "channeled" into "whistling" in response rather than offering up a counterargument (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 50). The "character" of the modesty occasioning this emotion and its channeling into whistling, however, is described by Tristram as being almost equal to a "woman's," by which he means that Toby acquired it not, as one might imagine, from having spent time conversing with and "knowing" women but, rather, "by a blow … from a stone, broke off by a ball from the parapet of a horn-work at the siege of Namur, which struck full upon my uncle Toby's groin" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 48). Yet just as we never discover "whereabouts" Toby received his wound, so we are frustrated in our expectation to have confirmed that the modesty's "womanly" character is attributable to the presence or absence of one kind of genitalia or the other as opposed to having been wounded in a war zone, or being in Flanders, or having stood in the proximity of a fortification recently renovated by Vauban. As is made clear by the episode in Volume 9, this work of obfuscation is Toby's own. The "origin" of Toby's "modesty" would therefore

have to be discovered in the possibility that his non-provision of verbal answers—his whistling Lillabullero—is a quasi-intentional, if also highly singular, act of putting the questioning demand of "whereabouts" "in its proper place," namely in the class of the absurd, along with any other expectations the reader might harbor of the womanly, social propriety, and the localizability of categorically knowable truths. "Which way could that [blow] effect [his modesty]?" Tristram asks on behalf of his interlocutor's (and Sterne's reader) in Volume 1, Chapter 21. "'Tis for an episode hereafter," he assures us, when "every circumstance relating to it in its proper place, shall be faithfully laid before you" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 48).

Whistling Lillabullero is neither an abdication of discursive thought, nor a conduit for otherwise uncontrollable emotion, nor for that matter a mere habit but, rather, a placeholder for thought: the opening of an interval where that which manages to escape the demand for knowability—such as the sheer sound of a phrase, a musical phrase—promises the arrival of the not-yet-thought, the not-yet-said, and the not-yet-written. "To disrupt the vicious circle of implosion … in which the acquisition of knowledge progressively destroys access to the heterogeneity that makes genuine knowledge possible," Sam writes in the chapter on "The Singularity of Literary Cognition" in his book on *Singularity*, "*Tristram Shandy* continually exposes and challenges readers' habitual expectation that the story will end with a meaningful conclusion" and in so doing "gives rise to a new kind of significance and afterlife" (Weber *Singularity: politics and poetics* 357-58). For Sam, the novel thus demonstrates the open-endedness of reading by ending inconclusively and suggesting, through its hints at the inability of the Shandy Family to reproduce itself "as a Life that transcends the limitations of its singular characters," that any expectation that an individual's story will be meaningful in itself and that its meaning will be self-replicable will be frustrated (Weber *Singularity: politics and poetics* 361). Correspondingly, Walter Shandy, Uncle Toby,

and Tristram, too, lead fractured, singular lives motivated less by deliberation than by obsession, compulsion, and repetitive habits that give the sense of a continuous self while driving the characters down paths they cannot control (Weber *Singularity: politics and poetics* 356).

*Lillabullero*, though, is a tune untethered from its text and eminently reproducible, even self-replicating in the way it induces its performer conform to its gesture of pointing out the absurd and refusing to settle, even if, as a musical phrase, it cannot technically "live" without its host—without its being whistled—and so without situation. Whereas the fraternal relations of Walter and Toby Shandy are, from the viewpoint of Tristram, marked by their inexplicable and unresolvable strife over the significance of the story of Aunt Dinah, those who whistle Lillabullero are linked by a common project of evasion and intentional ambiguity that may or may not be fully in their power to control, but out of which a community of singular beings nevertheless emerges. Lillabullero may perhaps be likened to what today is called "viral media"—a pattern that has the ability to replicate itself by converting other objects into copies of themselves, in ways that challenge conventional explanations of how ideas originate, spread, evolve, and die. Or, perhaps, it might be compared with what in German is called an *Ohrwurm*—a tune that refuses to let go and comes back to mind repeatedly, sometimes to the consternation of the one in whose ear the tune settles and who is compelled to whistle it with or without sound, almost always, however, accompanied by laughter at the inexplicable readiness with which our own minds will make space for the uninvited guest. Either way, one thing that both the *Ohrwurm* and the viral medium have in common is their hospitability towards forms of life that are nonhuman yet underpin the outlines of some of the most audacious visions of community that the history of thought has dreamt up for humankind: a "perpetual peace" between beings who decline to impose their human "right" of free movement onto others, a world "wide enough to hold both

thee and me" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 115). This latter vision is articulated by none other than Uncle Toby who, having suffered a fly "buzz[ing] about his nose all *dinner time*," nevertheless admonishes it to "get thee gone" out the window in place of hurting it (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 115); the very phrase is cited by the author of the first vision, Immanuel Kant, as a "motto that each of us could adopt."[8] Challenging conventions that regard co-existence as a zero-sum game between the spontaneous rational self and an entity that this self must variously invent as its opponent, dependent, imitation, or non-existent other, the community of whistlers that emerges under the sign of Lillabullero discloses another horizon for sociability that—and this is what likens it to virtual groupings around "viral" phenomena—has the propensity to evade closure by initiating with each single whistle a wayward, unpredictable path in every which direction for the more-than-one.

Under the sign of Lillabullero, a community of whistlers emerges at any point at which the mind meets the unthought—an encounter without which nothing would be known, yet the problem of which the philosophy of knowledge has contorted itself into ignoring, *more geometrico*, in the name of the didactic and the straightforward. Noting this difficulty, Walter Shandy's other challenger, Walter Benjamin, proposed instead that "[m]ethod" be reimagined as "indirection" [*Umweg*]: for, he remarks in the "Epistemo-Critical Foreword" to his study of the German Baroque *Trauerspiel*, "[it] is peculiar to philosophical writing to be confronted anew at every turn with the question of presentation. To be sure, in its closed and finished form, philosophical writing will constitute doctrine, but it is not within the power of mere thought to confer on it such closure" (Benjamin *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* 1-2). Following instead the path of "indirection" that aptly describes Uncle Toby's whistling as well, "thinking" that renounces "the unbroken course of intention," Benjamin writes, would instead "constantly begin anew; with its sense of the circumstantial, it goes back to the thing itself"—a "continual breathing in and out [that] is the form of existence most proper to

contemplation" (Benjamin *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* 3). Like Josefine's "fricative" whistling in Kafka's story, too, breath given form—whether as rhythm or as tune—renders what does not have to be said "plainly legible" (Weber "Kafka's Josefine [correct version]" 12): philosophical writing, and the community of its whistlers (Toby, Kant, Benjamin, Josefine), "come together out of the singular and disparate" (Benjamin *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* 3). Whistling comes full circle, in a circular logic that the narrator Tristram demurs to elaborate, instead leaving the discussion to the promise to one day put "every circumstance relating to it in its proper place" and dislodging the place even of the "modesty" that Sterne misdirects his reader to attribute to an incapacity for disambiguation (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 48). In place of modesty, then, there is the possibility of coyness; in place of ambiguity, the ambiguity of ambiguity, the place where ambiguity touches itself. To bring this back to the beginning: when Sam provides the accompaniment to one's thinking, one becomes aware that the attunement to the force of ambiguity also shares the ground of ambiguity with a thinking that derives from exposure and absurdity an ungrounding of conventions of sociability and situational emplacement but also a community of the most audacious kind. And this, as I have had the pleasure of knowing now for a long time, unsettles the settled for the sake of the ungrounded, the side-show, and the more-than-one.

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[1] Weber "Kafka's Josefine [correct version]". The editions of Kafka's "Josefine, die Sängerin oder Das Volk der Mäuse" cited by Sam are those included in Kafka and Hermes and Kafka and Corngold. This and all other unpublished manuscripts cited with permission from their author.

[2] Weber, Albers and Reinisch (272). In the interview, which was originally published in German with slight differences in 2015, Sam notes that *Tristram Shandy* was the main text of the first seminar he ever taught, which happened to be at the Freie Universität.

[3] *Hamlet* I.i.141; cited in Weber "Ibi et ubique [Theatricality as Medium]" (12).

[4] Bishop Burnet's *History of His Own Time, 1724-1734* [1823], III: 319; cited by Simpson (449); here cited in Sterne *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (113). The song's text also contained a chorus of similarly derived nonsense words; see the score reproduced in Sterne *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (115).

[5] See, for instance, Sterne *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman. With an Introduction by Wilbur L. Cross* (260-61).

[6] Volume 9, Chapter 26; Sterne *Tristram Shandy* (450).

[7] In Volume 9, Chapter 31, the narrating Tristram presents Toby as finally being made to realize what the Widow Wadman is asking, whereupon "[m]y uncle *Toby* gave a long whistle——but in a note which could scarce be heard across the table" (Sterne *Tristram Shandy* 454). In this version of events, dawning awareness puts an end to whistling Lillabullero, which seems only to accompany the inability to acknowledge and address the possibility of ambiguity. —In one of his published mentions of this episode, Sam, too, makes use of this representation of Toby's incapacities: "In the case of Uncle Toby, the exact whereabouts of his wound can have decisive consequences for his future life, affecting his capacity to father a progeny, as well as to sexually satisfy a possible spouse. Toby himself seems for the most part unaware of this ambiguity, 'concentrating' instead only on its 'extensive' dimension—the field of battle—and ignoring its intensive, corporeal one. This could, from a Freudian perspective, be easily assimilated to a gesture of 'isolation,' if not of 'disavowal.'" There, this characterization of the episode and its subsequent elaboration in the novel is understood as a writerly decision, that is, an expression of Sterne's awareness, *avant la lettre*, of what Saussure diagnoses as the limitlessly arbitrary and conflictual nature of signs' relations to its others: "That the setting in which Toby was wounded is thus described as one in which a total loss of control is imposed by the nature of the grounds on which it is impossible to take a stand, much less move about—this *cut-up* ground returns persistently throughout the novel, and not least of all to characterize the act of writing itself, which can also be described as constantly *cutting up*." See the discussion in the chapter "On the Militarization of Feeling" in Weber *Singularity: politics and poetics* (51-55).

[8] "Toby sagt im Tristam [*sic.*] Shandy zu einer Fliege, die ihn lange beunruhigt hatte, indem er sie zum Fenster hinausläßt: ‚Gehe, du böses Thier, die Welt ist groß genug für mich und dich!' Und dies könnte jeder zu seinem Wahlspruche machen. Wir dürfen uns nicht einander lästig werden; die Welt ist groß genug für uns Alle" ("Pädagogik," Kant AA 9: 469).