

Literary Fragmentation as a Gnoseological Tool from Modernism to Contemporaneity: *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften* by Robert Musil and *Les Années* by Annie Ernaux

Rachele Cinerari

Department of Philology, Literature and Linguistics

University of Pisa

Palazzo Matteucci, Piazza Evangelista Torricelli, 2, 56126 Pisa PI, Italy

E-mail: rachelecinerari@gmail.com

Abstract:

Literature can be regarded as a cognitive mode that transcends binary and oppositional views of rationality and irrationality, sustaining a dialectical tension between precision and possibility. Through the strategic use of fragmentation, the literary form is not dissolved; instead, it invites a rethinking and reshaping. The essence of this paper goes beyond mere experimentalism; it contends that the use of fragments establishes a profound link between form and content, coupled with a meticulous attention to the moment of text production. Drawing examples from two literary works of the early twentieth century – Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* and Annie Ernaux's *Les Années* – both shaped as “fragments of fragments”, the paper aims to explore the role of literary fragmentation as a gnoseological path. Moreover, the use of the fragment can be intricately tied to the concept of *Essayism*, understood in its etymological sense of an attempt. The incompleteness of reality becomes constitutive of the literary form, embodying an analysis of alternative possibilities. In contemporary times, the cultural and social landscape resonates with sentiments and reflections reminiscent of the modernist era.

Keywords: Annie Ernaux, Fragmentation, Literature as Knowledge, Robert Musil, Theory of literature

Crisis?

The concept of insufficiency has long served as a crucial interpretive lens for comprehending the literary landscape of the early 20th century. Often associated with a sense of crisis, it underscores the inefficiency of language, traditional literary forms, the capacities of the knowing subject, and the analysis of literary works from that period as manifestations of the disintegration of established forms and the inadequacy of linguistic tools.

However, what was once perceived as a predominantly negative and destructive phenomenon also reveals itself as an exceptionally productive moment in the literary crisis. This transformation becomes an integral part of it, forming its foundation. Many modernist works embody a profound quest, a proactive and cognitive approach, a continual effort to enable literature to endure despite its own chaos and the chaos of the world. The illusion of unity and reality collapses, paving the way

for an increasing subjectification of the narrative, which accommodates the fragmentation of the subject. The grand narratives have proven to be inadequate.

In this article, my objective is to delve into the origins of the fragmented nature evident in the two selected works under examination: Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* and Annie Ernaux's *Les Années*. Despite being published nearly a century apart, these texts can be seen as collections of fragments that form provisional units. I believe that the fragmentary nature of these works, particularly in the case of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, is not accidental. These texts embody the idea that literature can serve as a cognitive mode, transcending the binary and oppositional rational/irrational dichotomy. They represent a quest guided by possibility, maintaining an ongoing tension between precision and potential. The conviction here is not simply about experimentation but rather about the essence of a work residing in its structure, where the content emerges as a result of its stylistic processes. There is a deep appreciation for the productive aspect of the artistic process, highlighting the belief that literature is the ideal medium for expressing tensions without the need for reconciliation. This approach preserves the vitality of possibility and allows exploration without imposing a definitive choice.

While a comprehensive exploration of literary fragment theories from Romanticism onward is not possible here, it's noteworthy that the fragment has been a central theme and concern in literary and philosophical reflections since the beginning of the last century. The fragment, considered a privileged vantage point, enables the observation of intricate phenomena, underscoring its pivotal role in understanding the complexities of artistic expression.

Walter Benjamin, for instance, uses the fragment as a cognitive tool to challenge the notion of creative rationality. He argues against the construction of solid, coherent narratives, proposing that thought should become estranged within the object of knowledge. He introduces the concept of "Jetztzeit," fixing knowledge in a fragmentary moment. Through his "Passages" and dialectical images, he advocates for the use of fragments and montage to create a partial and tentative knowledge where fragments combine to form a provisional unity, a field of rubble from which reconstruction is possible. Many other examples highlight the value of the fragmentary approach, from Benjamin's *Passagen-Werk* to Adorno's *Minima Moralia*, Paul Valéry's *Cabiers*, the theories of Aby Warburg, Ernst Bloch, and so on. The avant-garde often employed the fragment as a means of deconstructing traditional forms.

In the contemporary world, creative work emerges in a state of conflict and vulnerability. "The subject is no longer a dominating ego, it is instead what precariously unites the extremes; the happiness of the work that is constructed and takes shape and the fragility that contaminates the subject that carries it out, the world to which it is directed, the work itself that is the extreme fruit of this fragility [...]. We are condemned to live in time and 'time is one of the many names of death'. [...] True art is inconciliatory and irreconcilable. It does not heal the fractures, it does not suture wounds and cracks, it does not even sublimate the materials it drags along with it" (Rella 2014, 82-84), that wreckage of wreckage, waste, *mauvaises pensées*.

The texts we are examining here underscore the significance of this cognitive tool within the

realm of literature. In both of these works, the fragment serves not only as a means to convey trauma or to deconstruct the world and established literary forms but also as a tool for reshaping a form that seeks to be reinvented, reimagined, and adapted to thrive in the modern era.

An essayistic path?

As is commonly recognized, the foundation of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* is what the author refers to as the “Utopia of Essayism,” a concept closely intertwined with the theme of fragmentation. Ulrich, the novel's main character, who embarks on a year-long sabbatical from life to seek and craft a novel way of living and thinking, embodies this perspective.

There was a quality in Ulrich's character that operated in a scattered, paralyzing, and disarming way against logical systematization, a singular will, and the definitively directed impulses of ambition; and this trait was also linked to the term he had chosen: “Essayism”. (Musil 1978, 218).

In Musil's view, Essayismus transcends the boundaries of a mere literary genre; rather, it embodies a profound cognitive approach—an anti-ideological ideology. Musil deliberately avoids categorizing the essay as a specific genre, and in this analysis, the term 'essay-novel' (Ercolino 2018) won't be employed. The early 20th century emerges as a fertile period for contemplating the essay form, where influential theorists such as György Lukacs, Georg Simmel, Max Bense, and Theodor Adorno elevate it beyond a mere literary model to a significant epistemic path.

In the case of *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, it surpasses mere inclusion of elements resembling “non-fiction” genres; it presents a challenge. This challenge involves experimentation, research, trial and error, exploration of every conceivable option, and a resistance to fixity and the philosophy of strict concepts. The true challenge of Musil's novel lies in the harmonization of narrative and thought. Contrary to the common claim that the text is merely peppered with essayistic and speculative fragments, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* intricately weaves various discourse elements—ranging from maximal fiction to maximal speculation. These elements progress together, mutually influencing and contaminating each other, creating a rich and dynamic narrative tapestry. Musil could assert that this could only be achieved “only in the novel, through the medium of events and characters” (Rasch 1967).

This work can be seen as a creative workshop, embracing what Adorno called “the anti-systematic instance” (Adorno 1974, 20). The form isn't dissolved but rethought and reshaped, even drawing on probabilistic and combinatorial theories. On a formal level, the text is presented in an exceptionally fragmented manner. The fragment serves as a privileged location for shedding light on universal themes, identifying connections, and exploring possibilities.

The utopia of Essayismus serves as the accommodating framework for the tensions that define Musil's novel. Within this framework, a continuous and irreducible dialectic unfolds between precision and depth, exactness and potential, and the realms of thought categorized as “ratioïd” and

“nicht-ratioöid”. The protagonist, Ulrich, personifies this nuanced and complex attitude, embodying the intricate interplay of these philosophical dichotomies.

Similar to an essay that, through the progression of its sections, explores a subject from various angles without completely capturing it – since a fully apprehended subject suddenly loses its breadth and transforms into a concept – he thought he could perceive and handle the world and his own life most accurately. (Musil 1978, 249).

The text deviates from a linear and progressive structure, minimizing action as it advances through temporal and syntactic jumps. It employs ellipses, suspensions, paratactic language, and analogical connections, embodying a fragmented way of thinking. This deliberate stylistic choice enhances the complexity and non-traditional nature of the narrative structure. Literature, conceived as the more unclosed than any other domain (Bachmann 1982, 83), permits the exploration of irreducible possibilities. The work is akin to a laboratory, an ongoing experiment (Gamper 2007, Herford 2015) of exploration, aiming to bridge the gap between two mental orientations, of which Musil writes: “One [approach] contentedly settles for being precise and adheres to facts; the other is not content with that but always looks at the whole and derives its insights from so-called eternal and grand truths” (Musil 1978, 252).

For Musil, this is the only path to genuine knowledge, that “andere Zustand” (other state) the text grapples with. The continuous pursuit of possibility is evident through the various alterations the text undergoes in the hands of the author and its inherent incompleteness, which leaves it open and constantly evolving. The editorial history of the text exemplifies this, as the volumes published during Musil's lifetime represent only a fraction of his extensive work of writing and reflection. The fragment, with its focus on the particular, becomes an indispensable tool for reshaping the literary form. As Giuseppe Di Giacomo notes, “Musil realizes that one can only represent chaos now because it exists in reality, but he achieves this representation through disintegration... In this way, Musil refuses to succumb to dissolution while representing it” (Di Giacomo 1999, 137).

Living and writing in an essayistic manner, in this sense, involves resisting the claim of reality to present itself as unchangeable and enforce clearly defined values. Literature can only challenge this illusion if it embraces combination, multiplicity, and uncertainty, rejecting any dogmatic stance. This great novel remains a partial, necessarily incomplete, and “provisional solution” (Cetti Marinoni 2014). It is perhaps not coincidental that the book has come down to us in an unfinished form: its fundamental structure resembles a field of debris, yet it serves the purpose of attempting to rebuild.

The cognizant subject is no longer equipped to acquire an overarching view that facilitates the analysis of reality at a glance. Instead, their focus must be directed towards discerning the true essence of things, which manifests itself in the detail, the fragment, the clue, and subjective experience. This recognition highlights the necessity for a more nuanced and attentive engagement with the intricacies of the world.

When examining the structure of this text, one can discern echoes of Adorno's words in *Der*

Essay als Form, which, while specifically addressing the essay form, seem to be applicable, *ex post*, to this work as well: “The common objection against him, that he is fragmentary and random, itself postulates the existence of totality, thereby asserting the identity of subject and object, and behaves as if one were in control of the whole” (Adorno 1958, 24). Wholeness is not inherent, and a text that aims to reflect and narrate reality cannot disregard this absence but must make it the central theme of its discourse, focusing on the transient and building upon it. The essay “denkt in Brüchen, so wie die Realität brüchig ist” (Adorno [1958] 2003, 35); the text thinks in fragments because reality is itself fragmentary.

The utilization of fragments isn't an act of renunciation, destruction, or mere disintegration; rather, it represents a quest to reshape the literary form. Disorder becomes the raw material of literature, serving as the foundational element upon which it is constructed. This intentional incorporation of fragments underscores literature's transformative power and its ability to forge new creative pathways. The fragmentary nature of the world and the impossibility of reduction to a single unity are also embodied in the novel, evident in Ulrich's concept of “active passivity” (Musil 1978, 356) and in the characteristics of other characters in the novel, forming a constellation of individualities. Furthermore, Musil's text doesn't adhere to the rules of causal connections and chronological sequence but establishes a series of networks of links based on the use of analogical connections (*Gleichnis*).

This form allows the work to anchor itself in the fundamental instant that is essential for knowledge and perception. The work dismantles a false sense of totality, presenting itself as a fixed fragment in the moment, denying synthesis even through form. In line with Adorno's perspective, it simultaneously maintains it while disrupting the continuum, rejecting the notion that human history is a steady and progressive flow.

Survival of an attempt

Over the passing decades, the exploration of these ideas has proliferated, giving rise to various approaches and experiments grounded in similar aesthetic and epistemic foundations. The fragmentation of the self has increasingly emerged as a central theme in literature, prompting critical examinations of the experiences stemming from the shocks of the early 20th century. Many of these developments, particularly the fragmentation of the self, find resonance in postmodern literature. The literary fragment assumes a dual role, acting as both the subject and cornerstone of numerous literary works, with authors employing it in diverse ways. This multifaceted use of the literary fragment reflects the richness and complexity of its role in conveying and exploring the complexities of the human experience.

Over the passage of time, narrative works consistently embrace fragmentariness and fallibility, unfolding expansive spaces and times that invite readers to inhabit and explore their meanings. The fragmentation of the subject becomes an increasingly prominent literary focus, and the aftershocks of the early 20th-century disruptions find their continued expression in the fragmented representation

of the self, a characteristic often associated with Postmodern literature. “The transformation inevitably affects the subject: a fragmented world and society corresponds to a fragmented subject. Here too, there is a noteworthy shift: if in the period of modernity the subject was ‘alienated’, now it is, precisely, fragmented” (Ceserani 1997, 84). This observation underlines a significant evolution in the portrayal of the self, where the contemporary literary landscape mirrors a world and society that are themselves characterized by fragmentation, marking a departure from the alienation emphasized during the modernist era.

Taking a leap forward of nearly a hundred years, let's shift our focus to a more recent example: *Les Années* by Annie Ernaux, published in 2008. *Les Années* is a markedly different text, often categorized by critics as autobiography, autofiction, memoir, or novel. In my view, it defies easy classification under any of these labels. Its fragmentary nature is immediately apparent, even at the level of its layout and presentation.

Annie Ernaux's entire body of work reflects her fascination with the intersection of the trajectory of her texts and their form. She addresses this aspect in interviews and in the texts that constitute *L'Atelier noir*. She notes, “What will be comical, if one day this writing journal is published, in fact, as 99% research, is that we will discover to what extent, ultimately, the form has preoccupied me” (Ernaux 2011, 125). This preoccupation runs parallel to her desire to create writing that grapples with the problem of truth (Dugast-Portes 2015).

In a world with a formless, intricate structure that defies reduction to a harmonious description and narrative, literature seeking to engage with the world and contingency must embody this complexity at its core.

Unlike *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*, where some semblance of traditional narrative structure persists, *Les Années* is composed of fragments, lists, catalogs, collections of facts, and episodes of life. It functions as an album of existence and memory (Richterová [1981] 2021), resonating with Walter Benjamin's words regarding his journey in creating the *Passagen-Werk*.

Method of this work: literary montage. I have nothing to say. Only to show. I will not adopt clever formulations, steal nothing valuable. But the rags, the waste, the refuse: I do not want to describe them but to exhibit them. (Benjamin 1982, 574)

This montage embodies a provisional and experimental character, “which is inscribed in the verb ‘essayer’” (Pontolillo 2022, 224). Much like what we observed with Musil, the verb “essayer” pertains to the essay as a discursive genre and resides within a semantic field comprising terms like attempt, discard, selection, error, and experiment. However, even in this case, it doesn't entirely adhere to the essay as discourse or genre to remain on a different plane and create an aesthetic form rooted in the fragment, a literary form that can endure in modernity and serve as an “instrument de lutte” (Ernaux 2008, 241), a tool of struggle. In the choice of construction and formal approach in Ernaux's text, a fundamental question arises: can a contemporary novel present a reconciliatory, logical narrative? Must it dissolve literature into abstraction, hermeticism, and inconsistency?

Fragmentation, though conspicuously present and even ostentatious, doesn't necessarily imply disorder and anarchy, nor is it a simple dissolution devoid of meaningful connections and structures. Within this apparent fragmentary non-structure, one must recognize the source of creativity and organization through assembly, an openness to life's potential (Rachwalska von Rejchwald 2009).

This apparent disorder mirrors the subject's experience of the world – a world for which comprehensive and absolute knowledge is utopian and unattainable. It is a world that can only be described through “*autohistoria*... a term I use to describe the genre of writing about one's personal and collective history using fictive elements, a sort of fictionalized autobiography or memoir” (Anzaldúa 2002, 578).

The representation of a world lacking symmetry and order necessitates a deep dive into the fragments and details of life that can be preserved “as they fall upon the mind in the order in which they fall” within their own order “however disconnected and incoherent in appearance” (Woolf 1993, 9). The blank spaces in the text are integral to its creation, simultaneously representing both presence and absence. They require the reader to actively participate in the process of interpretation, underscoring the need to understand the work's creation and fruition as two interconnected and potentially complementary facets of the same cognitive process.

Ernaux's aim is to speak about the universal through the self, to say what one can see “If we were to attempt to list the events that occurred outside of ourselves” (Ernaux 2008, 225). Yet the self rarely truly materializes. There is a subject aspiring to be historical (Luperini 2018, 120), but it mostly appears in the third person, using “nous” and ‘on’, with little room for ‘je’. It is an autobiography seeking to represent a generation, not an individual self. Ernaux herself expresses her intention to write an “autobiographie impersonnelle” (impersonal autobiography), where she uses “No ‘I’ [...] but ‘one’ and ‘we’” (Ernaux 2008, 240).

However, this endeavor is pursued through subjectivation and an extremely partial point of view. Ernaux's goal, as she asserts in the final part of the book, is to locate collective memory within individual memory, preserving fragments of what she calls “the lived dimension of history” (Ernaux 2008, 239). To achieve this, the text continually returns to the representation of the particular, the detail. A fundamental characteristic of the text is the tension between the specifics of personal memory running parallel to the saved traces of collective memory, and “it is on this polarity that the meaning and challenge of the work are built”. (Pontolillo 2022, 220). Ernaux cannot represent the totality except through particularity. Even if she adopts the filter of autonomy, the self cannot be a universal self of grand historiographies, a “nous” claiming universality. To be a historical subject, the contemporary subject must choose to be a partial and precisely fragmentary subject. Even an autobiographical ‘I’ proceeds by trial and error, assaying possibilities.

The text doesn't present a mere accumulation of the debris of experience but rather a collection of preserved moments of memory, contributing to the construction of a meaningful system suited to the epistemological experience of modernity. This formal operation serves as an interpretation and search for reality and truth, revealing the potential and possibility of vital experience within it.

In *Journal du dehors* Ernaux states: “There is no hierarchy in the experiences we have about the world” (Ernaux 2011, 9). Indeed, among the narrative fragments constituting *Les Années*, there is no hierarchical or qualitative categorization. It is the act of reading that establishes connections, not based on chronological or causal relationships, but through analogical associations, employing absent images that create a network of references and allegorical and analogical links.

As is often the case with fragmentary works, the structure activates multiple reading paths (Rachwalska von Rejchwald 2009). The linear, “traditional” reading, guided by the succession of fragments following one another in the order of the pages, allows for cross-cutting readings. The fragmentary work demands reader participation, making the act of reading a repetition of the creative and cognitive process that is the work itself.

Everything is provisional

Modernity indeed serves as a fertile ground for fragmented approaches, rendering univocal, total, and reconciliatory narratives seemingly unattainable. Literature has evolved to follow paths detached from strict propositional or cause-and-effect structures. Yet, the texts examined in this analysis underscore a profound emphasis on the creative process within the work, attributing significant gnoseological value to it, as well as on the moment of consumption.

This literature endeavors to position itself as a cognitive mode, engaging in the elaboration of pathways that harmonize reality and possibility, soul and precision. It embraces ambivalence, steadfastly refusing to succumb to singularity while maintaining a constant state of openness. The texts, particularly those analyzed here, grapple directly with understanding human beings in the contemporary world and the profound question of truth. They assert that the truth of literature can and should be elusive, hypothetical, partial, and provisional.

Fragmentation in these works extends beyond macroscopic aspects such as *mise-en-page* and page spacing. It is discernible in the configuration of different periods, the paratactic structure of certain passages, the use of ellipses and suspensions, and the high degree of metaphoricity in fragmentary texts. While these aspects couldn't be exhaustively examined here, it is evident that the fragment serves as a cognitive and descriptive tool for a reality that is inherently fragmented.

Fragmentariness embodies evolving attempts and paths, manifesting as details that string together and form provisional constellations. It signifies a rigorous architecture deflagrating, venturing into a universe of possibilities, routes with undefined endpoints, an ongoing journey inclined toward heterodoxy. In the works studied, this doesn't lead to complete deflagration and the abandonment of narrative and literary form; instead, as observed, it results in remodulation and re-composition, even at the formal level. These examined attempts affirm that literature can still function as an instrument and space for interpreting the world, resisting univocality and epistemic and ideological hierarchies, and challenging and subverting norms.

Knowledge is perceived as an ongoing and productive act; there's no static state of facts, but a continuous process. As Bense (1950, 18) aptly puts it, “In reality, there are no technical states [...]”.

There are only technical events, processes, and the so-called results and products belong to this process, are links in it like links in a chain". In the realm of literature, there's no room for a rigid, coherent system. Narrative transcends mere description and the accumulation of borrowed theories or theoretical fragments. Literature asserts its unique mode of comprehension by reshaping fragments of knowledge into hybrid forms and constructing diverse epistemic domains. It wields both creative and destructive power. When literature absorbs scientific imaginaries, its intent is not mere appropriation; rather, it seeks to disorganize, break down, assign new objectives, and reshape both internal and external relations. The texts we've explored closely align with and embody this concept in their conception and construction.

Literary creation transcends mere representation of reality; it entails interpretation and recreation. Through the rewriting of the knowledge it encompasses, literature not only challenges established ideas but also scrutinizes the very literary forms that underpin it. Far from mere repetition or reiteration, literature engages in the deconstruction, selection, and reconstruction of the given material.

Diverging from other epistemological discourses, literature doesn't hinge on the exclusion of the heterogeneous; rather, it flourishes through inclusion and assimilation. It directs its focus towards elements cast aside by the confines of scientific, ethical, or institutional thought-systems, which are often constructed upon the exclusion of the exceptional. Literature absorbs what is commonly deemed as 'leftover', 'waste', or a compromise. It has the power to "To understand things that are different, far apart, contradictory, foreign, or familiar as a unity". (Blumenberg 2020 [1986], 19). Literature authorizes the presence of flashes of pure reality and glimpses of life that defy repetition and conceptualization. It imparts a completely different form of knowledge (Dahan-Gaida, 2016). The productive process, in this context, takes the form of a method carried out using "fragments of reason" (Gadda 1974, 285). It adapts itself according to the subject it's addressing; when representing an unknowable and fragmented world, it adjusts its discourse accordingly.

This productive process doesn't always adhere to complete sentences or linear structures. It can deviate from the formal structure of typical statements, grammatical constructs, and lexical semantics when the issue demands it. This demand arises when the non-propositional nature of the problem is characterized by the simultaneity of elements, a quality that only an image or graphic representation can do justice to. The next systematic step, following spatial composition, is sequencing or temporal organization, which necessarily aligns with the linear nature of the writing system (Gellhaus 2008, 136).

If attention to detail serves as a tool for understanding, and if the fragment is the preferred viewpoint for examining modernity, then the literary text must adjust itself accordingly.

Endnotes:

1. Unless otherwise indicated, the English translations are mine.

References¹

- Adorno, Theodor W. *Noten zur Literatur I*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1958.
- Anzaldúa, Gloria. "Now let us shift...the path of *conocimiento*...inner work." *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*. Ed. Anzaldúa, Gloria and Keating, Ana. New York: Routledge, 2002. 540-78.
- Aubrey-Morici, Marine "The Essayification of Narrative Forms in the 21st Century: a Comparative Study". Ed. Fusillo, Massimo; Simonetti, Gianluigi; Marchese, Lorenzo. *Thinking Narratively: Between Novel-Essay and Narrative Essay*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022. 101-112.
- Bachmann, Ingeborg. *Frankfurter Vorlesungen. Probleme zeitgenössischer Dichtung*. München, Berlin: Piper Verlag, [1982] 2016.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band V. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.
- Bense, Max. *Literaturmetaphysik. Der Schriftsteller in der technischen Welt*. München: Piper Verlag, 1950.
- Blumenberg, Hans. *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2020 [1986].
- Ceserani, Remo, *Raccontare il Postmoderno*, Torino: Bollati e Boringhieri, 1997.
- Coglitore, Roberta. "La ri-mediazione digitale e la dissolvenza dell'io nel Photojournal di Annie Ernaux." *Schermi. Rappresentazioni, immagini, transmedialità, Between*, VIII.16 (2018).
<http://www.betweenjournal.it>.
- Dahan-Gaida, Laurence. "L'art, la littérature et le vivant." *Arts et Savoirs*, 7, (2016).
<http://journals.openedition.org/aes/894>.
- De Angelis, Enrico. *Robert Musil. Profilo critico e biografico*. Torino: Einaudi, 1982.
- Desideri, Fabrizio. "Prefazione." Ed. Marcheschi, Matteo. *Rottami, rovine, minuzzerie. Pensare per frammenti*. Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2018.
- Di Giacomo, Giuseppe. *Estetica e letteratura. Il grande romanzo tra Ottocento e Novecento*. Bari: Laterza, 1999.
- Donnarumma, Raffaele. "Gli anni di Annie Ernaux." *Allegoria* 76 (2017): 109-122.
- Dugast-Portes, F. "Écriture et lecture du fragment dans l'œuvre d'Annie Ernaux." *Annie Ernaux: Un engagement d'écriture*. Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle. [<http://books.openedition.org/psn/171>].
- Dyčková, A. "Liberation of Language and Suspension of Subject in T.W. Adorno's Notes to Literature." *Humanities Bulletin* 5. 2 (2023): 26-39.
<https://journals.lapub.co.uk/index.php/HB/article/view/2460>.
- Ercolino, Stefano. *The Novel-Essay, 1884-1947*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Ernaux, Annie. *Écrire la vie*. Paris: Gallimard, 2016.
- Ernaux, Annie. *L'Atelier noir*. Paris: Editions des Busclats, 2011.
- Ernaux, Annie. *Les Années*. Paris: Gallimard, 2008.
- Gadda, Carlo Emilio, *Meditazione Milanese*, Torino: Einaudi, 1974.
- Gamper, M. "Dichtung als 'Versuch' Literatur zwischen Experiment und Essay." *Zeitschrift für Germanistik, Neue Folge* 17. 3 (2007): 593-611.
- Gellhaus, Axel. *Schreibengehen. Literatur und Fotografie en passant*. Köln: Böhlau, 2008.
- Grazzini, Serena. "Conoscere e vivere in modo instabile "cioè, press'a poco, come una goccia d'acqua in una nuvola": *L'uomo senza qualità* di Musil". Ed. Iotti, Gianni. *Raccontare e conoscere. Paradigmi del sapere nelle forme narrative*. Pisa: Pacini, 2019. 113-132.
- Herford, Maximilian. "Die Gegenwart ist nichts als eine Hypothese: Formen und Funktionen von Experimentalität in Robert Musils *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*." *Studia Theodisca* XXII (2015): 33-62.

- James, William. *Principles of Psychology*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890.
- Luperini, Romano. *Dal modernismo a oggi*. Roma: Carocci, 2018.
- Mülder-Bach, Inka. *Robert Musil. Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften. Ein Versuch über den Roman*. München: Hanser, 2013.
- Musil, Robert. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 3 vols., 1978.
- Musil, Robert. *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Salzburg: Jung und Jung, 2016-2018.
- Pontolillo, Giovanni. "Pour une lecture critique de Les Années d'Annie Ernaux." *Svět literatury – Časopis pro novodobé literatury (World of Literature – Journal for Modern Literatures)* (2022): 216-227.
- Rachwalska von Rejchwald, J. "(In)visible perseverance of absence. The form's importance in Les Années by Annie Ernaux." *Quêtes littéraires* 1 (2011): 112-136.
- Rachwalska von Rejchwald, J. "Lector in fragmento: en lisant La vie extérieure et Journal du dehors". *Annie Ernaux. Perspectives critiques*. New York/Ottawa/Toronto. Legas, 2009. 51-61.
- Rasch, W. *Über Robert Musils Roman "Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften"*. Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967.
- Rella, Franco. *Forme del sapere, L'eros, la morte, la violenza*, Milano: Bompiani 2014.
- Richterová, Sylvia. *Topografia*, Roma: Rina, [1981] 2021.
- Susini-Anastopoulos, Françoise. *L'écriture fragmentaire*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997.
- Wandruszka, Marie Luise. *Mettere insieme i frammenti. Da Caroline Schlegel a Robert Altman*. Roma: Carocci, 2002.
- Woolf, Virginia. *The Crowded Dance of Modern Life: Selected Essays*. London: Penguin, 1993.