

II International Conference on “Hermeneutics of Symbol, Myth and ‘Modernity of Antiquity’ in Italian Literature and the Arts from the Renaissance up to the Present Day” (Milan, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, 19-20, December, 2016)



ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The hermeneutics of the “modernity of antiquity” is a still pioneering branch of research in Italian literature and art studies. Its aim is to discover the hidden meaning of works of literature and arts where other approaches failed or proved unsatisfactory.

Its distinguishing trait consists in using, along with all the results of historical, critical and philological studies, ancient pagan religious and mythological sources and heresiological traditions as decisive and yet unexpected interpretative tools to understand literary and artistic works produced in the modern era and in Christian times, but skillfully conceived by their authors – who identify themselves with ancient people that had come back to life in modern times in disguise as crypto-pagans in incognito – as erudite enigmas. The authors created such enigmas from the very same materials taken from ancient pagan religions or heresies, counting on the fact that such sources and the meanings they carry are unknown to the most part of the “common readers” and not only to them. Most of the readers lack indeed the interdisciplinary skills ranging from the literature or the art to the religions of the pagan antiquity, either Mediterranean or non Mediterranean, and to the heresies of Christianity, Judaism and other religions.

The works that can be ascribed to the hermeneutics of the “modernity of antiquity” category, which are actually crypto-pagan works, have therefore been conceived and produced with a multilayered semantic structure, similar to that of a shrine or a palimpsest.

The main objective of the modernity of the antiquity which, more precisely, should be considered as «hermeneutics of the “symbolic-mythological modernity of antiquity”», is to open the lid of the shrine-palimpsest work, which means scraping the *scriptio superior* of the literary and artistic images so as to reveal the true meaning that their author – riddler in disguise – veiled in the *scriptio inferior*.

Such images, built with a multilayered semantic structure of a shrine-palimpsest, are actually symbols. “One made of two” is

indeed the basic meaning of the Greek word σύμβολον, as used by Plato in *Symposium* 16, 191D. And as symbolic images, they also carry a different meaning. In other words, they contain an idea which give them a meaning other than the apparent, realistic one.

In the case of works conceived from the perspective of the "symbolic-mythological modernity of antiquity", symbolic images contain a metaphysical and religious idea and more precisely a metaphysical-religious idea based on the ancient sources of mythology, i.e. pagan religion (generally non Homeric-Olympic, but anti-Olympic, archaic, mystery cults, either Mediterranean or non Mediterranean), or heresies (Christian, Jew, but not exclusively).

The scholars of the "modernity of the antiquity", that is the "symbolic-mythological modernity of antiquity", do not limit their research to a descriptive, analytical and empirical analysis. They solve cruxes of interpretation through a deductive-investigative research. After considering all the results of the philological and historical-critical studies, which are their fundamental pre-requisites, they will reach a hermeneutical solution with the aid of their peculiar tools, that is the sources of the ancient pagan religion or of the heresies, sources hidden in the creation of the symbolic images of those works and of the idea they contain and essential to the discovery of their hidden meaning.

To study the "symbolic-mythological modernity of antiquity" means to consider the sources of the ancient pagan religion or heresies that can be found in the scriptio inferior of the images of the works as important hermeneutical clues: they will indeed prove to be the crucial yet unexpected keys to foresee and then to reveal the hidden metaphysical-religious idea that is the recondite meaning of literary and art works

unwilling to reveal it for the fact itself of having been built upon themes and pagan or heretic sources that create the religious symbol they carry.

The *Second International Conference on "Hermeneutics of Symbol, Myth and 'Modernity of Antiquity' in Italian literature and the Arts from the Renaissance up to the Present Day* represents a chance to promote the hermeneutics of the "symbolic-mythological modernity of antiquity" at a national and international level and, at the same time, to stimulate new and further studies in this direction that, although still unexplored, promises to open up new and interesting hermeneutical perspectives, not only for scholars but also for other groups of readers.

CALL FOR PAPERS e CALL FOR POSTERS

I. PANELS

I. Words and concepts

- I. 1. Hermeneutics, symbol and myth: etymological meaning of the terms and their evolution in the ancient culture.
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II. Symbol and myth from early Catholicism

- II. 1. Symbol from early Catholicism and liturgy.
- II. 2. Symbols and myths of paganism, with particular reference to the mystery cults, in the interpretation of the Fathers of the Church, the Christian Apologists and

ancient Christian writers (i.e. Clement of Alexandria, Arnobius, Firmicus Maternus, Augustine of Hippo).

III. The religious meaning of mythological symbol, myth and new syncretistic and apocalyptic mythology in some anticlassical theories of the modern age

- **III. 1.** *Abrégé de l'Origine de tous les Cultes* by Charles François Dupuis (Trie-Château, 1742 - Is-sur-Tille, 1809).
 - **III. 2.** *Symbolik und Mythologie der alten Völker, besonders der Griechen* by Georg Friedrich Creuzer (Marburg an der Lahn, 1771 - Heidelberg, 1858).
 - **III. 3.** *Gottheiten von Samothrake e la Philosophie der Offenbarung* by Friedrich W. J. Schelling (Leonberg, Württemberg, 1775 - Bad Ragaz, Sankt Gallen, 1854).
 - **III. 4.** *Die unsterblichkeitslehre der orphischen theologie au den grabdenkmälern des altertums nach anleitung einer vase aus Canosa im besitz des herrn prosper biardot in Paris dargestellt* by Johann Jakob Bachofen (Basel, 1815 – Basel 1887).
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IV. Crypto-pagan symbols and themes hidden “under the veil” of Italian literature and the arts: symbols, myths and themes of the “modernity of antiquity” from the Renaissance to the twenty-first century

- **IV. 1.** «Ut pictura poësis»

The symbols and themes of this section must refer to:

a) archaic, pre-Homeric, non-Olympic or even anti-Olympic ancient religious systems, or to ancient mystery cults, either Mediterranean or non Mediterranean;

b) themes and figures that can be analyzed (even from a comparative and mythological-religious perspective, if necessary) include: Bacchus (-Dyonisus-Zagreus-Sabatius-Jacchus; Orpheus); Venus (-Aphrodite; Astarte; Tanit; Ishtar); Adonis (-Tammuz); Isis, Osiris, Horus, Aton, Amun, Serapis; Saturn (Cronus, Moloch, Baal Hammon; Aion, Zervan); Mithra; Shiva.

c) crypto-pagan symbols referring to apocalyptic themes.

- [Essential bibliography](#)

- **IV. 2.** Traces of ancient Christian and Jewish heresies and of the Jewish, phoenician-punic, crypto-paganism hidden “under the veil” of the images, of the symbols and of the themes of Italian literature from the Renaissance to the twenty-first century.
- **IV. 3.** Traces of crypto-esoteric initiation and crypto-pagan symbolism hidden “under the veil” of the narrative of Jules Verne (Nantes, 1828 - Amiens, 1905) and Maurice Leblanc (Rouen, 1864 - Perpignan, 1941), and in both popular and highbrow Italian literature and arts.

- **IV. 4.** The crypto-paganism of the “Ancients” in the works of Lord Dunsany (London, 1878 - Dublin, 1957), Arthur Machen (Caerleon-on-Usk, Monmouthshire, 1863 - Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire, 1947) and Howard Phillips Lovecraft (Providence, Rhode Island, USA, 1890-1937) in Italian literature and arts.
- **IV. 5.** Themes and symbols of ancient paganism (mystery cults, Mediterranean and non Mediterranean) in historical-esoteric Italian thrillers.
- **IV. 6.** The “modernity of antiquity” in the symbols and mythological and crypto-pagan themes of the twentieth and twenty-first century’s comics, cartoons and video games.

CALL FOR PAPERS e CALL FOR POSTERS

II. TERMS OF PARTICIPATION

Languages allowed:

- Italian for Italian speakers;
- English, French, Spanish and German for foreign speakers or speakers with a foreign passport.

All the **participation proposals** (POSTER or SPEECH) must be sent via email to the Scientific Secretary (ermeneutica.SMMA@unicatt.it) by **October, 20.**

The proposal will be sent along together with **2 pdf files**, titled: **File 1 + title of the panel** the proposal is referring to; and **File 2 + surname and name + title of the panel** the proposal is referring to.

- 1) **File1** will be a pdf file including ONLY the following information (in Italian or in English, French, Spanish or German):
 - the title of the proposal or the poster,
 - the title of the panel the proposal is referring to,
 - abstract (2.000 characters, space included),
 - 10 key words,
 - at least 5 bibliographical references,
 - the main ancient sources that will be used.

- 2) **File2** will be a pdf file including the following information (in Italian or in English, French, Spanish or German):
 - first name and last name,
 - residence,
 - citizenship,
 - passport (specify only if it is foreign or Italian, without the number; do not send a copy of the document),
 - phone number,
 - the title of the proposal or the poster,
 - the title of the panel the proposal is referring to,
 - abstract (2.000 characters, space included),
 - 10 key words,
 - at least 5 bibliographical references,
 - the main ancient sources that will be used.
 - resume including University and academic position (full professor, associate professor, researcher, aggregate

professor; PhD student, grant researcher; laboratory teacher; assistant) and list of scientific publications;
- freelance (MA and PhD) researchers' resume will include also 1) the title of the PhD and Degree, 2) the University they attended; 3) the title of their thesis and the name of their tutor/s; 4) their current job position and their job experiences.

The object line of the email – to be sent by October, 20 to the Scientific Secretary (ermeneutica.SMMA@unicatt.it) – will include:

PROPOSAL or POSTER + title of the panel the proposal is referring to.

The communication regarding the accepted proposals (both speech and poster) will be sent by **November, 15**.

The authors of the accepted POSTERS and PROPOSALS must subscribe and pay the participation fee by **November, 14**. Please note that if you pay through bank transfer, you will have to send the receipt to formazione.permanente-mi@unicatt.it; and cc. to renata.dellafiori@unicatt.it.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

* The conference organizers will not take into consideration proposals which consider myth and symbol from a psychological, psychoanalytical perspective, which consider

myth merely in the perspective of "traditional narrative", or which analyze themes and figures of Homeric-Olympic mythology.

* The conference organizers will not take into consideration proposals which consider myth and symbol from a sociological, ethnological or anthropological perspective.

* The conference organizers will not take into consideration proposals which consider myth merely in the perspective of "traditional narrative".

* The conference organizers will not take into consideration proposals which analyze themes and figures of Homeric-Olympic mythology.

* The conference organizers will take into consideration proposal based on the inter-disciplinary approach of the "symbolic-mythological modernity of antiquity", which combines the history of the literature and of the arts with the history of the ancient religions and of the heresies (Christian, Jewish and so on), paying a particular attention to the study of the ancient sources of the religions and of the heresies (see *About the conference*)

For further information concerning the concept of "symbolic-mythological modernity of antiquity", the "Panels" and the program, please contact: ida.villa@unicatt.it and bart.vandenbossche@arts.kuleuven.be

The submitted papers which will pass a double blind peer review will be published in a **volume**.

GENERAL CONFERENCE CHAIR

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