

Literature and Science : 1922-2022

“Sapienza” - Università di Roma, 30-31 March 2023

The conference is intended to foster a productive dialogue between the literary and scientific communities. The conversation between the two communities has been ongoing over time, across different geographical areas, and has been shaped by continuities and discontinuities (Hagen). For a good part of the twentieth century, it has certainly presupposed a difference between the humanities and the sciences, especially with regard to the question of method (Gadamer), but the resurgence of the debate on method in literary studies in the first two decades of the twenty-first century suggests that, in spite of the diverging paths of specialization and differentiation, the dialogue between the literary and scientific communities unfolds a dialectics of encounters in a unified cultural system of knowledge which intensifies the search for a common ground while countering and demystifying radical oppositions.

This conference targets issues of contiguity between the human and the external world (animals, plants, objects, the biosphere as a whole), from a decentred, non-anthropomorphic perspective. From this vantage point, it intends to re-examine Modernism: 2022 is also the centenary of both *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* — works that place center stage figures of knowledge (Ulysses; Tiresias) — foregrounding the human creature’s uncanny capacity for distancing and domination of cosmic reality through logos and technique. These modernist classics engage with science; they show the indebtedness of literature to — and alignment with — scientific attitudes and methods (Pound, Huxley, Woolf, M. Moore, Beckett, among many more). Their generative quality as literary texts simultaneously invites reflection on attempts at innervating literary criticism and critical discourse with scientific objectivity, encouraging a reassessment of the concept of technique in the philosophical-critical tradition and its role in the rise and fortune of literary-critical schools, from Russian Formalism, through poststructuralism, and present currents such as new realism, ecocriticism, etc. Within this horizon, the conference also welcomes studies related to posthumanism, to ecology and climate change, to holism and to the idea of Anthropocene, and encourages contributions that explore how the conversation between literature and science might entail looking into the scientists’ frequent employment of allegorical and metaphorical language, climaxing in texts stylistically close to narratives.

We invite submissions focused on, but not limited to, the following topics:

- § Literature and sciences (medicine, psychology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, history, hard and soft sciences)
- § Modernism and science
- § Postmodernism and science
- § Literary criticism as/and science
- § The literary in science
- § Posthumanism
- § Trans-species languages and discourses
- § The human in context: plants
- § The human in context: animals
- § The human in context: the world of objects
- § Philosophy and reality as independent from human thought
- § Mythological figures of the Search for Knowledge (Prometheus, Oedipus, Ulysses)
- § Prosthetic bodies
- § Artificial intelligence
- § Ageing/youth preservation
- § Faith, Science, Literature

Please send anonymized 300-500-word abstracts in English and a short bio of no more than 150 words by July 2022 to:

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Proposals in Italian will be accepted on condition that an English version of the paper is circulated one week prior to the Conference.