

POETICA & CRISTIANESIMO

5

POETICA & CRISTIANESIMO

CONVEGNI BIENNALI DELLA
FACOLTÀ DI COMUNICAZIONE SOCIALE ISTITUZIONALE
DELLA PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITÀ DELLA SANTA CROCE

Volumi pubblicati:

1. *Poetica & Cristianesimo*, 2004 – ISBN 88-8333-135-4
2. *Il ritorno a casa*, 2006 – ISBN 88-8333-160-5
3. *Mimesi, verità e fiction*, 2009 – ISBN 88-8333-220-3
4. *Ragione, fiction e fede*, 2011 – ISBN 978-88-8333-255-5
5. *Scrittori del Novecento e mistero cristiano*, 2013 – ISBN 978-88-8333-299-9

PONTIFICIA UNIVERSITÀ
DELLA SANTA CROCE

FACOLTÀ DI COMUNICAZIONE
SOCIALE ISTITUZIONALE

SCRITTORI DEL NOVECENTO E MISTERO CRISTIANO

Poetica & Cristianesimo 2011

A cura di
ENRIQUE FUSTER
JOHN WAUCK

EDUSC

Prima edizione 2013

© 2013 – ESC s.c.ar.l.

Via dei Pianellari, 41 – 00186 Roma

Tel. (39) 06 45493637 – Fax (39) 06 45493641

info@EduSC.it

ISBN 978-88-8333-299-9

Grafica di L. M. Agostinelli

Impaginazione di G. Pignalberi (in L^AT_EX 2_ε)

SOMMARIO

Introduzione	
The Christian Mystery in Literature and Film, 1900–2000: Fathoming a Century - JOHN WAUCK	9

Relazioni

Risonanze cristiane nella poesia del Novecento - PASQUALE MAFFEO	15
El poeta en su torre de fe: el sujeto poético en la lírica española contemporánea - JAVIER DE NAVASCUÉS	37
The Dawn of Twentieth Century Christian Literature - JOSEPH PEARCE	53
Levi, Arslan, and Responses to Genocide - SIOBHAN NASH-MARSHALL	65
Gracia y Redención en el cine clásico y contemporáneo: de Platón a Avatar - EDUARDO TORRES-DULCE	95
Twentieth-century Catholic Authors and the Secular World - EVELYN BIRGE VITZ	117

Comunicazioni

El gran dilema: justicia o misericordia (en dos novelas alemanas del siglo XX: <i>Der Gouverneur y Somos utopía</i>) - ENRIQUE BANÚS	141
«Esiste un modo per tornare a essere buoni». Una lettura antropologica de <i>Il cacciatore di aquiloni</i> - FEDERICA BERGAMINO	153
<i>The Dark Knight</i> de Christopher Nolan: lectura analógica y simbólica de un <i>blockbuster</i> - CARMEN SOFÍA BRENES	163
Búsqueda poética y misterio cristiano: la indagación de poeta enamorado en Gustavo González Villanueva y Helena Ospina - JORGE CHEN SHAM	173
Asturias y Vargas Llosa en "Escritores Latinoamericanos" - ERIKA CHINCHILLA	185
<i>L'Esorcismo di Emily Rose</i> . Sacrificio oblativo e visioni del preternaturale - GIOVANNI COGLIANDRO	195
Un povero cristiano: Ignazio Silone - LUISA DE RITIS	209
Escritores de entreguerras y la crisis de la cultura moderna - ONÉSIMO DÍAZ	221
Lo sforzo per diventare umani nel cinema dei fratelli Dardenne - ENRIQUE FUSTER	233
Cinema spirituale, cinema religioso e critica cinematografica - NORBERTO GONZÁLEZ GAITANO	243
<i>El Padrino</i> de F.F. Coppola como añoranza de personas e instituciones justas - JUAN JOSÉ GARCÍA-NOBLEJAS	251
El anhelo de trascendencia en la poetisa cubana María Rosa Noda - LUCRECIA MENA DE GOICOLEA	261
Due narrative della confessione: Juan José Arreola e Fernando del Paso - RAFAEL JIMÉNEZ CATAÑO	269

SOMMARIO

Il padre nella letteratura del XX secolo - GIULIO MASPERO	279
El asombro, la Iglesia y su propia historia en la obra poética de Karol Wojtyła - GASTÓN DE MÉZERVILLE, HELENA DE MÉZERVILLE	291
El sentido del sufrimiento en la novela <i>Wise Blood</i> de Flannery O'Connor - SUSANA MIRÓ LÓPEZ	305
“Un fuoco acceso nella notte”. La narrativa di Cormac McCarthy - RAFFAELE MONTANO	315
Tres momentos en la geometría vertical de Leopoldo Marechal - MÓNICA MONTES BETANCOURT	325
Julio Ramón Ribeyro: el sentido de la vida en <i>Prosas apátridas</i> ; escritura hecha de tiempo y para durar en el tiempo - GALIA OSPINA	337
Pável Florenski: una poética personalista de la unidad - HELENA OSPINA	347
Leopoldo Marechal: El viaje de lo bello hacia la Belleza - GABRIEL QUESADA MORA	357
“Dopo tante paure la vita ricomincia”. La speranza di Corrado Alvaro - ALESSANDRA TIRELLI	365
Otro Van Gogh es posible - VÍCTOR VALEMBOIS	375
Humor y cristianismo en Eduardo Mendoza - ROBERTO VERA AGUILAR	385
Actitudes frente al misterio de la muerte en <i>Metáforas y reflejos</i> . Jorgelina Loubet - CRISTINA VIÑUELA	395

INTRODUZIONE

THE CHRISTIAN MYSTERY IN LITERATURE AND FILM, 1900–2000: FATHOMING A CENTURY

John Wauck

Pontificia Università della Santa Croce

In May of 2011, an international conference was held in Rome, at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, to take stock of the remarkably varied role that Christianity — its teachings, its spirit and its culture — played in 20th century literature.

The conference was based on the somewhat daring premise that, a decade into the 21st century, we now have sufficient distance to begin analyzing the previous 100 years of literary history from an objective point of view. That premise is surely debatable, but what is beyond doubt is that, from a Christian perspective, the 20th century was as fascinating and as rich as any that came before, well deserving of profound, sustained study.

When viewed in comparison with the 19th century, the 20th century offers striking instances of continuity and equally striking discontinuities. Over the course of the century, many boundaries — geographical, social and literary — fell. Literature inspired by Christian faith sprang up anew around the globe: Africa (Chinua Achebe); Asia (Shusaku Endo); Scandinavia (Laxness and Undset); Australia (Les Murray). Women — Flannery O'Connor, Muriel Spark, Dorothy Sayers, Gertrude von le Fort, Sigrid Undset, Gabriela Mistral, Marilynne Robinson — played an increasingly prominent role. Christianity began to play a key role in the most diverse genres: comedy (Guareschi,

J. F. Powers), horror (William Peter Blatty's *Exorcist*), detective fiction (Chesterton, P. D. James), science fiction (Walter Miller), fantasy (C. S. Lewis), historical fiction and drama. Figures like Robert Bolt and Evelyn Waugh stepped back-and-forth freely across the fertile frontier between literature and film.

Yet there were strong continuities as well. The string of religious conversions and, specifically, the return to Roman Catholic belief, which began in the Romantic Era — one thinks of literary figures such as René de Chateaubriand, Klemens Brentano, Cardinal Newman, G. M. Hopkins, Joris-Karl Huysmans — continued apace in the early part of the 20th century. During this period, many literary artists became converts to more traditional forms of Christian belief. In England, for example, we see the conversions of Oscar Wilde, J. R. R. Tolkien, Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene, T. S. Eliot, G. K. Chesterton, and C. S. Lewis. In France, the American-born Julien Green and the poet Max Jacob embrace Catholicism; in Italy, Giovanni Papini; in Scandinavia, the Nobel-prize-winning novelist Sigrid Undset. The strong attraction of Christian faith was evident even among those who, like Franz Werfel and Willa Cather, remained sympathetic “fellow-travelers.”

In the conference, this phenomenon — the Catholic literary revival of the late 19th and early 20th centuries — was addressed by Joseph Pearce, author of the book *Literary Converts*. His paper, “The Dawn of Twentieth Century Christian Literature,” traces the roots of this revival to English Romanticism and, more particularly, the conversion of John Henry Newman and the Oxford Movement.

While the first half of the 20th century saw an extraordinary flowering of Christian literature, in the second half, various factors seemed to draw a curtain on an era when Christian poets and novelists such as Sienkiewicz, Undset, Mistral, Eliot and Mauriac might be expected to win the Nobel Prize. Nevertheless, as 20th century writers wrestled with questions of moral conscience, sexuality and love, the search for meaning, and the problem of evil, vestiges of Christian belief and habits of thought remained powerfully present, even in post-Christian authors like Joyce, Mann, Borges, Buzzati and Paz. The paper by the Italian poet and playwright Pasquale Maffeo, “Risonanze cristiane nella poesia del novecento” (Christian Resonances in 20th Century Poetry), examines this continued presence of Christian themes and imagery in the increasingly secularized culture of the last century.

As this process has continued with far greater intensity in second half of the 20th century, so much so that we can almost divide the century in two, we see the Christian poet increasingly marginalized by the culture at large, an isolation that is analyzed by Javier de Navascués of the University of Navarre in his paper, “El poeta en su torre de fe: el sujeto poético en la lírica española contemporánea” (The Poet in His Tower of Faith: the Poetic Subject in Contemporary Spanish Lyric Poetry), which explains the emergence of such radically independent literary figures as the poet Miguel d’Ors and the novelist-essayist Juan Manuel de Prada.

A major source of continuity between 19th and 20th Christian literature has been the focus on themes such as the existence of evil and the possibility of belief in God — issues that, in earlier centuries, were less central to the concerns of major Christian writers, for whom such questions often seemed more-or-less resolved. In her paper, “Levi, Arslan, and Responses of Genocide,” Siobhan Nash Marshall of Manhattanville College takes up the most emblematic confrontation with evil of the 20th century by reflecting on two very different Italian reactions to the horror of genocide: Primo Levi’s memoir about Auschwitz *Se questo è un uomo* (*If This Is a Man*) and Antonia Arslan’s novel *La masseria delle allodole* (*Skylark Farm*), which deals with the Armenian genocide during and after the First World War.

One of the truly transformative discontinuities between the literary culture of the 19th century and the 20th century has been the emergence of cinema as a major form of a dramatic art, and the religious dimension of film is the theme of Spanish film critic Eduardo Torres-Dulce’s paper “Gracia y redención en el cine clásico y contemporáneo: de Platón a *Avatar*” (Grace and Redemption in Classic and Contemporary Cinema: from Plato to *Avatar*), which offers a dazzling and encyclopedic tour of film history in its relationship with the fundamental Christian beliefs.

Despite the ongoing presence of the Christian mysteries in modern literature, there can be no question that Christianity is no longer the dominant belief system of the cultural elite. This too is a continuation and intensification of a phenomenon that began long before the 20th century. As a consequence, in a world shaped not only by world wars and genocide but also by Darwin, Marx, Einstein and Freud, Christianity has to explain and defend itself before an often

alien culture, much as it had to do in its very earliest centuries. Inevitably, literature has become a battleground for opposing views of religion and culture. The literary consequence of this situation are the theme of the paper, "Twentieth-Century Catholic Authors and the Secular World" by Evelyn Birge Vitz of New York University, who points out the sometimes amusing challenges faced by authors such as Evelyn Waugh, Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy and Jack Kerouac, who wrote for secular audiences but used what could be called a "Catholic code" — language and references that few non-Catholics would comprehend — that allowed more sophisticated readers to intuit the profoundly religious significance of their fiction.

The essays gathered in this volume — including the numerous shorter presentations — represent an opportunity to explore the questions and insights that the literary presence of the Christian mystery from 1900 on — whether admired, embraced, echoed or challenged — provokes and promises. Nevertheless, ten years is a short period of time, and one may hope that the 2011 conference will be recalled as a bold first step — the first of many attempts to come to grips with the role of Christian faith in the literary life of the 20th century.