

(RE)INVENTIONS AND NARRATIVES OF (UN)CERTAINTY: MYTH,
IMAGINATION, AND SPECULATION ACROSS LITERATURE AND THEORY

Myth, Mythology, and the Reconfiguration of Experience in Modern and Contemporary Literature

Section Organizers:

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Section language:

English and Italian

Call for Papers:

This thematic section invites contributions that examine myth as a critical tool through which narrative and poetic forms reconfigure time, space, and experience under conditions of epistemic and existential uncertainty. Situated within the broader framework of *(Un)certainities and (Re)inventions*, the section explores how myth operates as a mode of negotiating crisis, reshaping temporality, and articulating alternative forms of knowledge and existence.

The point of departure is the tension between myth and mythology, as formulated by Furio Jesi (1968). While mythology may be understood as a historically conditioned system of narratives, figures, and ideological structures, myth itself remains elusive, accessible only through its mediated forms. From this perspective, myth cannot be approached directly, but only through the cultural configurations that both transmit and transform it. At the same time, the distinction between myth and its interpretations is itself historically variable. From Giambattista Vico's conception of myth as an early, image-based form of knowledge embedded in historical processes, through Enlightenment and idealist attempts to demystify or overcome it, to its Romantic re-sacralisation as a privileged access to primordial truth, myth has been repeatedly redefined according to shifting epistemological frameworks.

The section explores the role of myth as a structuring principle capable of reconfiguring time and space within narrative and poetic works, with particular attention to twentieth-century Italian literature and its contemporary developments. Understood both as mythological narrative and as a constellation of "figures and sites inhabiting the collective unconscious" (Abbrugiati 2014), myth constitutes, as Van den Bossche (2007) has shown, a privileged point of convergence between literature and other fields of knowledge, including anthropology, ethnology, and psychology.

Rather than asking whether myth possesses metaphysical validity, the section proposes to investigate how it relates to history – how it is excluded from it, reabsorbed into it, or reactivated within it as a mode of resistance. Particular attention may be given to what Ernesto De Martino describes as the "crisis of presence", understood as a condition in which the subject's relation to the world, to time, and to meaning becomes unstable or threatened with dissolution.



Within this framework, poetic and narrative practices may be approached as sites in which myth re-emerges as a form of symbolic and experiential reconstruction. Rather than representing reality, such practices may function to restore it – transforming symptoms of crisis into images and reconstituting the subject's capacity to inhabit time and space. This process unfolds not outside history, but within it, under conditions of uncertainty, conflict, and risk.

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Associated Research Groups:

MITEMI. Interdisciplinary Studies on Myth, Time, Space, and Memory

The MITEMI Research Group (Interdisciplinary Studies on Myth, Time, Space, and Memory) was established as a space for interdisciplinary dialogue, bringing together research in literary studies, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, sociology, art history, and architecture. Its work centres on contemporary forms of the presence of myth in twentieth- and twenty-first-century European culture. The group's aim is to initiate and develop critical reflection on myth as a cognitive, symbolic, and culture-forming category – understood as a mode of responding to the crisis of modernity, the loss of meaning, the disintegration of collective memory, and the transformation of temporal and spatial structures. MITEMI seeks to create a dynamic space for intellectual exchange, grounded in collaboration across universities, disciplines, and languages, in which myth is approached not merely as an object of analysis, but also as a tool for rethinking the world.

