



FACULTY OF ARTS  
CHARLES UNIVERSITY  
IN PRAGUE



*Istituto Italiano di Cultura  
Praga*

**The Institute of Romance Studies  
Faculty of Humanities - Charles IV University in Prague,  
in collaboration with Italian Cultural Institute**

organize

an international Literature Convention on the topic:

**“Esotericism, occultism and fantasy in Italian Literature from the *fin de siècle* to  
avant-garde”.**

**Prague, Czech Republic, April 13<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> 2016.**

In the period between the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, after the wave of great positivist belief in reason, a logical crisis of rationality started, which affected the entire way of thinking in Western society. *Fin de siècle* literature, including the Italian exponents, was also strongly affected by it. Writers started exploring an untouched occult territory in search for knowledge that goes beyond the material world, beyond all that is evident, explainable or familiar, seduced by the desire to “chart the unknown”, which is partially present even in the works of realism Master, Giovanni Verga. The fact that even the major representatives of realism, foremost Luigi Capuana, haven't remained immune to this trend, speaks volumes. On the literary scene (and in other forms of art) spirituality broke through as the rising protagonist, having replaced rationality and truth, until then considered to be an objective entity. This process of abandoning the certainties of the “old school” was accompanied by the decline of certain literary genres, such as realism for example, and the rise of others: first and foremost fantasy storytelling. The unified image of the “Little World of the Past” was crumbling, disintegrating in the same way as the psyche of the individual, giving way to the birth of character-man, with Debenedetti. From the traditional romantic theme of duality, from doubling the soul and/or body we get to the hundreds of thousands of identities of Pirandellian characters or man multiplied by futurists.

Such an atmosphere established strong bonds between literature and esotericism, spiritualism and the so-called “occult”, a bond that in Italy, continued until the historical scene-setting for avant-garde and beyond.

The relationship between literature and esotericism in particular, has been in the limelight in recent years thanks to rigorous studies, which have made it possible for us to see how the phenomenon came to be, and how important the analysis and deeper understanding of literary currents and of individual writers and their work is. This field of knowledge has become the subject of academic research in the last decades and for this reason the main focus of Convention will be on Italian authors, active in the years between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, whose life and/or work has been particularly affected by the influence of esoteric thinking and their fascination with the “occult”, as well as on those authors that have contributed to the development of fantasy genre in Italian literature, a genre which, even if often referred to as weak or “irregular” - spread crucial teachings throughout society, which due to their nature and characteristics, can be defined as “initiation”.

Even if for Todorov the golden age of fantasy literature ends with the beginning of the new century, the aim of the Convention is to investigate the extent to which the changes from the beginning of the twentieth century (introduced by Freud, Einstein, Bergson...) have influenced further development of the fantasy genre in the Italian literature.

**The Convention will take place in two parallel sessions on the 13th, 14th and 15th of April 2016. in the premises of the Italian Culture Institute in Prague (*Šporkova 14 St. - 118 00 Praha 1 - Malá Strana*). The closing ceremony will be held at the Faculty of Philosophy – Charles IV University (Nám. Jana Palacha 2 St, 116 38, Praha 1). The conference will be opened by prof. Marco Pasi (University of Amsterdam), prof. Simona Cigliana (Sapienza University, Rome) and prof. Antonio Saccone (University Federico II, Naples).**

**A detailed programme will be made available during January 2016.**

**You are kindly invited to submit your abstract on the aforementioned topic (in Italian or English), not exceeding 1800 characters (spaces included), accompanied by a brief professional résumé, no later than October the 15th 2015, to the following e-mail address:**

**[convegnopraga@gmail.com](mailto:convegnopraga@gmail.com)**

**Communication of the accepted proposals will be sent by November 15th 2015.**

The Participation fee for the selected speakers is 70,- EUR (Fee for PhD students is 55,-EUR).

The fee includes production of graphic materials, coffee and lunch on the days of the Convention, including gala dinner.

The publication of a collective volume is expected by the first half of 2017.

**Organizing committee:**

**Alice Flemrová, Mauro Ruggiero, Giovanni Sciola.**