





Canone teatrale europeo

*Canon of European Drama*

21

*serie diretta da*

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Arianna Frattali e Stefano Locatelli

## *Un canone del teatro europeo?*

*«Canone», «Europa». Se evochiamo due nozioni così complesse nella denominazione di questa collana editoriale non è per attaccarci a due realtà fisse e acquisite, ma è per guardare a due obiettivi aperti.*

*Per canone intendiamo quel che è minimamente essenziale per conoscere la cultura teatrale e la vocazione drammatica europea.*

*Esso accoglie testi in cui i paesi europei hanno espresso pensieri, significati, valori, tecniche, parole che ne hanno manifestato lo spirito e che sono stati reciprocamente accolti costituendo un tessuto connettivo o comunemente riconoscibile come tale.*

*Non una serie di norme o modelli, ma una lista di testi che sono stati nel tempo costitutivi di una cultura che ha più o meno, in continuità o intermittenza, pur fra contrasti e lotte, pensato a un orizzonte comune.*

*Canone è qui una tradizione viva, un criterio didattico orientativo, mobile e relativo, soggetto a un continuo processo di convalida. È un patrimonio necessario su cui esercitare le scelte di una memoria selettiva, per progettarsi attivamente. È un viaggio. Un patrimonio del nostro passato intimamente e dinamicamente legato al nostro avvenire.*

*Mettersi nella prospettiva del canone significa per noi cercare ciò che guarda oltre ai provincialismi dei tempi e dei luoghi.*

*Con questa serie di libri assumiamo dunque il termine di canone teatrale europeo senza troppe pretese definitorie.*

*Si selezionano e si analizzano testi che nelle varie epoche storiche dei paesi europei hanno svolto funzioni di snodo o sono stati picchi di tendenze, contemporaneamente nell'area della letteratura drammatica e nell'universo visibile e orale del teatro, per gli aspetti ideologici e per gli aspetti tecnico-formali e che sono diventati canonici, secondo le varie procedure che gli studiosi del problema hanno ampiamente evidenziato.*

*Storia delle idee e storia delle forme.*

*Si tratta di aiutarci a prendere coscienza di ciò che ha unito o può unire l'Europa, di ciò che può essere lasciato cadere o essere*

*scambiato con le altre culture nel momento in cui tutti ci affacciamo sul mondo globale e ci disponiamo responsabilmente a costruirlo.*

*Il teatro è uno dei mezzi di più immediato e forte impatto in questo senso, esso è strutturalmente adatto alla "koinonia" cui, nonostante tanti segni contrari, utopisticamente tanti di noi credono.*

*Il teatro è un grande strumento per conoscersi, entrare in sinergia, integrarsi salvando identità e differenze, trovare terreni comuni sulla base di emozioni forti e condivise, di incontri gratuiti e pacifici.*

*La serie è rivolta alle persone consapevoli, ai giovani, agli studenti, agli operatori, ai formatori, agli artisti e naturalmente agli studiosi che ci piacerebbe coinvolgere sempre più numerosi in questo progetto.*

A.B. e A.C.

## *A Canon of European Drama?*

*'Canon', 'Europe'. By adopting such complex notions in the title of this series, we look at two open objectives rather than embracing two fixed, acquired realities.*

*By using the definition 'canon', we refer to the minimum prerequisites to understand Europe's theatre culture and dramatic vocation.*

*The canon encompasses texts in which European countries have conveyed thoughts, meanings, values, techniques and words cultivated inside them, and which have represented their spirit. These are texts that are generally accepted to create a common fabric or recognised as such.*

*It is not a series of norms or models. It is a list of texts that over time have been constitutive of a culture focused, more or less constantly or occasionally, and even between contrasts and struggles, on a common horizon.*

*Here canon means a live tradition, an indicative didactic criterion, mobile and relative, subject to a continual process of validation. It is a crucial heritage on which to make the choices of a selective memory for the purpose of active development. It is a journey. A heritage of our past intimately and dynamically linked to our future.*

*Using the viewpoint of the canon gives us the opportunity to look beyond the provincialism of times and places.*

*With the volumes in the series, therefore, we adopt the term of European theatre canon without too much ceremony.*

*For ideological and technical-formal aspects, each text selected and analysed belonging to different European historical periods has been a breakthrough or trendsetter, both in dramatic literature and in the visible and oral universe of the theatre. And therefore each has become canonical according to the different procedures widely highlighted by scholars.*

*History of ideas and forms.*

*The canon is a way for us to be aware of what has united or could unite Europe, of what could be discarded or exchanged with other cultures in this world of globalization we are responsibly building.*

*Thus theatre is one of the most immediate and strongly impacting means. Structurally suited to the "koinonia" in which, notwithstanding the contrary, many of us idealistically believe in.*

*Theatre is an extraordinary means to know each other, to meet up, to enter into synergy, to integrate preserving identities and differences, to find common ground on the basis of strong and shared emotions, of free and peaceful meetings.*

*The series is aimed at informed readers, young people, students, theatre practitioners, teachers, artists as well as scholars. And it is our hope that in the future this project will involve even more participants.*

*A.B. and A.C.*

*I volumi della Collana sono sottoposti alla lettura di almeno  
due revisori secondo la procedura del “doppio cieco”*

# Napoleonic Milan

## Laboratory of modernity and strategies of representation

Proceedings of Conference  
Milan, 15-16 March 2021

*edited by*  
Angelo Bianchi and Annamaria Cascetta

*translated from the Italian by*  
Dale Owens

*visualizza la scheda del libro sul sito [www.edizioniets.com](http://www.edizioniets.com)*



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La serie è patrocinata  
dal CIT-Centro di cultura e iniziativa teatrale “Mario Apollonio”



The publishing of this book is supported by  
*Fondazione Cariplo*



This book has the patronage of:

*Comitato bicentenario napoleonico*



*CSI-CIS Centro di Studi Italiani -  
Center of Italian Studies*



*Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana*



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Palazzo Roncioni - Lungarno Mediceo, 16, I-56127 Pisa  
info@edizioniets.com - www.edizioniets.com

*Distribuzione*

Messaggerie Libri SPA  
Sede legale: via G. Verdi 8 - 20090 Assago (MI)

*Promozione*

PDE PROMOZIONE SRL  
via Zago 2/2 - 40128 Bologna

ISBN 978-88467-6337-2  
ISSN 2279-5766



ANGELO BIANCHI - ANNAMARIA CASCETTA

## Introduction

This volume gathers the proceedings of the Conference “Napoleon in Milan” held on 15 and 16 March 2021 by the *Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana* in conjunction with the *Centro di Studi Italiani – Center of Italian Studies* (CSI-CIS) and the *Centro di Cultura e Iniziativa Teatrale “Mario Apollonio”* (CIT), both active at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano. It is also accompanied by the partial catalogue of the exhibition “Napoleon at the Ambrosiana”, which rounds off the Conference, mounted at the *Pinacoteca Ambrosiana* directed by Monsignor Alberto Rocca from 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2022.

The Conference was held thanks to the contribution of the Cariplo Foundation.

The conference forms part of the wide-ranging programme of studies, exhibitions and performances promoted by the Committee for the Napoleonic Bicentenary chaired by Luigi Mascilli Migliorini and coordinated by Marina Rosa, which involves a network of Italian cultural institutions and runs in 2021-2022.

The set of events in this project (described in its entirety on the website <https://napoleone21.eu>) is not intended to be a celebration but, rather, a wide-ranging reflection in light of the historiographical findings of recent times, our present-day problems and the transition we are living through, and the rethinking of the contradictions of the extraordinary Napoleonic experience.

As at other times in its history, Milan was also a hotbed of innovation during the Napoleonic era, during both the phase of the revolutionary triennium and the republic and the phase of the Kingdom of Italy between 1796, when the young General Bonaparte entered the city, and 1814, when Viceroy Eugène de Beauharnais gave up and fled Italy.

This is the idea that inspired this Conference.

Milan in these years is a laboratory of modernity in which a process of profound and fertile cultural transformation is launched; a process that would innervate subsequent national events.

Napoleon arouses, catalyses and channels energies of renewal. Some of these were already simmering more or less below the surface in the fabric of the Enlightenment city. It was a fabric that was cultivated and open to the transformations which the new power of the French causes to re-emerge, first through and in connection with the members of the generous democratic movement, then with the co-opted local authorities of a more moderate persuasion.

An era of transition (it is this characteristic that urges us, in our period of profound crisis and change, to re-read the Napoleonic period without celebratory intentions). A period of transition, therefore, that has the contradictory dynamics, the thrusts and counter-thrusts of every period transition.

The first part of the volume, dedicated to essays on the historical framework, focuses on some of the main lines of the transformations taking place, starting with the profound political changes caused by the Napoleonic experience in Italy: from the brief, often ephemeral and troubled events of the “Jacobin” republics, to the consolidation of Napoleonic power, through the experience of the Italian Republic and the Kingdom of Italy. The careful and in-depth analysis of some dimensions of the political, military, social and religious life of Milan and of the various state formations that succeeded each other in that short period of time allows us to focus on the development of some decisive lines of transformation.

Through the careful analysis of the debates triggered by the process of constitutionalisation of states and political life, along with the laying down of principles and practices that recalled and called into question long-term elements, it is thus possible to identify characteristics of sudden and abrupt transformations, but also of preservation, not only in the development of codes and norms, but more generally in common sentiment, in so-called “public opinion”. This is the case of the debate on “civil death”, which began in the last quarter of the 18th century, at the height of the Enlightenment, and had consequences also in Milan and in the Italian states following the introduction of the subsequent constitutional texts and the consequent revision and adaptation of codes and legislation. And

it was in Milan and the Italian states that the effects were felt of the discussions and debates which had begun on the subject and which highlight the constant call to the principles of natural law as the source and inspiration of the gradual affirmation of the rights of man and the citizen.

Still on the plane of political debate but on a different level, that of propaganda, during the years of the establishment of Napoleonic power – and this also applies to Milan – the construction of the “myth” of Napoleon represents one of the elements of particular development and modernity. A decisive aspect of this penetration and dissemination, above all among the lower classes, was the use of religious formats, through the overcoming of the bitterness of the revolutionary years, the reconciliation with the Catholic Church and the restoration and diffusion of the cult of Saint Napoleon, a Corsican martyr of the 3rd century and protector and eponym of the triumphant Emperor.

Medium to long-term in nature were also the urban transformations that kept pace with the repeated measures taken by the ecclesiastical institutions, for example the reorganisation of the city’s parish churches carried out from the 1760s onwards during the reign of Maria Theresa of Habsburg, and the suppression of religious institutions: convents, monasteries, collegiate churches. These latter measures were taken by the imperial authorities a decade later, still in the era of Maria Theresa and Joseph, and prosecuted with greater intensity and radicalism during the revolutionary triennium and then also in the Napoleonic period, at least until 1810 and the decree of general suppression. This series of measures, in addition to profoundly modifying the face of *Milano sacra* of Borromean memory, made available a large number of buildings that were gradually used for various functions of public utility: schools and colleges, barracks and military warehouses, and then the service and representative offices of the new administration of the Napoleonic state: the court, the ministries, the directorates general. In the course of those two decades, we thus witness successive transformations and adaptations of the city to the new functions which it was now assigned as a result of its role as a second-tier capital: from the function of military stronghold and *caposaldo* in the military system of the Spanish empire, fortress facing the eastern border, against the old Franco-Piedmontese enemies,

to logistical and administrative centre of organisation, storage facility and billet, in particular for the control of the city and the territory of the state and manufacturing and commercial activities; it thus took on the characteristics of an administrative and commercial centre, which from then on would characterise its profile and urban and social development.

The arts were a laboratory of modernity to which the Napoleonic era devoted special attention, particularly the performing arts, which were the main focus of the second session of the Conference aimed at investigating the strategies of representation and the processes of construction of memory and public opinion.

The theatre scene is in ferment in the city that envisages itself as a 'European' capital. Social life awakens in the renovated urban spaces where festivals are held and in the theatres: the *Teatro alla Scala*, the *Teatro alla Canobbiana*, i.e. the 'small theatre', but a place of civil events with a wide resonance, in a climate of feverish enthusiasm, the *Teatro Patriottico*, later the *Filodrammatici* and the minor theatres.

Although it continued to be, in its routine and quantitatively in its most significant part, a place of entertainment, the theatre became the object of an intense planning effort of renewal involving the most committed and sensitive of administrators and artists.

The idea of theatre is called into question. Its aesthetic, moral, didactic and political function, its management and organisation, the training of the actors, the methods of declamation, the rules concerning the audience, the emphasis on demanding genres such as tragedy, serious drama in music or heroic ballet and the synergies with the models of the French tradition are the subject matter of debate and creative impulses and the basis for political tragedy is laid. We can certainly find elements that had already appeared in the reflections of Enlightenment intellectuals but which acquire coherence, organicity, strength and projection in the significant discontinuity of the situation.

The section of the Conference dedicated to the strategies of representation examines various types of dramatic, ritual and ceremonial performance forms.

It emphasises the multiplicity of their functions: propaganda, celebration, education, political formation, and the drive for institutional reform in the modern sense.

It highlights the division of these phenomena into different phases in relation to the evolution of Napoleonic rule between republic, kingdom and empire and their contradictory thrust (even within the same phase) between evolution towards modernity and involution towards previous modalities.

The relationship of continuity or discontinuity with respect to the Enlightenment or Baroque past varies in the different cases and the different experiences.

The degree of theoretical commitment in the elaboration of ideas or practical commitment in setting up experimental laboratories varies.

The range of models from which the various sources draw inspiration is wide-ranging and fascinating: Roman monuments, the apparatuses and celebratory symbols of the Ancien Régime, historical and ancient mythical heroes, the format of festivals in the Rousseauistic, popular or dynastic style.

What emerges is a lively, multifaceted picture, full of thrusts and counter-thrusts, contradictions and ideas capable of bearing fruit. A hothouse of innovation, regression, regulations and transgressions, of which the essays provide interesting first-hand documented examples.

We would like to thank Arianna Frattali for her collaboration with the editing support of this book.

In heartfelt remembrance of Giuliana Ricci who believed so much in this project and made a significant contribution to its conception, but who left us too early to see its completion.

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NAPOLEON AT THE AMBROSIANA:  
PATHS OF REPRESENTATION

Catalogue of the exhibition at the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana  
(Milan, 5 October 2021 – 4 May 2022)

curated by *Francesca Barbieri and Alessandra Mignatti*

*Francesca Barbieri*

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Finito di stampare nel mese di luglio 2022