

PROPHETS AND PROFITS

Ancient Prophecy and Divination and its Reception

29 - 31 July 2015
16th UNISA Classics Colloquium
in collaboration with CRAC
(Classical Reception Annual Colloquium)

Confirmed invited speakers:

Prof Jon Solomon (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

Prof Esther Eidinow (University of Nottingham)

Dr Federico Santangelo (University of Newcastle)

Prof Folake Onayemi (University of Ibadan)

Superstition and a desire to know what lies in the future has been part of human history for thousands of years. Whether humans in ancient times sought this knowledge by applying to an oracle through which the god was believed to speak, whether they used soothsayers or 'manteis' who interpreted specific signs such as the flight of birds, or whether they resorted to dice divination, there was a fundamental desire to know the will of the gods. In many cases pragmatic concerns (personal, economic or political) can be deduced from the context of the applicant. Taking a critical look at the wider issues around the writings of ancient authors, and incorporating the vast array of non-literary and material evidence across this research field has led to stimulating debate in this fascinating area of socio-religious scholarship.

The concept of pagan divination and communication with the gods in a post-pagan world has also produced fascinating receptions. The presentation of these processes in monotheistic societies such as the medieval Christian Europe, and in later periods, where the role of religion in general changed so radically, provides a particular challenge. This subject has hitherto not been discussed in any in depth manner by scholars. The present conference therefore aims to rectify this by providing an opportunity for addressing all questions related to the reception of Greco-Roman divination, oracles and prophecy, in all media, including literature, television, film, art and music.

The above title is an indication that topics will take into account a number of socio-religious aspects, and while we also welcome other discourses and comparative studies on prophecy and divination, we particularly encourage topics on the following aspects:

- Specific oracles, such as the Pythia or Sibyl, and their role in history and historiography.
- The role of cult centres such as Delphi, Dodona or Daphne, in local economies.
- Eliciting and reading divinatory signs - techniques, language, magical objects.
- Individual agency in divination

- Divination and magic, curse and cure
- Oracles in popular culture
- Hollywood's depiction the gods and their interaction with mankind
- The reception of ancient prophecy and divination in popular fiction
- The reception of Ancient Curses

Paper proposals were invited for papers of 20 minutes debating current issues and problems on any aspect of the above in the broad context of the Mediterranean world, as well as its reception in modern media.

More on the conference:

Convening in 2015 for the 16th time, the Unisa Classics Colloquium aims to combine stimulating scholarly discussion with a pleasant and intimate atmosphere. Over two and a half days, approximately 20 scholarly contributions from around the world are to be presented. The 40 minute slots provide ample time for discussion and valuable feedback. Parallel sessions are avoided in order to promote unity of focus in the conference, and delegates get to know each other properly. Information on previous conferences may be found at <http://www.unisa.ac.za/Default.asp?Cmd=ViewContent&ContentID=1819>.

Venue information and fees:

The Village Ridge Boutique Hotel in Waterkloof, Pretoria, will be the venue this year. The conference package, including accommodation for 29-31 July and the conference fee, will be ZAR 1466.93 pp sharing. If you wish to book accommodation before or after these three days, you are welcome to contact the Village Ridge Hotel directly. All the booking forms and contact information can also be obtained from Martine De Marre, dmarrmea@unisa.ac.za.

Since transport to and from the conference venue might pose difficulties, participants should ideally arrive at OR Tambo Airport and in Pretoria on the morning of the 28th and only book a flight out from the evening of the 31st but preferably later.

For those staying at the hotel, the conference fee is included in the accommodation package. The conference fee for participants *not* staying at the conference venue is as follows: Full conference fee: ZAR750. Fee per day: ZAR250. Postgraduates, other students and interested parties not able to claim back conference fees from their institutions should please contact the organizers for a discount.

Programme:

A preliminary programme will be compiled from the received proposals and published on the Departmental website after the final date for submissions.

Excursion:

To make up for the fact that the conference itself will not be in the bush, we plan to take you to a game reserve on the day after the conference, i.e. 1 August.

Publication of papers:

Depending on suitability to the main theme and quality, a collection of articles on the colloquium theme is envisaged. Submitted papers are subject to a refereeing process. If you would consider submitting your paper for publication, please indicate this to us via return mail for further guidelines on style.