

Figura. Studies on the Classical Tradition: Terrestrial Images

FIGURA. Studies on the Classical Tradition

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Among the most shocking images that circulated around the world during the first months of the new coronavirus pandemic, the photographs and videos of large urban centers turned into true ghost cities had a special impact. This happened not only because these images documented an unprecedented reality of which social isolation (adopted as the main measure to contain the number of infections) was its cause and consequence, but also because they seemed to explain another contemporary phenomenon: the return of jellyfish to the canals of Venice (Italy), ducks crossing a street in the center of Paris (France), a group of deer walking through the streets of Nara (Japan), a cougar captured in the streets of Santiago (Chile), or the crystalline waters of Botafogo beach, in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), to cite just a few examples, became indicators of the regenerative potential of nature, for which human activity would constitute the main obstacle. With rare exceptions, countries around the world recorded a significant reduction in carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, giving irrefutable scientific validation to what had been perceived.

The panorama described so far, of which we are all witnesses, led to a strong (and perhaps irrecoverable) relativization of the positive dimension of anthropocentrism, which had so far prevailed in the way modern Western man interpreted his own actions. Anthropocentrism might well be defined both as the epistemological basis that attributes to man authority over other elements of nature (as stated in the first sentences of Genesis) as well as the empirical reason of the Anthropocene, epoch in which human behavior is accountable for the transformation of nature. The current context, marked by the intensification of distrust in the positive effects of human intervention, has nevertheless put into evidence the need to trust science. This apparent paradox is linked to the growing stimulus of the interaction between *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*, the valorization of the telluric nature of man, the idealization of life in the countryside and the aestheticization of poverty. Finally, from a narrative point of view, the experience of the pandemic briefly narrated in the preceding lines also seems to have promoted, intuitively or programmatically, a return to certain topoi of the classical world that have reactivated (in the words of Bruno Latour) the tension between the terrestrial and terraqueous dimensions of man, his actions and its products.

Given these coordinates, this call for papers encourages authors to reflect on the ways and the extent that the scenario described so far invites us to rethink some key elements that run through early modernity. Although not mandatory, contributions on the following topics will be particularly welcome:

- The relationship between town and country;

- The resurgence of the myth of the Golden Age;
- The imagination of utopian cities;
- The development of cartography in the context of early modern maritime exploration;
- The notion of autochthony and territoriality;
- The symbolic functions of the antipodes and their politico-cultural uses;
- The rhetoric of colonization, agriculture, and mineral extractivism;
- Archeology and speculation about the depths of the earth;
- The development of a taste for the rustic.

Organization: Renato Menezes e Carolina Martinez

Author guidelines:

<https://econtents.bc.unicamp.br/inpec/index.php/figura/announcement/view/47>

Reference:

CFP: Figura. Studies on the Classical Tradition: Terrestrial Images. In: ArtHist.net, Feb 15, 2021 (accessed Mar 30, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/33412>>.