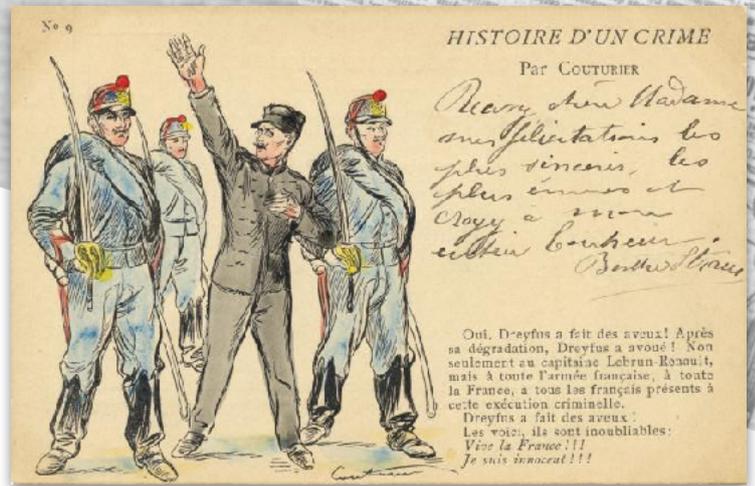


# CASE CLOSED...?

## The Affaire Dreyfus in British literature and culture

La Sapienza, Università di Roma  
Rome, 6 February 2020



### CALL FOR PAPERS

A gloomy parenthesis in the radiant belle époque, the Affaire Dreyfus (1894-1906) was the most notable political and judicial scandal of the Third French Republic. Soon, the story of the Jewish Captain crossed the Channel and became, in Great Britain, a true sensation. The case was everywhere – in the press, on stage, in novels, even on the big screen – and for a few years, it resonated with the political and cultural history of fin-de-siècle Britain: the end of the Victorian age, the politicization of antisemitism, British imperialist ambitions, the rising tension between European powers etc. Today, the Affaire Dreyfus is back in the spotlight: it is the story behind Robert Harris' best-seller *An Officer and a Spy* (2013) and Roman Polanski's latest film *J'accuse* (2019).

This, however, is hardly the first time the Affaire has appeared in the domains of literature or cinema. On the contrary, its peculiar bond with the realm of literature is possibly the main reason for its extraordinary popularity. With its high narrative potential, dramatic accelerations and turns of events, the sense of suspense and eventual happy ending, the story of the Affaire was, and is, a rich well from which literature drew compelling plotlines, vivacity and aesthetic materials – the conviction for high treason, the trial, the ceremony of degradation, the exile on Devil's Island; the scandal, the story of espionage, the conspiracy, intelligence stolen and retrieved, forged letters, spies, suicides, veiled women and cleaning ladies employed by the Secret Service; the fight between Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards, the publication of Emile Zola's *J'accuse...!* (1898), the Rennes trial and, finally, the official pardon.

The aim of this conference is to describe the presence of the Affaire Dreyfus in Great Britain through the lens of literature. Shifting the focus from France to Great Britain will hopefully open a rich, as yet hardly explored territory, adding new interest to a well-known case and illuminating its complexities. The conference will move in two directions: on the one hand, a historical reconstruction of the British response to the Dreyfus case; on the other hand, an investigation on the legacy of the Affaire in the British novel, dwelling on the modes of representation, on the proliferation of Dreyfus material in popular literature and its apparent absence from the Modernist production.

#### Contributions may include, but are not limited to:

- The representation of the Affaire Dreyfus in the British press: themes, imagery, rhetoric
- British responses to the Affaire
- Franco-British relations, British anti-Gallicism
- Liberalism, philosemitic traditions, antisemitism
- The reception of the Affaire in British Jewry, the representation of the Jewish self
- The birth of Zionism
- International espionage and imperialism
- Emile Zola, the Dreyfusards and the birth of the politically engaged intellectual
- The role of women in the Affaire
- Presence and absence of the Affaire in works of fiction and non-fiction
- The modes of representation of the Affaire: allusions, transpositions, allegories, themes, motives etc.
- Popular entertainment, plays and films based on the Dreyfus case
- The Affaire in popular literature - Gothic fiction, spy fiction, popular romance etc.
- The Affaire, the intellectual milieu and the Modernist novel

Please submit a 300-word abstract together with a short author bio by **15 December 2019** to [alessandra.crotti@uniroma1.it](mailto:alessandra.crotti@uniroma1.it). Notifications of acceptance by 20 December.

Papers should be 20 minutes long.



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