**2018 Symposium Classicum Peregrinum:**
**Blessings and Curses in Antiquity**
June 21-24, 2018
Lonato del Garda, Italy

The 2018 Symposium Classicum Peregrinum will meet at Lonato del Garda, on Lago di Garda, Italy, June 21-24, 2018, with visits to the Grotte di Catullo at Sirmione, the Roman Kilns of Lonato, and the Roman villa at Desenzano.

**A session on Games, fate and chance is organised by V. Dasen (ERC locusludi.unifr.ch). Please send a title and abstract in english (max. 400 words) on this specific topic to the organiser of the session: veronique.dasen@unifr.ch before january 31, 2018.**

The topic of the Symposium is concerned with the ambiguous phenomenon of the word sacer, which can mean "holy, sacred, dedicated to a divinity," or "accursed, wicked, devoted to a deity for destruction." The positive sense is by far the more common in Roman usage. Romans also used other favorable terms with roots based, for example, in favor, such as Faustus, Favonius, etc, or words using other positive roots, such as auctus (augeo), as in Augustus, or fors (Fortuna).

Our topic will be concerned with the ambiguous phenomenon of the word *sacer*, which can mean "holy, sacred, dedicated to a divinity," or "accursed, wicked, devoted to a deity for destruction." The positive sense is by far the more common in Roman usage. Romans also used other favorable terms with roots based, for example, in *favor*, such as *Faustus, Favonius*, etc, or words using other positive roots, such as *auctus* (*augeo*), as in Augustus, or *fors (Fortuna)*.

Bliss– *felicitas*, *bona auspicia, omina, favor* (which was also identified with Faunus) – signified the favor of the god—the implications of the concept of Augustus, Fortuna and the related idea of *fors/forte*, and the belief in an *evocatio* also fit in here because it implied the favor of a god who previously patronized the enemies.

A curse was a means of harming one's enemies: *Auri sacra fames* is an example of how the Romans viewed the desire for stolen gold. Declaring something or someone *sacer* signified entrusting to one god the property of someone else. *Sacer esto* is an ancient form of curse. Basically it is similar to the ancient Greek enchantments (sometimes by means of necromancy), magic bonds (κατάδεσμοι), etc., which entrusted the gods of the dead with one or more living persons. *Devotio,* "a consecrating (or a devotedness)", especially if invoked in war was another form of cursing one's enemies.

On the Greek side we find some interventions of the gods themselves (in Homer, but also in some wars and battles: the Dioscuri at the battle of Sagra river, Demeter, Core and Pan during the second Persian war, etc., and gods loving humans, such as Midas, or some prophets, such as Branchos. The Greeks knew of some public curses, such as those from Teos (*dirae Teiorum*), or the *lex cathartica* of Cyrene. The myths of Phoinix and that of Meleagros relate to familial curses; Oedipus had a malediction because of his sins, etc.

The wrath and the envy of gods, the omission of cultic acts, the need for new gods and cults, curses, black magic and other phenomena were means to explain misfortune. Human societies conceived of a repertoire of mechanics which could account for misfortune, discontent, diseases, famine, and other evil. On the other hand, fortune and wealth were often taken as signs of divine bliss, and somethimes used as a proof of the social rank of a person.

Such phenomena are fundamental in the Christian mentality and have been largely discussed in theology (the Grace of God), but pagan approaches to them are less often investigated. How did Roman writers deal with this ambiguity? Catullus, for example, or

Vergil, and Horace, and Juvenal? And was this ambiguity similarly reflected in Greek writers? Does physical or literary evidence survive to reflect these different attitudes? How can the archaeological evidence help to understand these phenomena?

The conference organizers are: Patricia A. Johnston (Brandeis University, Waltham, MA) (johnston@brandeis.edu), Christopher Faraone (University of Chicago) (cf12@uchicago.edu), Attilio Mastrocinque (Università di Verona) (attilio.mastrocinque@univr.it), Lászlo Tákács (Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Budapest) (takacs.laszlo@btk.ppke.hu), and Elisa Zentilini (Università di Verona) (elisa.zentilini@gmail.com).

For accommodations: there are many Bed and Breakfasts in Lonato, including the following:
http://www.contradalacavallina.it/ agriturismo-cascina-reciago-lago-di-garda/;
https://www.bed-and-breakfast.it/mobile/it/
lombardia/b-b-belfiore-lonato-del-garda/28295,
https://www.bed-and-breakfast.it/mobile/it/
booking/lombardia/art-gallery-bb-lonato-del-garda/39374

Speakers who are coming by car will find many other b&bs in Desenzano.

## Registration Form: SYMPOSIUM PEREGRINUM 2018
2018 Symposium Classicum Peregrinum: Blessings and Curses in
Antiquity June 21-24, 2018
Lonato di Garda, Italy
Name_____ Address:
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Telephone/Fax_____ E-mail
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_____ Lecture Title
_____ Mode of Travel:
_____
Arrival: Day: _____ Time:_____

Abstracts must be in English and should not exceed 400 words or one-half page).
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Please send this form by 1 March 2018 to Prof. Patricia A. Johnston, johnston@brandeis.edu. (Department of Classical Studies MS 092, Mandel Humanities Center, Brandeis Universty, Waltham MA 02454-9110).