

SOCIAL MYTHS



THE EMPEROR'S ALTER EGO
FREDERICK II'S *AUGUSTALE*
AND THE STUDIES OF GÉRARD BOUCHARD
ON SOCIAL MYTHS

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The Emperor's Alter Ego

Frederick's II *Augustale* and Gérard Bouchard's Studies on Social Myths

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Gérard Bouchard, in his interesting book, *Raison et déraison du mythe: Au coeur des imaginaires collectif* (Bouchard 2015) – which I read in its English translation, with the captivating title of *Social Myths and Collective Imaginaries* (Bouchard 2017) – addresses, among others, two important issues for a scholar of philosophy and political symbolics: *what a social myth is* and the *process of mythification*. These topics occupy the second and third chapter of his book and, even though the author explicitly states that his research is mostly oriented to investigate modern political dynamics, his intuitions and arguments – sometimes schematically summarised in synoptic tables – nevertheless prove to be very pertinent to analyse pre-modern political events as well, or even events that refer to the cultural, political and social climate of the Middle Ages.

Since my reading of Bouchard's book happened while I was drafting a scientific essay on Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (Cesaro 2018), the circumstance allowed me to apply the insights of the Canadian scholar to the political action of the great medieval emperor: this, besides interpretations which are a bit too

mythologising,¹ and while considering that Frederick was a man of his time, made such *liminal* features stood out that, with all due caution, they prelude some typical traits of modernity. The dream and the political action of the Swabian sovereign (who was a polysemic synthesis of calculation and artifice but also genius and recklessness) refers – as is known – to the concept of *Kunstwerk* (*State-work of art*) which Jacob Burckhardt (1860) coined for Frederick's ambiguous political construction, which was largely founded on constructing the “myth of the emperor”. A *social myth* which was feeding on the instrumental usage of symbols, aimed at supporting a precise (and innovative, for the time when it was conceived) ideology of power.

In this short article, I will try to apply the epistemic coordinates which, according to Bouchard, define the *social myth* to some of the aspects of Frederick's political action, always brimming with vitality and full of emotional energies.

In the very wide overview of possible “objects of study” related to the legendary Norman-Swabian context, I obviously had to make choices and be selective. In my recent aforementioned article I reviewed innovative juridical institutions (the law of *defence*), monumental legal codes (the *Liber Augustalis*), products of creative genius (the singular book *De arte venandi cum avibus* and the fabulous *Castel del Monte*) and fascinating philosophical doctrines (*political Averroism*); here, for obvious reasons of space, I will focus my attention on a single “object” of study: a precious gold coin, the *angustale*, which, among so many significant “materials,” is exceptionally pregnant with *symbolic pathos*, and therefore suitable to summarize the theses presented by Bouchard on the nature of social myth (with particular reference to its process of construction and the conditions for its effectiveness).

1 Cf. the classic works by Kantorowicz 1927 or by Van Cleve 1972.

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According to the Canadian scholar, to understand the nature of a social myth, it is first of all necessary to overcome a common perception that reduces it to a fable, a legend, a literary construction. From the perspective of the philosophy of social sciences, it is important to consider the myth as a collective representation that embodies a value, a belief, an ideal, and which is always oriented towards the attainment of an end. In this perspective, (social) myth presents itself as a powerful mechanism capable of pushing a community towards a (political) direction.

Since I share the perspective of such an illustrious scholar, I cannot help but underline that, in the wake of knowledge-related ideologies (rationalist, scientific and positivist ones), a mythic-symbolic hermeneutic approach has been sometimes, summarily, reduced to a folkloristic dimension; in other circumstances, it was considered the expression of a marginal culture, connected to naive ways of thinking of civilisations still belonging to an evolutionary tier in which they were not yet fully able to follow the path of discursive and abstract reasoning, or still trapped in a numinous or hyletic dimension.

Italian scholars of political symbolics have long criticized the superficial vision, typical of today's Western world, under which human beings, as the protagonists of social dynamics (mostly intended as the depositories of a merely cognitive intelligence that makes them full-fledged "political animals"), forced themselves to first overcome and then progressively abandon their emotional and imaginative dimension, in favour of a rationalist anthropology that, when it comes to "mythic" and "symbolic" dimensions, restricts

itself to considering their ambivalent and veiling aspects rather than those producing forms of truth and reality.

To delve into the relationship that the myth establishes with reality, it is therefore necessary to highlight the fundamental characteristics of *symbols*² (which, we could affirm, make up the “constitutive matter” of the myth).

A careful study of the nature of the symbol will allow us to definitely lift any reservation on its *real consistency* and to consider it a full-fledged privileged instrument of analysis in the social sciences and, more in general, of the cultural and political dynamics of human beings.

First of all, a symbol has a *constitutive value* and, from this point of view, it is also a – creating and/or aggregating – *force*,³ since it emanates directives to thought and behaviours. It is therefore not just a form of communication or representation of reality; it produces reality and is produced by reality. And precisely as a product of reality, a symbol has then the characteristics of *specularity* and *non-arbitrariness*. Overcoming the reservations of antiquated rationalist and empiricist attitudes, it can thus be stressed that every form of knowledge is achieved through constructions and symbolic vehicles (without its symbolic dimension, reality itself would have no meaning for us, since it becomes intelligible only through symbolically-structured procedures). *Symbolisation*, therefore, constitutes the starting point of every intellectual act, so that all different kinds of experience, with a vital or intellectual character, correspond to different levels of symbolic mediation.

2 On the specific characteristics of the symbol, cf. Chiodi 2006; 2010; 2014); Bonvecchio, 2010; Mazzù 1990); Barberi 2002; Bellini 2006; 2012.

3 On the consideration of the symbol as a “phenomenological place that structures a whole human field of forces, both social, personal and gnoseological”, cf. Limone 1997, 35-36.

The symbol not only allows “self-recognition and self-perception” (Chiodi 2006, 43) but also lets us recognise the connotative attitudes and belongings of a group on a collective level: by virtue of that, a symbol is *identitarian*, since it allows us to understand the totality of our cultural world, precisely because it is *specular* and *not arbitrary* (and thus *representative* of the real and *discursive* on a logical and gnoseological level), by using links and analogical processes to confer reality and intelligibility to the world. In addition, a symbol is *energetic*, since it infuses a particular *pathos* in those involved in *experiencing* it; and, finally, it can assume *enantiodromic characteristics*, i.e. the meanings and structures of meaning it expresses (especially when pushed to the limit) can change into their opposites. From this perspective, a symbol becomes the expression of a game of opposites in the state of becoming; a concept whose first intuition can be traced back to the philosophy of Heraclitus, later taken up by Jung in the form of a principle, a universal law of the – individual and collective – human psyche: where there is a unilateral and hypertrophic development of a level of meaning or where an instance remains too long repressed, its opposite is not completely nullified but, rather, like an extremely-compressed spring, it becomes loaded with energy ready to be released, in order to compensate with the use of force (*pòlemos*) for the disuse and oblivion it was forced to.

Therefore, after summing up the characteristics of the symbolic (constitutive value, energetic, identitarian, force, specularity, non-arbitrariness, *enantiodromia*), it is possible to claim that it also represents the *hermeneutic feature* of the real (cf. Limone 1997, 43). Since it involves thought and feeling, meaning and intuition, a mythic-symbolic approach immediately calls to mind the peculiarities of so-called *hermeneutics in a strong sense*,⁴ which is at the

4 On the concept of *hermeneutics in a strong sense*, cf. Chiodi 2007, 87-120. For further reading Chiodi 2000, 199-211.

same time constitutive, creative, representative and interpretative towards reality.

Consequently, the hermeneutic intelligence applicable to the symbolic dimension is the one that does not disdain to use, in a direct way, intuition and the psychoemotional dimension of affections. And it does so without excluding the analytical components of knowledge, but rather harmonising them with its aesthetic evaluations and creative sensibilities. In this way, a specific *liminal consciousness* emerges,⁵ as the mental posture characteristic of symbolic hermeneutics. Hermeneutics – as mentioned – in a strong sense, in overcoming merely analytical and synthetic paths (typical of cognitive consciousness), is able to merge, in the dimension of experience, not only knowing subject and known object, but also passivity and activity of consciousness.

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The intuitions of the Italian scholars of political symbolics converge, in many respects, with Bouchard's consideration of *social myth*, which, as pointed out above, is "ontologically" different from entirely aleatory forms of knowledge, with which it is sometimes identified (by virtue of a superficial overlap of the concepts of imaginary, imaginative, fabulous and fantastic). Treasuring the lesson of the Canadian sociologist, I maintain that a social myth is a collective representation that, synthesising ideas and embodying values, functions as a formidable propellant to achieve a political goal. Taking a step forward, we can subsequently define the constitutive elements of social myth: 1. *archetypal foundation* (myths feed on archetypes and these, in turn, find an adequate fertile ground in their symbolic dimension); 2. *hybridism* (a myth is always

5 On this point, cf. Chiodi 2011, 66.

a synthesis of reality and fiction, reason and emotion, conscious and unconscious: it therefore must be evaluated not on the basis of its truthfulness, but on its effectiveness); 3. *emotionality* (while not completely disregarding rationality, myth is nevertheless essentially founded on emotion: by virtue of that, it can transcend the contingencies of reality and the logical principle of non-contradiction); 4. *sacredness* (by overlooking reality and pure rationality, a myth always expresses a sort of surrogate sacredness: this characteristic explains its resilience and longevity); 5. *instrumentality* (a social myth, by taking on a strategic role in persuasion practices, is always embedded in power dynamics, even if this characteristic does not prevent it from being perceived as truthful by the public opinion); 6. *narrative structure* (a social myth uses a sacredness-imbued hybrid narration, governed by emotion rather than reason and often referred to the past, using it in a “selective and instrumental” way).

These characteristics allow us to distinguish (without separating) myth from ideology. As a matter of fact, the latter uses rational and coherent argumentative constructions; nevertheless, ideology relies on the authority of myths and symbols, leveraging – instrumentally – reason and emotion in order to encourage persuasion and mobilisation. In the same way, in social myth, while the emotional component remains predominant, reason is not fully excluded (cf. Granger 1996, 31); on the contrary, the myth seeks the support of reason to guarantee its affirmation, progress and reproduction.

As mentioned in the introduction, in addition to delving into the nature of social myth, Gérard Bouchard deals with the theme of the *mythification process*, investigating the mechanisms by which myths emerge (or decline) in a collectivity. With his usual expository clarity, the Canadian sociologist brings out eight elements on which – to fully delve into the topic – we must dwell

(Bouchard 2017, 48 ff.): 1. *the construction of the subject* (i.e. identifying the recipients of the discourse on myth); 2. *anchors* (i.e. past events that carry out a “foundational” function); 3. *imprints* (i.e. the persistence of experiences in the collective consciousness that take the form of a profound, lasting emotion – cf. Reddy 2001); 4. *ethos* (i.e. the transformation of an *imprint* into an *ethic*, understood as a set of aspirations, attitudes and predispositions that develops from a life experience⁶); 5. *sacralization* (which is perfected at the end of the process of “cognitive displacement” through which, with the prevalence of emotions over reason, myths come to assume the role of “prescriptive” representations – cf. Moscovici 1984); 6. *narration* (i.e. the process – which can also take on the form of a *ritual* – through which the emotion associated with the *anchor* and the *imprint* is stimulated in order to direct *ethos* and behaviours); 7. *techniques of persuasion* (which are able to adapt themselves to audiences and contexts in order to convey the message of the myth, while making use of a wide range of forms of communication: from an instrumental usage of images to a skillful usage of rhetoric; from the creation of keywords and strong, suggestive images to the resort to discursive procedures, *social repertoires* and symbolic models capable of enhancing a group’s identity – conspiracy theories, scapegoats, etc. –)⁷; 8. *social actors* (i.e. political leaders who promote and manipulate the message of social myths to achieve their interests, thereby highlighting the nature of *strategic resource* – with clear utilitarian ends – of the social myth that, when it finally becomes an integral part of the institutions, sees its

6 It is possible, for example, that a strong sense of injustice (*imprint*) linked to a previous experience of subjugation (*anchor*) generates a desire for equality, fairness and democracy, or that a nation oppressed by a despotic regime matures a strong attachment to freedom.

7 On this point cf. Tilly 2006.

dynamic process come full circle, to the point of turning into a veritable *orthodoxy*).

Exposed the “mechanisms” through which myths emerge or decline, Bouchard wonders about the possibility of creating new myths. By affirmatively answering his own question, he claims that such an operation may be traced back to the evocation (rather than *construction* or *invention*), by a sufficiently powerful social actor, of an archetypal image appropriately *manipulated* (or *transposed*) and then embedded into a collective dynamic in the hope of making it have a bearing on certain relations of power.

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In light of these considerations, I will now try to apply Bouchard’s reflections to a specific context (Frederick II’s), that is the cultural climate of the thirteenth century, in the knowledge that if all civilizations – in general – have been built, transformed and destroyed with the aid of the imaginary, that is particularly evident for the Middle Ages, a period in which every event, phenomenon or gesture took on a mythical and symbolic meaning that connected it to a dimension with a superior, transcendent, all-encompassing value.

For the peculiar historical context we want to deal with here (the first half of the 1200s), it is also necessary to underline that the different meanings to which a natural (an animal, a plant, a stone) or artificial (a poem, a fresco, a codex) reality could refer to had to be ascribed, on one hand, to different *cultural contexts* (Latin, Greek, Jewish but also Gallo-Roman, Celtic and Germanic) that, mixed, constituted the cultural baggage of a medieval author; on the other hand, they were inscribed within a *symbolic dimension*, of which

nature was considered a sensitive mask and in which everything assumed a further meaning, an overall explanation, a horizon of sense within a coherent and compact overarching order.

Percy Ernst Schramm, in a 1927 article,⁸ was the first to consider the *symbolology of power* as a fundamental branch of medieval studies. The German historian called for an interdisciplinary convergence of scholars on what, in his opinion, was to be considered a new discipline, based on the study of power through the *representation* of the image of its potency and magnificence, both on the level of lasting manifestations (architecture, statuary, literature, poetry) and in the transitory field of liturgy and ceremonials (festivals, celebrations, rites, processions).

In fact, these – visible and tangible – physical representations of power and a mythic imaginary, full of emotional energies, which underlies them or is produced by them (with all its consequent charge of drives, emotions and feelings) are inextricably merged in the *symbol*, which should be considered neither just a material object nor a mere product of the imagination, since it is both at the same time. In every symbol, therefore, the material reality of its configuration transcends to a higher level. It is not an overlap of two distinct realities, but a reciprocal integration, as is well-evidenced by Kantorowicz's theory of the "King's two bodies" (Kantorowicz 1957), not accidentally labelled as nonsense by many scholars of law and politics who received analytical and rationalist training.

Starting from this methodological perspective and treasuring Schramm's and Bouchard's lessons, we will try to examine some aspects of Frederick II's symbolology of power. Other significant studies have delved into his legal reforms or some of his political stances, as well as into different forms of cultural manifestation (up

8 Cf. in Schramm 1966, 247-265. For further reading cf. Bak 1973.

to the very same organisation of spaces and urban planning of the territory): all these were expressions of an imaginative and physical projection of his regal and imperial dominion. In these, the Norman, Germanic, Byzantine, Sicilian and Islamic traditions were overlapping; and, merging with the tradition of the Roman emperors and the *Sacrum Imperium*, found a synthesis in the Swabian sovereign.

From this perspective, even an instrumental organisation of space becomes one of the manifestations of the *omnipresence* of the sovereign (cf. Guerreau 1992; Randi 1986) and a tangibly evident one, both for the continuous repositioning of the court and the extravagant, personal stock-in-trade – elephants, camels, hawks, jewels and precious codices – of the *mobilissimo signore* (according to the definition of the anonymous compiler of the *Novellino*) [“a very mobile lord”], and through a pervasive diffusion of his official image. In an old-school pose, with paludation, fibula, crown or a laurel wreath: this is the way Frederick appears on his seals, coins, in the two portraits of the falconry treatise, in the enthroned figure in Capua and on the stone tablets that survived mutilation or the drastic spoliation suffered by the imperial structures during the Angevin domination.

Here we will simply point out, among the most reliable sculptural representations (preserved in Italy), the fragment of a head in Castel del Monte and his bust, conserved at the civic museum of Barletta (of controversial attribution). In both cases the portraits are courtly, with laurel and a stern, “classical” expression, which calls to mind the ideal effigy of an emperor that will simultaneously establish itself with the coinage of the *angustali*, coins on which, now that I am getting to the heart of the topic of this article, I will spend some final and – hopefully – significant consideration.

Returning from the crusade, after the reconciliation with Gregory IX and the conclusion of the Melfi assizes, Frederick, starting from 1231, ordered that a new gold coin be minted in Brindisi and Messina, which was to be called, with an explicit reference to the splendors of the Roman Empire, *angustale*:

Nummi aurei qui augustales vocantur
de mandato imperatoris in utraque sicla Brundusii et Messanae cuduntur.⁹

To his rigid control on mercantile and productive activities, Frederick thus added a special attention to monetary policy, in an attempt to bring order among the different currencies that were circulating in his kingdom, all different for metal, issuing authority, intrinsic value, cut and alloy. His reform was gradually implemented over a decade (1221-1231). It had the purpose of creating a valid exchange system capable of harmonising the needs of very different economic areas and, at the same time, transforming the aesthetic aspect – with a clear ideological intent – of the coins in circulation.

The precious coinage of the *angustale* tried to meet both needs. As a matter of fact, with its nominal value of a quarter of an ounce of gold, it offers, better than any other surviving artifact, a symbolic testament to the “political dream” of its creator (cf. Balbi de Caro 1994, 158). In all the *angustali* issues, it is indeed possible to notice, if not Frederick’s physical appearance, the official image that the Swabian emperor wanted to convey to the imagination and devotion of his subjects.

Kowalski, in a careful analysis on the usage of seals and on the *combinatio* of *recto* and *verso*, was able to develop a partial chronology

9 Cf. Sambon 1916, 95. For further research, cf. Travaini 1994 and Panvini Rosati 1995.

of the printing plates (cf. Kowalski 1976), and, on the basis of his results, has tried to present the evolution of the imperial effigy on the coins. If, at the beginning, it is possible to identify a basic model, classically-inspired but strongly stylised, at a later time a veritable *organic kind of portrait* is developed, which remains persistent, even in a diversity of styles through different coinages: a man in his thirties that conveys *energy* and *spirituality* through the image of an energetic and serene sovereign who is, at the same time, still young but neither *puer* nor *senex*.

In fact, one might say that Frederick was never young and never became old. The ancient, initiatic myth of regeneration of the *elder-child* seemed therefore to be renewed: a variation on the cosmic infant, linkable, on one hand, to the Etruscan Tages, and to the Hellenistic Arpocrates (the child Horus of the Egyptians) on the other. From the first, Frederick seemed to inherit the astonishing wisdom; from the second, his mysterious (*metatopical* and *metachronous*) ability to penetrate, by virtue of which nothing seemed to escape his gaze and hearing.

Keeping this into account, let us consider for a second this precious coin: a technically perfect coinage, minted using methods that are now obsolete, with images of great plastic force (while not exempt from compositional sobriety), inserted into a perfectly circular planchet.

On the *recto* of the *angustalis* stands, in its classic solemnity, the well-proportioned bust of a young Frederick (in profile, with laurel and paludated in imperial clothes). The beardless face of the sovereign, of a plasticity barely attenuated by the blurring of the contours, presents classical features, directly inspired by the tradition of the first imperial Rome. The figure, as a whole, is surrounded by an inscription in stern and measured ancient epigraphic forms: CESAR AVG (ustus) IMP (erator) ROM (anorum).

On the *verso*, contained within the legend FRIDE/RICUS (without any other epithet), the imperial eagle appears, with its hooked and threatening beak and powerful claws, its large wings detached from the body, caught at the time of taking flight or – at the contrary – when, landing on the ground, is about to fold its wings against its feathered body.¹⁰ The eagle, uranic and solar symbol par excellence, which evokes the numinous character and the ordering function of the *logos*, was entrusted with the task of expressing the synthesis of the *virtutes* of the Empire: hierarchical vision, martial capability and, above all, an ability to join the uranic sphere with the telluric sphere, evident in the combination of *recto* and *verso*, but also in the symbolic posture of the raptor. It had to recall the glories of the imperial eagle which, as an emblem of the army, the Roman insignias had led victorious in every corner of the world (and here it is hardly necessary to evoke the symbolic gesture of planting the insignia of the eagle in front of the main building of a city: eloquent expression of the accomplished submission to the military authority of Rome).

The *pathos* that the coin intentionally wanted to provoke is manifested by the absolute singularity of the *augustale*, which, in addition to completely renovating the formal canons which were then in use (by directly reconnecting to the mythical Augustan models, in accordance with Bouchard's concepts of *anchor* and *imprint*), had also the ambition to propose, throughout the area previously dominated by the gold of Byzantium, a coin capable of filling the void left on the great international circuits by the Byzantine currency.

These traits show in full the idea of the fierce propagandistic impact that the *augustale*, while being a coin limited to the *Regnum*, intended to assume throughout the Empire. An indication of this,

10 Cf. Impelluso 2004, II: 109-111. For further information on the symbol of the eagle and its connections with imperality, cf. Bonvecchio 1997.

absolutely unprecedented for Sicily, is the purity of the coin, which, unlike the sixteen carats of the old Norman tari, could reach twenty and a half carats, matching the gold content of the *hyperpyron*, the gold coin of Byzantium. Further testament to this was the diligence with which the sovereign ostensibly checked the correspondence of the images that represented him to the idea he wanted to convey of himself¹¹ (a zeal comparable to the obsessive attention he was paying to the correct spelling of his name, *Fridericus*, which cost the loss of his fingers to a notary that in a document had reported its *volgare*, Italianised form – *Federicus*).

Therefore the portrait of the emperor – the *signum* which was always predominant on coins and seals – could and should, *everywhere*, acting through the recognition of his person, *give order*, radiating strength as an image of divine grace, as was the case with Roman coins: they were a means of payment but also of political propaganda.¹² Although he separated the spiritual and the material dimension which were fused in the coin, Christ was referring to them when he distinguished the kingdom of God from that of Caesar.¹³

11 In Frederick's age *angustales* and *seals* reveal the technical expertise and the excellent quality of the *magistri* who were active in the main *ateliers* of the kingdom, Messina and Brindisi. An expertise handsomely rewarded by Frederick who, in Title 49 of his *Constitutions of Melfi*, addressing the *Magistri mechanicarum artium quorum operis et operibus homines carere non possunt*, mentions, among the few categories of masters – more related to the pomp of the court – the goldsmiths (*artifices qui in auro et argento laborant*). It is no accident indeed that the *siclarii* of Brindisi enjoyed the privilege of exemption from all taxes and a special forum.

12 On the meaning of coins as a means of political propaganda, cf. Stauffer 1952 and Vermeule 1959.

13 “Reddite quae sunt Caesaris Caesari et quae sunt Dei Deo” (Matthew, 22, 21).

Indeed by overcoming the dividing line between a “real” perception and an “imaginative” dimension, the figure (*signum*) becomes a *symbol* and, in this way, it does not simply “mean” the object to which it refers, but assumes the same reality, giving a real presence to the content of the representation. A *symbolum-res*, which is therefore capable, like an ancient Roman emblem or insignia, to *announce* more than what it *declares* (cf. Brun 1985, 81-82). A *symbolum-res* that not only means, but *is* and *gives* the power of what is signified: a power, in Frederick’s case, which is *omnipotent* and *pervasive*.

However, in addition to revealing the presence of the sovereign, Frederick’s elegant gold coin also intended to evoke the *omnipresence of his gaze, whose radiance his enemies were unable to bear out of fear of justice*¹⁴ (a typical attribute of divinity: here Bouchard’s characteristics of *sacredness* and *ethics* emerge in the construction of a social myth).

The *augustale*, as a matter of fact, whose counterfeiting amounted to the crime of lese-majesty (*monetam adulterinam cudens, dicitur crimen laesae majestatis committere*¹⁵), by reproducing *ad infinitum* the effigy of the emperor, contributed to eternalising his name, imposing everywhere the *image* of his power.

It seems evident to me that, by delving into the description of the nature, peculiarities and vicissitudes of the *augustale*, all the elements that Gérard Bouchard considered as constitutive of a social myth have appeared: *archetypal foundation*, *hybridism* (a synthesis of reality and fiction, reason and emotion), *emotional dimension*, *sacredness*, *instrumentality* and *narrative structure*.

At the same time, a few moments of what the Canadian scholar defined as a *process of mythification* were particularly explicit: suffice

14 Cf. on this point Huillard-Bréholles 1963, 879.

15 Cf. *Liber Augustalis*, III, 62. For further information cf. Schminck-Gustavus 1970.

to think of the evocation of an *anchor* (the Roman imperality) with a “foundational” function or the manipulation of an *emotional imprint* for the construction of *behavioural ethics*. Or the process of *sacralisation* with which the coin was invested through a (normative, imaginative and literary) *narrative*, accompanied by well-studied *techniques of persuasion* (a wise use of rhetoric; the creation of keywords and suggestive images). We are therefore in the presence of a social myth, which was wisely orchestrated and interpreted by its *actor*, Frederick II (*puer Apuliae* and *immutator saeculi*), to accomplish his political projects. That Frederick II *monstrum mendacii* and partisan of Satan, who was capable of all sorts of *machinatio* (artifice, machination) in order to achieve his objectives, including – for propaganda purposes – a mythical *renovatio monetae*:

ut ipsa nova moneta forma
nostri memoriam nominis et nostrae majestatis imaginem
eis jugiter representet.¹⁶

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16 Cf. Huillard-Bréholles 1963, 669.

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