

Contents

Introduction — 1

- a The Second Vatican Council and literature — 1
- b The relationship between Italian literature and Catholicism — 3
- c The semiotic method in the study of literary themes — 8
- d The corpus and structure of the book — 10

1 Semiotic Ideology and Religious Themes in Italian Fiction — 14

- 1.1 Forms of agency in linguistic creation: the origins — 18
- 1.2 Communication issues — 25
- 1.3 Language and humanity — 31
- 1.4 The cosmological power of the word and literary activity — 34
- 1.5 Conclusion — 43

2 Literary Representations of Rituals and Liturgical Latin — 46

- 2.1 Latin and the memory of the past: *Libera nos a Malo* — 52
- 2.2 Ritual as the sign of an ending age: *Pontificale in San Marco* — 61
- 2.3 Ritual and Latin as keys for a new quest for meaning: *Il peso della grazia* — 66
- 2.4 Conclusion — 79

3 The Thematic Role of the Pope, between Immanence and Transcendence — 84

- 3.1 The pope who renounced his title: *L'avventura di un povero cristiano* — 85
- 3.2 The dystopia of *Rome without the pope* — 92
- 3.3 The pope at the center of a conspiracy theory: *Imprimatur* — 107
- 3.4 Conclusion — 118

4 Atypical Models of Sanctity — 121

- 4.1 The skeleton saint: *La cattedrale* — 123
- 4.2 Sanctity from outside: *La corona di Undecimilla* — 133
- 4.3 *The sinner saint* — 139
- 4.4 Sanctity and blindness — 151
- 4.5 Conclusion — 156

Conclusion — 162

References Cited — 167

- a Fiction and essays by literary authors — **167**
- b Institutional documents issued by the Catholic Church — **168**
- c References — **169**
- d Websites — **176**

Index — 177