



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

DEPARTMENT  
OF CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY  
AND ITALIAN STUDIES

PhD Programme in *Literary and Philological Cultures*

## CLF 2025 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Doctoral Conference

Bologna, October 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> 2025

# «MUTATAS DICERE FORMAS» VARIATION AND CHANGE IN PHILOLOGY, LITERATURE, LINGUISTICS AND BOOK CULTURES

## Call for Abstracts

The PhD students of the Doctoral Program in Literary and Philological Cultures at Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna are pleased to announce the second edition of the Doctoral Conference of the Department of Classical Philology and Italian Studies. The conference invites participation from both PhD candidates and early-career researchers. This edition focuses on variation and change across the fields of Classical Studies, Italian Studies, Linguistics, and Book Cultures, following four thematic units outlined below. Contributions may explore theoretical and methodological perspectives (history of debates, critical approaches, influential positions) and/or empirical analyses (significant or widely discussed case studies).

### CLASSICAL STUDIES

Within Classical Studies, variation and change emerge as dense and pivotal concepts. They are fundamental for understanding literary, linguistic and philological phenomena. It is well known that all writing is - in essence - rewriting, a notion particularly peculiar to ancient literatures, where variation serves as the primary strategy for integrating the new within the framework of tradition.

In Greek literary culture, which revolves around the concept of *μῆτις*, the Hellenistic period fosters a productive dialogue between tradition and innovation, marking an era of significant transformations. This emulative dynamic is even more pronounced in Latin literature, an intertextual literature par excellence, which since its origins engages in continuous and fruitful confrontations with past authors. The concept of change is equally central to early Christian literature, affecting not only the definition of the Jesus movement's key characteristics, but also the formation of the biblical canon,

the emergence of the concept of αἵρεσις, the diversity of worship practices, and interreligious influences.

Variation plays a pivotal role in philological studies as well. Every copy, by its very nature, differs from its antigraph and, thus, introduces innovations - a primary focus of philological research. More specifically, the selection of textual variants is a fundamental step towards the establishment of the *constitutio textus*.

We therefore welcome proposals related to, but not limited to, the following thematic areas:

- i. Intertextual phenomena within one or multiple literary traditions;
- ii. Diachronic shifts within specific literary genres (e.g. epic, tragedy, historiography);
- iii. Thematic reworkings concerning the evolution of mythological narratives, *topoi* and character development;
- iv. Variations in language and stylistic register;
- v. Shifts in perspective and thought within the works of individual authors;
- vi. Methodological reflections on the selection of textual variants;
- vii. Discussion and problematization of authorial variants.

## **ROMANCE PHILOLOGY, ITALIAN PHILOLOGY AND ITALIAN STUDIES**

An inevitable process or a deliberate artifice, change manifests in various forms throughout human history and literary evolution. It is so pervasive that there is a risk of solely reducing it to a diachronic axis, overlooking its broader dimensions, ranging from geographical contexts to human interactions, and, lastly, to cultural production. Understanding literary transformation means investigating how a piece interacts with its context, tradition, audience, and even with itself.

This entails tracing, both within its forms and its essence, the enduring elements and the novelties that emerge in successive stages of literary evolution. More specifically, considering literary variation and transformation, the principle of change manifests in multiple ways and at different levels: from linguistic evolution to textual modifications during the process of transmission, from shifts in proximity to or divergence from literary models, including the most recent transformations influenced by social media. The notion of change inherently implies the existence of a reference norm or a starting point at least: the text can thus be understood as a dynamic process that, through the intricacies of its history, may reach outcomes vastly different from its original condition.

Based on such premises, we encourage proposals that, while not exclusively, address the following lines of inquiry:

- i. Change as the reworking of a model through emulation and transformation: examples include the adaptation of troubadour themes and forms in Italian lyric poetry; Petrarchism as a linguistic and stylistic model over centuries; changes in epistolography and theater; or the evolution of characters and themes from medieval French romances in chivalric poems, following the Boiardo-Ariosto-Tasso trajectory;
- ii. Diachronic and diatopic linguistic variation, with particular attention to language changes in different manuscript witnesses or within revised editions by the same author;
- iii. Transformations in the use of punctuation for technical and expressive purposes;

- iv. Variation and change in philology: significant authorial variants, diffraction phenomena, analysis of evolutionary apparatuses, rewritings, translations, vernacular adaptations, and *mises en prose*;
- v. Change as a literary theme;
- vi. Variations in the relationship between the patron, the author, and the audience;
- vii. Formal hybridizations of literature in relation to digital media and their thematization within literary texts;
- viii. New publishing dynamics in the digital era: transmedia storytelling and media franchises; self-publishing and distributed authorship; hypertextuality, non-linear productions, and AI-supported literature.

## LINGUISTICS

*All Grammars Leak*: Edward Sapir's (1921:39)<sup>1</sup> emblematic statement has become an established principle in linguistic research. Languages are far from being monolithic and one-dimensional entities; rather, they are inevitably subject to variation. Moreover, the concept of variation is often inseparable from that of change, which is why, according to Meillet (1921:17)<sup>2</sup>, the study of linguistic change should be inseparable from the study of social change. Establishing the overall state of affairs is therefore a complex task that requires multiple perspectives. Given the inseparable link between *variation and change*, what remains difficult to clarify is what Weinreich, Labov, and Herzog (1968) define as *actuation*: how, when, and why linguistic change occurs - and perhaps even more significantly - why it sometimes does not.

Why are some diachronic sources more productive than others? Why, given identical starting structural features, does change occur in some languages but not in others? What role does sociolinguistic variation play in shaping cross-linguistic patterns of change? Answering these questions and investigating such dynamics requires an integrated approach in which sociolinguistics examines language diversification along variation axes, typology explores possibilities, tendencies, and constraints at a universal structural level, and diachrony reconstructs change by clarifying the mechanisms and principles through which variation either leads - or fails to do so - to a definitive structural transformation of the system.

We therefore welcome contributions from all areas of linguistic research that, adopting an integrated approach to theoretical and methodological frameworks, combine tools from sociolinguistics, typology, and historical linguistics to investigate linguistic phenomena at any level of analysis (e.g., phonology, morphology, semantics, lexicon, syntax, pragmatics), either from a comparative perspective or through the study of individual languages.

Potential but not exclusive topics include:

- i. Typological perspectives on linguistic variation and change, with a focus on Italian, non-standard varieties, minority languages, or languages of the Italo-Romance domain, among

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<sup>1</sup> SAPIR, Edward (1921). *Language, an introduction to the study of speech*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company.

<sup>2</sup> MEILLET, Antoine (1921). *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale*. Paris: Champion.

- others; analyses of grammaticalization processes, lexicalization, pragmaticalization, or constructionalization processes in general;
- ii. Sociolinguistic aspects of variation that may clarify or suggest the origins and mechanisms and/or principles of change, or describe ongoing change, for instance, from a macro- or micro-diachronic perspective;
- iii. *Source-oriented* approaches to variation from a sociolinguistic and/or typological perspective;
- iv. Aspects of variation and change influenced by language acquisition, and/or by areal and contact factors;
- v. Quantitative approaches to the analysis of variation and change.

## BOOK CULTURES

The transformations affecting the book – understood not only as a material object but also as a vehicle of cultural and informational transmission – offer a vast and stimulating field of research. The history of books, printing, and publishing, along with the history of reading and libraries, intersects with bibliographical disciplines, as well as library and archival sciences. Such disciplinary richness allows scholars to examine practices related to the production, dissemination, consumption, and preservation of texts over time and space, in a reciprocal relationship with the cultural and social dynamics of each era. Whether one considers, as a mere instance, the ‘revolution’ of the *ars artificialiter scribendi*, the transformation of the library as a ‘growing organism’, the emergence of new audiences and geographical areas reached by print culture, or the development of new editorial genres, the realm of books has taken on multiple forms and functions. Such changes reflect and foster cultural shifts, not only in Europe, but in other contexts as well, continuously gaining new nuances and meanings while remaining shaped by the ongoing dialectic between continuity and discontinuity.

These aspects open up a range of research trajectories, which we encourage scholars to explore through, but not limited to, the following themes:

- i. *Changes in book shape*: transformations in formats and materials, from wax tablets to digital documents, alongside shifts in book morphology and production techniques.
- ii. *The evolving functions of books*: changes in *mise en livre* and textual organization, the emergence of new editorial models for both traditional and emerging disciplines (interactive books, illustrated books, etc.), and transformations in the forms and functions of paratexts.
- iii. *Variations in book spaces*: social, geographical, economic, and productive spaces related to book production and commerce; cultural and social spaces, including the evolution of readership demographics, needs, and the role of books; library spaces as reflections of society, their users, and their history; spaces of censorship, where boundaries of permissible content are defined and redefined.
- iv. *The evolution of book-related professions*: transformations in the roles of publishers, booksellers, authors (including those concealed by anonymity), and all other professionals linked to the book world (illustrators, literary agents, translators, etc.).
- v. *Library science paradigms and book preservation*: shifts in cataloguing techniques and their historical development, the contemporary context of metadata and the semantic web, the transition from repertorial to social librarianship, and the evolution of classification, bibliographic, and archival practices in relation to changes in book formats and materials.

- vi. *Transformations in archival and book collections*: changes in collections due to acquisitions, donations, and transfers, as well as alterations caused by emergencies such as wars, natural disasters, fires, and deliberate destruction.

## General Information

PhD students and those who have obtained such title within the last two years by the abstract submission deadline are invited to submit an original paper proposal (maximum 350 words, excluding the title and up to 10 bibliographic references), along with a short academic profile (maximum 100 words), by **May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025**.

Proposals should be sent to **convegnoficlit.unibo@gmail.com** with the subject line **"Paper Proposal – Doctoral Conference"** and should specify the relevant section (e.g., either Classical Studies, Classical Philology, Italian Studies, Italian Philology, Romance Philology, Linguistics or Book Sciences). The email should include the following information: paper title, name, affiliation, and contact email address. Submissions may be in Italian or English and should be sent in both .doc(x) and anonymized .pdf formats. The outcome of the review process will be communicated by **June 23<sup>th</sup>, 2025**. Each presentation will have a maximum duration of 20 minutes. Selected speakers are required to present their papers in person. All thematic units are interdisciplinary, and individual panels will be organized according to thematic or methodological similarities. The conference will also feature keynote speakers. The Scientific Committee will consider the possibility of publishing the conference proceedings. The conference will take place on **Monday, October 27<sup>th</sup> – Wednesday, October 29<sup>th</sup>, 2025**, at the **University of Bologna**.

There is no registration fee. Further details regarding registration, the conference venue, accepted proposals, and the full program will be provided on the official conference website:



<https://phd.unibo.it/culture-letterarie-e-filologiche/it/attivita/convegno-dottorale-internazionale-2025>

For further questions, please contact:



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