



Università di Genova

PhD Program in Classical and Modern Literatures and Cultures

DOCTORAL CONFERENCE

Genoa, October 29-31, 2024

FORMS OF FEAR

Call for Papers

The PhD students of the **Doctoral Program in Classical and Modern Literatures and Cultures** of the University of Genoa are pleased to announce the first edition of the **Doctoral Conference** of their program and of the Department of Italian, Romance, Antique, Art and Entertainment Studies. The conference is open to PhD students, young researchers in the fields of **Classics, Italian Studies, Linguistics, and Modern and Contemporary Literature**.

The conference focuses on the theme of *fear* in all its diachronic manifestations, from antiquity to the contemporary age. The theme can be addressed in the fields of folklore, literature, theatre, linguistics, and the visual arts. Below are some suggestions for the various academic fields. Papers of both theoretical and experimental natures will be welcomed, encouraging those which valorise comparative and interdisciplinary approaches.

CLASSICAL STUDIES

Mythology is a privileged field for the manifestation of frightening creatures and the representation of characters whose actions are driven by fear; not infrequently, literary images have found their iconographic counterparts which would be interesting to inspect either independently or in relation to textual references. Besides literature, popular culture is teeming with monsters and entities supposed to ward off the curious or the unwary from dangers; monsters whose stories have seldom been transposed onto the written page. Fear, however, not only works as an important narrative trope, but also as a driving force towards historical and social change: one needs only to think of the superstition linked to the mutilation of the Herms, or the panic unleashed first by the plague of Athens and, some centuries later, by the plague of Justinian—two historical events which look generally alike but linked to extremely different kinds of fear, connected respectively to the pagan and the Christian imaginary. Starting from such considerations, suggestions for papers verge on, but are not limited to, the following topics:



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- **Verbal manifestations of fear:** the voice as a tool for expressing fear through monologues and dialogues; idioms, proverbs and phrases that include fear.
- **Signs of fear:** facial expressions, gestures, body language and posture as indicators of fear; dances and rituals as a way of exorcising fear.
- **Individual drives:** fear as a factor in reasoned choices or impulsive decisions on behalf of historical and literary figures; fear as a stimulus for action, positive or negative, and as a source of inspiration.
- **Collective drives:** fear as a tool of control, power and manipulation; the role of fear in the construction of norms and taboos; fear and stereotypes in the perception of the 'enemy' and, more generally, of the 'other'; fear as a factor of social cohesion or disintegration.
- **Lexicon of fear:** nuances of the various terms that indicate fear in the Greek-Roman world; diachronic considerations about the evolution of ancient culture and society; the relationship between the terms indicating fear and concepts related to it, such as anxiety, terror and phobia.
- **Depictions of fear:** monstrous and terrifying creatures from the realms of mythology and ancient folklore; images of fear in mosaics, sculptures, paintings or illuminated manuscripts; apotropaic representations that indicate the dread of evil influences.
- **Folklore of fear:** frightening entities that populate the classical imaginary, the traces of which can occasionally be found in the modern one, both in fairy tales and in contemporary legends.

The SSD codes of the academic fields for which the abstracts will be evaluated are the following (in line with the Italian MIUR guidelines): L-FIL-LET/01-02, 04-08; L-ANT/02-03, 05, 07; M-STO/09, L-LIN/01.

MODERN LITERATURES, PHILOLOGY, AND LINGUISTICS

From its origins, the literary text has represented a privileged place for the expression of fear understood as an individual or collective emotional state. Suffice it to think about medieval superstitions such as apocalyptic narratives, allegorized fears of concrete evils such as famine or epidemics, or even the tendency, which lasts until the contemporary age, to exorcise said fears through wars and through the safe haven of either religious thought or the exemplary stories of bold and witty heroes. Far from being exclusively a thematic cue, fear is also a driving force for action that triggers conscious or unconscious mechanisms of control, the rewriting and revision of a text, and which favours the use of specific linguistic and communicative strategies. Starting from such considerations, suggestions for papers verge on, but are not limited to, the following topics:



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- **From millenary fears to recent horrors:** the written text as a collector of events, supposedly threatening entities either in specific contexts or under an evolutionary, cross-sectional perspective.
- **Literary occurrences** of superstition and folklore, from its origins to the modern age.
- The intricate human approach to the **supernatural**, captivating and repelling at the same time, and the complex conversation it has with religion.
- **Responding to fear:** the narration—and justification—of events, measures and judgements caused by fear: among others, the marginalisation of alterity, the crusades, colonial exploits or even political establishing of terror and dictatorships.
- **The depiction of fear** in the illustrations of ancient manuscripts: from illuminations to the *drôleries* portraying monsters, demons, disturbing creatures and the like with regard to their specific role, but also to the relationship between the image and the text.
- **Philology:** self-censorship mechanisms and cautionary measures implemented by the author during the editing process for fear of political, religious, social, and/or personal repercussions, with further regard to the adjustments made to the various drafts, or even to the possible discrepancies between the proofs, notes, copies, and the final draft.
- **Linguistics and language history:** use of linguistic, lexical, and stylistic devices—between which reticence, preterition, suspended syntax, etc.—to express trouble, be it precise authorial intention—e.g., when trying to depict the feeling of fear in their characters—or unconscious mechanisms caused by both concrete and potentially dangerous situations.
- **Horror literature:** origins, developments, and features of the genre in the context of Italian and foreign literature, but also from a comparative perspective and through the analysis of concrete case studies.
- **Theatre** and the convergence or divergence of various languages—verbal, visual, gestural, musical—to express fear, with further regard to the transition from the written text, or script (if any), to the acting performance, but also as a means of reenactment, distortion, or overcoming of fear itself.
- **Trauma studies** and the narrative devices linked to wars, political events, and colonial contexts, as well as the ‘intangible’ fears characterising the contemporary world.
- From the feeling of fear with regard to **post- and transmodern realities** to their definition and related riposte to the human condition marked by alienation or globalisation.
- The fear of facing the current issue of **climate change**—from the Era of the Anthropocene and that of eco anxiety—but also the perception of nature



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itself as a treacherous, untameable force, from the literature of the origins to contemporary times.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

PhD students and **early career scholars** who obtained their PhD within three years after the deadline of this call are encouraged to send their individual paper proposals to convegno.phd.diraas@gmail.com. The deadline for submitting proposals is **June 15, 2024**. Please, insert “PhD Paper Proposal” in the subject line of your email and specify the academic field your paper belongs to (“Classical Studies” or “Modern Literatures and Cultures”). Furthermore, attach your **PDF** file containing your 300-word abstract (bibliographical references excluded) and the title of your research, either in Italian or in English. Please, avoid including personal data in your file in order to ensure anonymity during the evaluation process. Notification of acceptance will be sent by August 20, 2024.

Each panel will last approximately 20 minutes. In-person presentations are warmly recommended. Online participation will only be available in case of impossibility to reach the conference venue; we kindly ask you to specify, via e-mail, whether you will be giving your speech **in person** or **online**.

The conference program will be organized based on the thematic or methodological affinity of the contributions. Presentations will include speeches by keynote speakers affiliated with both national and foreign universities: Tommaso Braccini (University of Siena), Douglas Cairns (University of Edinburgh), Fabio A. Camilletti (University of Warwick), Edward Wilson-Lee (Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge).

The Conference will be held from **October 29 to 31, 2024** at the University of Genoa. No registration fee is required.

For all general enquiries, contact convegno.phd.diraas@gmail.com.