Call for Papers

Doctoral Conference

PhD Programme in Foreign Literatures and Languages

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23 – 25.06.2022

Past, History and Memory

in Language and Literary Studies

This call for papers is proposed by the PhD Students in Foreign Literatures and Languages of the University of Verona with the support of the Project of Excellence in Digital Humanities. The conference aims at bringing together current and prospective PhD Students and early-stage researchers who wish to share and discuss their work around the themes of past, history and memory.

Literary and language studies have grappled with the concept and import of past in a variety of ways: past can be synonymous of tradition, of canon, and engaging with it can mean re-discussing the role one has with respect to a dominant or oppressed other; past times can come to us in the form of memories and remembrance, shattering our convictions about what is actually gone, what we should remember and what has changed. Narratives of the past are interwoven with the construction of the present; they shape and give meanings to individual and collective identities which are transmitted by languages and may in turn affect their survival. The past is also the subject of History with a capital H - a discipline whereby these reflections become political (whose past becomes History?) as well as ethical (who is to tell this story?).

Methodologically, ongoing efforts to preserve the past have defined whole fields of study, such as philology, archival studies and the study of aesthetic experiences with literature. Alongside the availability of open and innovative tools, cutting-edge research practices (unimaginable a few decades back) are now possible. Therefore, we particularly encourage submissions which investigate, apply and challenge research topics in Digital Humanities and the Empirical Study of Literature. In fact, Digital Humanities were born out of pioneering studies specifically meant for the preservation of the past, such as Father Busa's 'Index Thomisticus' project, which began in the 1940s. Although the field of the Empirical Study of Literature is fairly new, it is concerned with the past, history and memory in several ways - focusing, for instance, on the evolution of reader engagement, and the implications that various aesthetic, emotional and cognitive experiences with literary and non-literary narratives might have on readers.

We welcome submissions which employ varied research paradigms, both qualitative and quantitative, involving diverse fields and practices (e.g., experimental, observational, computational, theoretical investigations, field research, comparative and contrastive analyses). Contributions may include, but need not be limited to, the following list of topics:

Language Studies

- Past methods in the third millennium: the evolution of epistemologies, approaches and methodologies in language studies and applied linguistics
- Diachronic perspectives on language contact and variation
- The cultural, social, political, and economic powers shaping languages and communities (e.g., language colonization, subalternity, Indigenous languages, language policy and planning)
- The relationships between language, literacy, and the narrative construction of identity across cultures and times: present-day perspectives on identity construction (e.g., Discourse Analysis, language varieties and education)
- Adaptation and re-semiotization of discourse practices in new contexts of communication

Literary Studies

- Past as memory: memorial writing, writing as therapy, postmemory
- The historical novel and the ethical implications of morality in History (e.g., postcolonial studies, perpetrator narratives)
- Adaptation and appropriation: reworking of traditional forms, intermedia and transmedia adaptation
- The Empirical Study of Literature
- Narrative structures, readers' recollection of the textual message and narrative persuasion (e.g., story world absorption, transportation, foregrounding)
- Reading across the ages (e.g., reading in/about different historical eras, reading at different phases of the human lifespan, lifetime associations of reading and (neuro)cognition)

Digital Humanities

DH and Language Studies:
- The application of digital methods and tools to the study of languages (e.g., historical corpora and databases, thesauri, and digital editions)
- Revisiting established frameworks and facing new ethical challenges in the implementation of computational methods, NLP, and machine learning
- Critical contributions exploring the development of DH tools, their affordances and limitations in investigating past and current issues

DH, Literary Studies and the Empirical Study of Literature:
- Text gathering and text analysis: themes and genres, relations and changes from research and cultural perspectives, and generation of literary texts
- The digital study of literature from historical, philological, and modern publishing perspectives
- Empirical Aesthetics and Neurocognitive Poetics: the ways in which we experience and remember art and literature (e.g., use of eye-tracking methods, fMRI for psychological measures, machine learning algorithms)
- The evolution of reading and reader engagement, from physical books to online digital fiction

We invite contributions for 15-minute talks (plus 10 minutes for discussion); presentations can be delivered in English or Italian. The conference will be held in a hybrid format. Further information will be made available to presenters and participants in due time according to Covid-related restrictions. In-person presentations are encouraged, but you will be able to indicate a preferred modality (in-person or online). A selection of papers will be considered for publication.

Submission form
We welcome abstracts (300-500 words) written in English or Italian. Formatting should follow the latest APA guidelines (APA 7) with a maximum of seven bibliographic references. A provisional title (max. 20 words) and short bio (50-100 words) are required. Abstracts will be reviewed anonymously and evaluated on the basis of their pertinence to the theme, originality and scientific quality; language use will not be assessed. Click here to submit your abstract.

Important dates
Abstract Submission Deadline: March 31st, 2022
Notification of Acceptance: April 30th, 2022
Registration: May 10th, 2022
Conference Days: June 23rd-25th, 2022

Scientific committee:
Anna Bognolo, Marina Buzzoni, Lisanna Calvi, Adele Cipolla, Paolo Frassi, Marco Rospocher

Organizing committee: Giorgia Andreolli, Julia De Jonge, Serena Demichelis, Lorenzo Ferroni, Husnain Raza