



**Dottorato in Civiltà e culture  
linguistico-letterarie  
dall'antichità al moderno**

DIPARTIMENTO DI  
STUDI UMANISTICI



Doctoral Conference

Rome, May 6th-7th, 2026

## **READING, WRITING, STUDYING**

### ***The Intellectual Activity and Its Traces***

#### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

The PhD candidates of the Doctoral Programme in *Linguistic and literary civilizations and cultures from antiquity to modern times* at Roma Tre University are pleased to issue the invitation to participate in the second edition of the PhD Conference of the Department of Humanities, addressed to PhD candidates and early-career researchers. The theme of the Conference – to be developed within the fields of Classical Studies and Italian Studies – is *The Intellectual Activity and Its Traces*. Given the complexity of this phenomenon, what follows is merely a selection of possible lines of research.

#### **Ancient Studies**

From the author's pen to manuscripts and printed editions, the history of the transmission of ancient and medieval literary works is marked out by a succession of multiple transformations affecting both the text and its material medium. In the various stages of a work's 'biography', it is sometimes possible to discern traces of the activity of the chief agent of its transmission: the reader. The reader's defining qualities are, at once, individuality and multiplicity; it is with the reader that the author engages in a unique dialogue, though knowing only in part the reader's social identity, interests, and aims. Indeed, the reception of a text inevitably escapes the author's control, hence the many instances in which an author seeks to outline the profile of an ideal reader. For example, Aulus Gellius seems to do so in the preface to the *Attic Nights*: «Those who have never experienced the pleasure – and the toil – of reading and reading again, searching, writing, and annotating [...] should steer clear of these *Nights* and seek other diversions» (*Praef.* 19). *Lectitando, percontando, scribendo, commentando*: these gerunds vividly describe the reader's activity, which in the course of textual transmission becomes particularly significant when it leaves tangible traces of itself *directly upon the text*. To achieve a thorough understanding of this multifaceted and complex phenomenon, it is necessary to draw simultaneously upon philological, palaeographical, and historical approaches, as well as upon the study of the text's reception over time. Accordingly, contributions are invited that take the cue from the following themes:

- 1- Tangible traces of reading and writing from antiquity to the Middle Ages: analysis of the material evidence of the work made upon the text. *Marginalia* and the various types of paratextual elements; paragraphemic signs, erasures, underlinings, corrections; palaeographical study of graphic signs, abbreviations, Tironian notes, punctuation;
- 2- The relationship between text and paratext: ecdotic issues concerning works provided with paratextual apparatuses, at different stages of their transmission; supplies of paratextual apparatuses to the text's exegesis and its *constitutio*. Interpolations and *additamenta*: their reasons, purposes and ecdotic consequences;
- 3- Methods for identifying and classifying anonymous and/or historically identifiable readers. Evidence of scribes and/or authors as readers of themselves: revisions, corrections, autographs and authorial reworkings;
- 4- Tangible testimonies to the labour of intellectual activity: intentional revision projects, *subscriptions* and explicit statements of *emendatio*, glosses and commentaries meant to aid comprehension of the text, readers who 'suffer' through their reading, correctors lamenting the poor condition of a text and/or urge its care and preservation;
- 5- Causes and consequences of the work made upon the text: errors and variants between philology, linguistics and palaeography; legibility and illegibility of handwriting scripts; 'stratigraphy' of interventions made upon the text: their recognition and possible dating; involuntary adaptation to the linguistic habits of the reader/scribe; the relation between the use of the text and its *Nachleben* in later periods;
- 6- The fate of technical texts: multiple redactions, compilations, explicit and implicit quotations, re-uses, plagiarism; ecdotic issues;
- 7- The creation of personal libraries and of 'library texts/codices': purposes, methods of compilation, use and *Nachleben*; the preservation of 'selected' texts: *florilegia*, *compendia*, *excerpta*, *commentarii*;
- 8- When the writer speaks to the reader: awareness of the relationship with the audience: lexicon and form of literary genres in relation to their intended readership, appeals to readers, subsequent editions, added prefaces and/or postscripts;
- 9- 'Submerged' readers: when the act of reading is no longer the privilege of the elite.

### Italian studies

Since antiquity, intellectual activity has taken shape as a dynamic interplay of practices: reading, writing, annotating, copying, preserving. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio identified four distinct ways of "making books": the *scriptor*, who transcribes the works of others, without alteration; the *compiler*, who assembles existing texts; the *commentator*, who combines his own writings with those of others; the *auctor*, who creates both original and borrowed material, yet privileges his own voice as primary. In the medieval world, the *lector* interprets and participates in the adventure of the text with his own *auctoritas*, immersing himself existentially in the act of reading.

As Justus Lipsius reminds us in his *Epistolica Institutio* (1601), reading has never been a merely receptive act, but rather an active exercise of memory and imitation, a practice whose

workshop is found in books and personal notebooks. Within this space of interaction between mind and page, a “secondary” form of writing emerges, marginal and everyday, that prepares, accompanies, or prolongs inner thought.

Reading, however, also implies reaction: the reader’s experience becomes a mirror of an age, reflecting its cultural, political, and ideological tensions. The traces of reading - *marginalia*, glosses, commentaries, rewritings — thus become documents of historical consciousness and collective sensibility, capable of revealing the shifting relationship between text and audience.

Across time, from the earliest literary forms to the contemporary era, reading appears as a dynamic process of transmission and transformation, of preservation and reinterpretation, that crosses eras, sensibilities, and material supports.

Furthermore, over the centuries, reflection on literary texts has given rise to tangible signs of reading and study both external, left by contemporary or later readers and scholars, and internal, stemming from the author’s own reworking of his texts. In many notable cases, authors have returned to their works, annotating and reshaping them through clearly discernible processes of composition. In this way, literature becomes a legacy heritage, whose written form is transmitted and enriched by successive layers of meaning.

Beyond these material traces, one also observes immaterial signs of reading in intertextual processes, which contribute not only to interpretation but also to the redefinition of a work: this implies acts of literary criticism in various forms, such as theoretical debates, contributions in newspapers and journals, editorial reports, essays, as well as rewritings, translations, and adaptations. A broad panorama thus emerges, rich with scenarios that engage disciplines such as philology, literary criticism, and linguistics.

To explore this thematic richness, proposals will be welcomed that address one or more of the following research directions:

- 1- Graphic / philological apparatus accompanying study: paragraphemic marks, philological notes, underlinings, erasures. The collection of various *marginalia* sheds light on the critical-intellectual function involved in the reader’s research activity, offering privileged access to the ways in which reading and writing, reception and invention interact.
- 2- Working Papers: the gestation of a work through notes, notebooks, diaries, letters by the author, *avant-textes*, and palimpsests (consider, for example, Cardinal Angelo Mai’s discovery of fragments of Cicero’s *De re publica*).
- 3- Critical Production: commentaries, technical writings, reviews in monographs or periodicals, interventions. Between one book and another a direct dialogue arises among intellectuals, expressed in various forms aimed at interpreting the idea of literature-primarily through textual engagement: consider the rich exchanges of the later twentieth century, scenes of cultural (and not only cultural) debate, or the editorial reading workshops of the last century, which shaped the literary taste of the decades that followed.
- 4- Editorial Reader’s reports opinions entrusted to publishing-house collaborators acting as consultants who work - recalling Calvino’s notion - on others’ books: editors, literary advisers up to the *writer-publisher* or *hyper-reader*, who recommend or reject a work. Their task is to read the text while envisaging the community of readers represented by the publishing house.

5- Reception and reader response: material traces that testify essential features of a text's transmission and reception. The reader collaborates in the realization of a text, becoming a new-author through a creative process that reinterprets, continues or contests, the original work, since the meaning enclosed within a text is potentially infinite.

6- Authors' libraries: as organic spaces between reception and transmission, authors' libraries make it possible to trace the readings that accompanied each author's intellectual growth from youth to maturity (notable examples include Gadda, Calvino, and Aleramo). In this context, traces of writing (reading marks, dedications, metalinguistic notes, glosses and paratextual elements) constitute precious documents testifying to recurring modes and habits of reading.

7- Derivative works: rewritings, transmedial adaptations and translations by other authors. In several cases, one can trace the processes of reading and reworking through concrete textual marks or through contact between authors, for instance correspondence, revealing mechanisms that involve other media and historical, geographical, or linguistic contexts.

8- Observations and linguistic notes: linguistic commentaries, linguistic analyses, the use of literary texts in dictionaries and language studies (as in the *Accademia della Crusca* model). Questions of language have often been treated as matters of code and civilization itself: since people are the makers of language, it is through language that ethical and social norms are established.

9- The New Challenges of the Digital Humanities: digital annotation, modeling, and the representation of textual traces in Digital Scholarly Editions, that renew dialogue between reading, interpretation and technology.

### General information

PhD students, researchers/doctors who have held their PhD degree for no more than three years at the time of sending their application, and master's graduates are invited to submit a short abstract (max. 350 words, excluding title and essential bibliography) as well as a short academic profile (max. 100 words) no later than January 31st, 2026.

Please send your abstract to [convegnodottorale.uniroma3@outlook.it](mailto:convegnodottorale.uniroma3@outlook.it), writing "Proposal Doctoral Conference" in the e-mail subject line and making it clear for which sub-section of the Conference (Ancient studies or Italian studies) you are applying. The text of the e-mail should include the following information: title of your talk proposal, your first and last name, affiliation (university/institution), and your e-mail address for future communication. Language accepted for contributions are Italian and English. Your abstract must be submitted in .pdf format and must be anonymous (please do not include your name in the file with the text of your abstract). The results of the selection will be announced by February 28th 2026.

Each talk at the Conference should not exceed 20 minutes in duration. Selected speakers are expected to hold their presentation in person.

The Scientific Committee will consider the possibility of publishing the Conference Proceedings.

The Conference will be held on May 6th-7th, 2026 at the Humanities Department of the University Roma Tre (Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Roma Tre). There will be no registration fee. Information on registration, the venue of the Conference, accepted proposals and a detailed program of the event will be communicated to your personal e-mail address and will be posted on the official website of the Conference.

For further information, feel free to contact [convegnodottorale.uniroma3@outlook.it](mailto:convegnodottorale.uniroma3@outlook.it).

### **Organizing Committee**

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