



Doctoral School in Linguistic and Literary Sciences

FAMA VOLAT:

REPUTATION IN LINGUISTICS, LITERATURE, EDUCATION AND MEDIA COMMUNICATION

Catholic University of the Sacred Heart

Doctoral Conference

29 April 2027

Slander is a breeze

(Rossini, *The Barber of Seville*)

Reputation is not the same as who we are, but it is “the part of us that lives on in others” (Origgi 2016) and arises when a judgement is expressed, shared and received (Giardini and Wittek 2019). It therefore exists outside the individual and develops within the realm of interpersonal relationships – from gossip to the press, from literature to digital media. Reputation has always played a key role in how human societies function: as a form of social capital (Bourdieu 1983), it is an instrument of power which establishes mechanisms of recognition, inclusion and exclusion within communities (Origgi 2016; Cohen 2011). Today more than ever, in the age of Artificial Intelligence and deepfakes, of cancel culture and polarisations (Guillén-Nieto 2023), of the reputation economy (Marwick 2013) and of growing distrust in institutions and authorities, reputation calls for an in-depth and multidimensional examination.

In this context, the doctoral conference “*Fama Volat: Reputation in Linguistics, Literature, Education and Media Communication*”, organised by the PhD students of the 40th cycle of the Doctoral School in Linguistic and Literary Sciences at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, aims to open an interdisciplinary dialogue among scholars of linguistics, literature, education and media studies. Although they differ in approach and methodology,

these disciplines share an interconnected field of inquiry: that of language, narratives and the mechanisms through which reputation is constructed, represented, negotiated and transformed.

Linguistics

Discourse is the place where reputation is formed and the tool by which speakers can shape how others perceive them. Linguistics offers numerous interpretative lenses to examine these processes: the pragmatic study of how *ethos* is constructed; the analysis of face and forms of (im)politeness; appraisal, stance and positioning analysis; metaphor studies and framing; studies of legitimation and the discursive construction of identity; textual and multimodal analysis; as well as the sociolinguistic examination of varieties, accents and registers, to name but a few. Alongside these, quantitative perspectives – corpus linguistics, stylometry and Natural Language Processing – make it possible to identify recurring patterns in the construction and negotiation of reputation. The objects of inquiry are equally varied: political and academic discourse, where reputational capital is consciously managed; institutional, corporate and crisis communication, with the ensuing image repair and image restoration strategies; marketing communication and branding; digital spaces and hate speech; journalism, reviews and gossip; everyday interactions and the practices through which reputation is constructed, attributed, contested and negotiated.

Literature

Literature is understood here not only as a space for representing reputation, but also as an object subject to judgement and legitimation processes. Hence, the concept of reputation branches into two main perspectives: reputation *in* literature and reputation *of* literature. In the first case, reputation is thematised in the relationships among characters and in the identities which are perceived and constructed by society within the text. Dynamics of social judgement, gossip, ostracism, stigma, taboo, scandal and (dis)honour are structured around these identities. In the second case, the focus is on the dynamics through which authors, works, genres and traditions acquire, lose or regain prestige and legitimacy. This perspective includes processes of canonisation and marginalisation, hierarchies between ‘high’ and ‘low’ literature, critical and publishing reception, the reputation of specific genres or forms of expression, as well as practices of rediscovery and re-evaluation.

Education

In the field of education, reputation can be examined both as a form of capital for educational institutions and as a dimension that teaching and learning help to (de)construct. In the first case, schools and universities are subject to rankings and evaluation systems that shape their public image and determine their attractiveness in a context of growing competition and internationalisation. In the second case, the focus shifts to the link between language learning, identity and social reputation. Acquiring the host country's language can be interpreted as a tool for constructing, redefining or rebuilding an individual's reputation, in that it allows learners to negotiate their personal and professional standing within the community. Language proficiency thus becomes a resource through which individuals gain recognition and credibility in the eyes of others, overcoming invisibility or stigma. From this perspective, language teaching can also contribute to the dismantling of stereotypical representations, promoting inclusive educational practices that do justice to the complexity of identities and cultures.

Cinema, media and the performing arts

Cinema, media and the performing arts are spaces where reputation is both represented and thematised; they are also mechanisms that create and destroy it, and are themselves subject to value judgements. Furthermore, reputation is made and unmade through processes of media circulation: from the spectacularisation of trials to the 'media trials' of journalism and true crime, from the digital pillory to cancel culture, from the self-promotion of influencers and micro-celebrities to the reputational crises of companies and institutions. Reputation is also the capital upon which stardom and the creative and entertainment industries are built: talent, production companies, platforms, theatres, festivals and awards manage this capital while also being vulnerable to it, as the events surrounding the #MeToo movement have shown. Genres, formats and modes of expression, too, are situated within hierarchies of value that set quality TV against trash or experimental theatre against musicals – hierarchies that can be overturned, as demonstrated by the cultural recognition of popular cinema. Audiences, fandoms and critics actively intervene in these dynamics through reviews, review bombing and rehabilitation campaigns. Finally, the media shape the reputation of places, from destination imagery and place branding to film tourism and dark tourism.

Suggested topics

Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- **language as a mechanism** capable of redefining, destroying or rehabilitating an individual's reputation, even setting the machinery of justice in motion or sparking media, institutional and public witch-hunts;
- the **theme of the double**, understood as the split between the authentic self and the social mask worn to preserve one's respectability;
- the **reputation of the text and of the author**: censorship and canon formation through critical, publishing and academic reception, as well as audience reception;
- reputation in terms of '**media trials**', the **digital pillory**, **cancel culture** and the **self-representation strategies** of celebrities, influencers and institutions;
- **reputation as narrative and capital**: scandal and slander as narrative driving forces in cinema, TV series, theatre and music; stardom and the reputation of talent, brands and the creative industries;
- the **cultural legitimization** of media genres, formats and practices between highbrow and lowbrow, quality and trash, as well as the role of criticism, awards, festivals and fandom;
- the **reputation of places**: media imagery, destination image, place branding and film tourism;
- the **(re)construction of reputation**: strategies through which individuals and organisations establish credibility and legitimacy and address reputational crises;
- **gossip** and **rumour** in celebrity culture and beyond: reported speech, evidentiality and the attribution of hearsay;
- the **polarisation of public discourse**: the linguistic construction of the 'us versus them' opposition and strategies of delegitimation;
- **prestige** and **stigma**: the reputation of languages, varieties, accents and registers;
- **reputation in education**: rankings and evaluation systems for schools and universities; language learning, identity and social reputation; inclusive educational practices and stereotypical representations.

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Submission guidelines

The conference is open to PhD students and researchers who have obtained their doctoral degree no more than five years ago. Proposals are invited for 20-minute papers. Abstracts may be submitted in Italian or English, and papers may be presented in either language. The language of each session will be determined when drawing up the programme.

Proposals must be sent to the Organising Committee by 18 January 2027 at famavolat.unicatt@outlook.com, with 'Reputation Conference Proposal' as the subject line, followed by the applicant's surname (e.g. 'Reputation Conference Proposal – Smith').

Proposals must include an attached Word document containing:

- an abstract of no more than 300 words (excluding references), including title and keywords;
- a short biographical note of no more than 150 words, including institutional affiliation, if any.

Applicants will be notified of the outcome by 15 February 2027.

The conference will be held in person at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. There is no registration fee. Participants are responsible for their own travel, accommodation and meal expenses.

Publication of the conference proceedings is planned. Further details regarding submission guidelines and deadlines will be communicated at a later date.

For any further questions or information, please do not hesitate to contact the Organising Committee at the email address above.

KEY INFORMATION AND DATES

- **Deadline for abstract submission:** 18 January 2027
- **Notification of acceptance:** 15 February 2027
- **Conference:** 29 April 2027
- **Conference venue:** Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (Milan campus)
- **Organising committee:** Emanuele Bonazzoli, Lucia Carminati, Caterina Ceriani, Mila Fantinelli, Giulia Ferrari Bedini, Augusto Lombardini, Raoul Spiccia, Marco Uberti, Elena Zavaglia
- **Scientific committee:** Laura Balbiani, Wael Eissa Farouq, Armando Fumagalli, Silvia Gilardoni, Federica Missaglia, Enrico Reggiani, Massimo Scaglioni, Cristina Vallaro, Maria Teresa Zanola
- **Secretariat:** Simona Galbusera (Department of Linguistic Sciences and Foreign Literatures)