

**Balbi, G. (2013). "I Will Answer You, My Friend, but I am Afraid": Telephones and the Fear of a New Medium in Nineteenth and Early Twentieth-Century Italy. In S. Nicholas & T. O'Malley (Eds.), *The Media, Social Fears and Moral Panics: Historical Perspectives* (pp. 59-75). London and New York: Routledge.**

Between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new medium called the telephone gave rise to concerns and fears in Italian society: it seemed to endanger the physical and psychological equilibrium of users and (female) switchboard operators, to affect the social and moral realm of contemporary society, and to be a "devilish" tool itself mainly because it was difficult to use. This chapter focuses on these aspects and it aims to identify the reasons why new media frighten societies in all periods of history: new media often change the *status quo*, heralding in a period of transition and uncertainty, and anxiety represents either a mechanism of defense by the new or the first step towards metabolizing it.