

II International Conference *Renovating Narratives*

Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technologies in the Cultural Context of Slavic Studies 20-21 February 2025

Artificial intelligence represents a largely unexplored frontier in the context of Slavic studies, a territory rich in potential but also in challenges. The conference *Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technologies in the Cultural Context of Slavic Studies* aims to investigate how AI and, in general, modern digital technologies, are redefining languages, forms of communication, and artistic expressions within the Slavic cultures. These tools can be considered as heirs to the process of continuous linguistic, literary, and cultural renewal that has always accompanied the great revolutions in human thought. In this crucial phase of transition, it is essential to reflect on the potential future impacts, both positive and negative, of modern technologies on the evolution of the Slavic languages, literatures, and cultures.

Contemporary technological innovations are undoubtedly a relevant pioneering resource in the Humanities, fostering the development of original research methodologies in the field of Slavic languages and literatures (Škorić, Stanković et al. 2022). The emergence of Digital Humanities has given rise to a new conception of both literature and literary criticism, which has become increasingly multidisciplinary. At the same time, the interaction between text and technological innovations has always significantly accompanied the evolution of literature. Not only have technological revolutions contributed to shaping and redefining the nature of the text over the centuries, but literature itself has been, and still is, a fundamental tool for reflection on the use and possible consequences of new technologies (Hammond 2023).

Digital tools also show original applications in other areas related to creativity. For instance, since the end of the last century the development of digital art has been able to expand and partially transform the very concept of an art object, as well as the modes of receiving and interacting with artworks (Strukov 2021). Additionally, in recent years, artificial intelligence art has produced diverse outcomes, based on a revolutionary idea of interaction between human and machine. The implications related to the use of AI in the creation and reception of artistic, literary, musical, performative, visual works, etc. have been the subject of various recent studies, highlighting the urgency to explore the relationship between creativity and computer tools (Oskenen et al. 2023).

The development of increasingly sophisticated digital systems is prompting contemporary writers, artists, and thinkers to question possible future scenarios related to the evolution of humanity. The role of technologies in our daily experience is represented either in utopian or dystopian terms, considering the possible benefits for our species, but also the threat of a loss of identity. In this context, the contemporary debate related to the level of consciousness of artificial intelligence involves various disciplines and aims to predict the

possible developments in the relationship between AI and human societies (Menon et al. 2024). At the same time, the emergence of experimental technologies imposes a reflection, both synchronically and diachronically, on the revolutionary scope and reception of scientific innovations in different cultural spheres, as well as on the elaboration of ethical norms and guidelines related to their use. This concerns, for example, the possibility of merging the encounter between humanism and technology into what Ferraris and Saracco define as ‘Webfare’ (2023), but also the consequences of a posthuman hybridization between humans and various forms of technology, already explored in the Soviet speculative fiction of the 1950s-1980s, as well as in some post-Soviet cultural products (McQuillen, Vaingurt 2018; Suslov 2022).

The evolution towards the fifth industrial revolution represents not only a digital and green transition, but a human-centric cultural change, in which lifelong learning assumes a central role related to the ‘reskilling’ and ‘upskilling’ of human capital (Pedone 2023). Large Language Models (LLMs) – among which ChatGPT is the most famous – based on sophisticated deep neural networks, have revolutionized the human-machine relationship, offering various opportunities in the field of teaching and translation. The interaction between students and computer tools, supported by the multimedia nature of the latter, could promote active learning if carried out in a conscious and critical manner, allowing learners to deepen their understanding and receive personalized explanations (Rospigliosi 2023). This approach is in line with current trends in the use of linguistic corpora, where a possible opening towards the integration of AI tools in corpus-based methodology is observed (Crosthwaite, Baisa 2023). Regarding translation, the role of human experts is expected to increasingly focus on revision, stylistic refinement, and cultural adaptation of texts, ensuring an accurate rendering of contextual and linguistic nuances. For this reason, it seems important to encourage experimentation with machine translators in language learning, aiming to make students aware of the potential advantages, but also of the critical points of their functioning.

The current field of scientific research is divided between those who conceive generative AI systems as excellent support tools (Ciotti 2023) and those who consider them mere text generators, defined as ‘stochastic parrots’ (Bender et al. 2021) as they are based on the statistical combination of plausible data fragments, but are unable to fully grasp contextual meaning. A series of issues emerge related to the functioning of these systems, which are based on unsupervised ML and deep learning, and are often incomprehensible even to their creators (Goodfellow et al. 2016; Burrell 2016). Additionally, the need for enormous computational resources for their training entails a significant environmental impact. Finally, there is the risk of amplifying biases and stereotypes present in the training data, potentially perpetuating misinformation and fake news. Concerns about privacy protection and the excessive power of large technology platforms are also growing and, consequently, greater legislative attention and adequate regulation are necessary to ensure balanced and responsible technological development (Zambonelli 2020).

Finally, in recent years virtual spaces are increasingly becoming ideal places to exhibit one's digital self, allowing, in some cases, to overcome the traditional conceptualization of

gender, understood as a performative social construct (Butler 1990). Despite presenting some challenges, mainly related to conforming to social norms, these spaces also represent a powerful counter-narrative in this area, offering new possibilities for self-expression.

The presentations proposed at the conference *Artificial Intelligence and Digital Technologies in the Cultural Context of Slavic Studies* focus on the following thematic areas:

The evolution and role of the arts in the AI era
Artificial intelligence art, digital art, mail art
Electronic literature
AI and creativity
The role of technology in posthumanist and transhumanist thought
Utopian and dystopian visions in arts and literature
Ethics and AI
Digital tools for literary criticism: theoretical models and practical applications
The role of scientific and technological innovation in the Humanities, from both a synchronic and diachronic perspective
New expressive languages and their evolution within Slavic studies
Advantages (and disadvantages) of generative AI systems
Gender issues and the virtual world
Language and technology from both a synchronic and diachronic perspective
New perspectives in AI-oriented language teaching
Human-machine interaction in translation and translation studies

The languages of the conference are: Italian, English, and Slavic languages.

The event will preferably take place in presence, although it will be possible to attend the panels also virtually. Participation is free of charge.

Abstract submission (max 2000 characters) by November 15, 2024

Notification of acceptance (or non-acceptance) will be communicated by January 7, 2025

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Claudia Olivieri (University of Catania)
Henriette Stahl (University of Trier)

Plenary Speakers:

Ranka Stanković (University of Belgrade)
Vlad Strukov (University of Leeds)

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