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INTRODUCTION. NEW TRENDS IN CONTEMPORARY SLAVIC STUDIES: METHODOLOGIES, THEMES, AND FORMS OF THOUGHT

This special issue brings together a selection of papers presented at the international conference *Renovating Narratives: Innovative Research Perspectives in the Slavic Studies*, held at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures and Modern Cultures at the University of Turin on February 8–9, 2024. The event was conceived to provide a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of innovation within the field of Slavic studies, illustrating how broad and forward-thinking research perspectives are essential to preserve the richness and diversity of the Slavic cultures in today's rapidly transforming global context.

Our starting point was the belief that contemporary socio-political changes, the emergence of posthumanist and postcolonial paradigms, ongoing processes of globalisation, and current conflicts have significantly reshaped Slavic disciplines. These developments have prompted renewed reflection on questions of identity, while also fostering the rise of new and effective modes of interpreting reality.

In this context, the increasingly interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary nature of Humanities research plays a crucial role in enabling a nuanced and multi-layered understanding of the complexity inherent in the contemporary world. Scholars in Slavic studies are actively engaging in fruitful dialogues with adjacent fields, generating new layers of knowledge and forging connections with previously distant

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areas of inquiry. Furthermore, contemporary digital methodologies have opened new avenues of research, particularly in relation to linguistic corpora and the tools available for automated translation and language teaching. These methodological advances attest to the Humanities' ongoing commitment to revitalising and reimagining traditional narratives.

In light of these considerations, we argue that innovative and multidisciplinary research methodologies are essential for re-examining linguistic, literary, cultural, philosophical, and historical aspects of the Slavic world from original standpoints. At the same time, addressing emerging themes and perspectives allows us to better understand cultural complexities and to embrace broader approaches to traditional Humanities research questions. For this reason, the contributions in this special issue both investigate the ongoing cultural transformations within Slavic societies—alongside their influence on cultural self-perception and conceptual frameworks—and examine the methodological and thematic evolutions shaping Slavic disciplines today. Given the profound interconnections among Slavic languages and cultures, the articles span a range of cultural areas. Additionally, they encompass diverse academic fields, including literature, linguistics, and philosophy. The multidisciplinary dialogue fostered by this special issue represents a valuable opportunity to rethink and renovate traditional narratives, paving the way for future studies and unexpected research paths.

The interdisciplinary nature of this volume is immediately evident in the opening contribution *Wooden Matter, Bodily Memories and Stalinist Dystopias* by Roberta Sala, which examines Igor' Makarevich's *Homo Lignum* project. Grounded in material ecocriticism and transcorporeality, her analysis offers a sophisticated exploration of wood and bodily experiences in Soviet Russia, illuminating how artistic practices reveal intricate historical and cultural dynamics.

The next contribution, *Intersensorial worlds in the short stories of Bora Stanković* by Snežana Milosavljević Milić, offers an innovative interpretation of Stanković's literary worlds through the lens of contemporary sensory and atmospheric poetics. By exploring the intricate connections between sensory language and thought, the author reveals modernist qualities that transcend conventional critical approaches to the Serbian classic's sensualism, presenting a nuanced reinterpretation of his literary significance.

Giulia Baselica's contribution, *The New World After the Flood. The Rain Motif in the Novel Late Fate by Arkadij and Boris Strugackij* examines the rain motif in the Strugackij's novel, particularly within the secondary narrative *Ugly Swans*. Through an ecocritical methodology, she reveals the thematic implications and environmental

awareness underlying the authors' work, offering a refined interpretation of their philosophical and literary vision.

Simone Guidetti's essay *Arkadii Dragomoshchenko's Poetic Landscapes as an Instrument of Self-Questioning and Cross-Cultural Displacement in the Late Soviet Underground* explores Arkadii Dragomoshchenko's poetic landscapes as a complex instrument of self-questioning and cross-cultural displacement in the late Soviet underground. By drawing innovative parallels with Buddhist thought, classical Chinese landscape aesthetics, and Hryhorii Skovoroda's nomadic philosophy of paradoxes, Guidetti reveals how the Leningrad underground writer consciously developed a unique strategy of resistance within the Soviet *vtoraia kul'tura*.

The next two papers delve into philosophical themes. Giorgia Rimondi's work, *Considerations on Russian philosophy today* critically examines the role of philosophers within the contemporary Russian intellectual landscape. Focusing on the unresolved tension between philosophical inquiry and political expectations, she explores the challenges facing Russian philosophy in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, revealing the risks of marginalisation and ideological distortion.

Aleksandra Sekulić's contribution, *The feast of enlightenment and famine of self* explores Dositej Obradović's autobiography *Life and Adventures* through an innovative perspective. Examining the Serbian Illuminist's conception of knowledge and cosmopolitan experience, Sekulić reveals the complex interplay between the hunger for enlightenment and the desire for shared knowledge. Her analysis uncovers the nuanced ambivalence of self-representation in Obradović's writing, particularly through the metaphorical lens of feasting and hospitality.

Valentina Nosedà's essay, *Exploring Aspectual Opposition in Russian: A Corpus-Based Analysis of Videt' vs Uvidet' and Slyšat' vs Uslyšat* opens the linguistic section with a detailed study on Russian verbal aspect. Using a Russian-Italian parallel corpus, she investigates the preference for perfective over imperfective forms in specific contexts. The analysis reveals that, for both aspects, the presence of a contiguous verb and its aspect are the most significant factors influencing aspectual choice.

Olja Perišić and Ranka Stanković's contribution *IT-SR-NER: Serbian-Italian Parallel Corpus for Learning Serbian as a Foreign Language* explores the *It-Sr-NER* Serbian-Italian parallel corpus, examining its potential applications in language teaching. Focusing on Named Entity Recognition, particularly toponyms and proper names, the authors propose innovative approaches to using this corpus in teaching Serbian as a foreign language, with special emphasis on identifying and addressing *lexical gaps* in linguistic instruction of Italian speaking students.

Francesca Volpi's contribution, *Old and New Russia: Rereading the Historical Legacy in Light of the War in Ukraine* offers a critical thematic and lexical analysis of three Vladimir Putin's speeches between 2014 and 2022. Through a nuanced examination, Volpi reveals the selective and instrumental use of historical narratives, demonstrating how these rhetorical strategies construct an external enemy image to justify foreign policy decisions within a broader context of historical revisionism.

Erica Pinelli's concluding essay *Multimodal Metaphors and Metonymies in Soviet Anti-Alcohol Posters: On Material of the Second Half of the Twenties-Early Thirties and of the Years of perestroika* examines multimodal metaphors and metonymies in Soviet anti-alcohol posters across two distinct historical periods: the late 1920s and early 1930s, and the years of perestroika. Her analysis reveals how the metaphorical representations of alcohol and alcoholism evolve in response to shifting social and ideological priorities, demonstrating the increasing complexity of cognitive structures in Soviet visual propaganda.