The Annual Congress of

Romanian Association of General and Comparative Literature (ALGCR)

Robots and AI.
Techno-sciences vs Literature and Arts
Positivism vs Humanism

10-12 July 2025

„Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iași

Dear colleagues,

In 2025, the annual congress of ALGCR will be organized at the Faculty of Letters through the kindness of our colleagues from „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași. We propose an acute contemporary theme, namely, the relationship between all forms of AI and human nature.

Scientific Committee

Mircea Martin

Cătălin Constantinescu

Bogdan Crețu

Caius Dobrescu

Oana Fotache

Adrian Lăcătuș

Carmen Mușat

Antonio Patraș

Vasile Spiridon

Executive Committee

Corin Braga

Claudia Tărnăuceanu

Alin Călin

Sorin Mocanu

Lucia Cifor

Livia Iacob

Oana Soare

Marius Conkan

Maria Barbu

Call for Papers

As technology advances apace, the boundaries between man and machine are blurring, and the robots imagined in early science fiction narratives (such as those of Karel Čapek or Isaac Asimov) seem out of step with the current capabilities of artificial intelligence. This ongoing evolution raises fundamental questions about the traditional meanings of ethics and progress, as well as about how we conceptualize human identity, social structures and human interactions with the environment. In this context, it is worth mentioning Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno's theory of the dialectic of enlightenment, which briefly states that the emphasis on

rationalism in the 18th century led to a huge technological development, the effects of which proved devastating in the 20th century with the dominance of fascism and totalitarianism in general. On the other hand, precisely such technological developments propelled by the systemic transformations of post-Fordist capitalism facilitated the emergence of postmodernism as a form of "mass-culture" (characterized by heterogeneity and pluralism), according to Fredric Jameson and David Harvey.

Oscillating between the optimism of utopian projections and concerns about a dystopian future on a planetary scale, the debates about the role of technology in shaping our understanding of the existence have become inevitable and urgent in various spheres of knowledge and everyday life, not to mention the return of old dilemmas about the power and limits of the human condition. This conference builds on such issues and invites scholars to investigate the numerous connections between technology and social-cultural environments with the help of critical methods and theories proposed within trans-/posthumanism, cultural studies, utopian and dystopian studies.

Transhumanism, for instance, advocates overcoming biological limits through technology and offers visions/solutions to improve life, which can be considered both a salvation and a potential act of hybris. On the one hand, the promise of a life free from the problems of ageing and inevitable death responds to utopian aspirations of reaching perfection and immortality. On the other hand, this attempt to artificially alter the course of human life may exacerbate the tensions between the idealistic vision and the pragmatic realities of its implementation, giving rise to fears of the danger of dehumanization. In this context, the figure of the cyborg as defined by Donna Haraway is illustrative, based precisely on the blurring of the distinctions between man, animal and machine.

In general, technologically saturated societies have been the subject of a considerable number of dystopian fictions, in which writers have signalled the danger of losing control over technological artifacts. Reality itself seems to be losing its classical materiality in an era of simulacra and simulation (in the sense of Jean Baudrillard) and of secondary worlds generated by artificial intelligence. Likewise, within the current capitalist system (under the 'capitalist realism' theorized by Mark Fisher) and under the growing threat of environmental crises, the role of technology emphasizes its liberating and alienating potential in ecological narratives and the labour market. On the other hand, the importance of funding and deploying hyper technologies in fields such as neurosciences, advanced medicine or digital sciences is already a scientific consensus.

This conference aims to welcome interdisciplinary approaches that interrogate how the literary, media, social, economic, political and historical imaginaries mediate these tensions, offering insights into the emerging ontologies of the future. How do we navigate the promises and perils of technological progress? What role do narratives - literary, philosophical and speculative - play in shaping our collective vision of the future?

As usually, we suggest an open list of possible **themes and subthemes**:

1. Positivism vs./& Humanism
2. Techno-sciences **vs./& Literature and Arts**
3. **Rationality vs./& Imaginary**
4. **Logos vs./& Mythos**
5. Transhumanist Philosophy and its fictional representations
6. Technological Hybris: Transhumanism and ethics
7. Techno-scientific Imaginaries
8. Robots, Cyborgs and hybridity: Human-Machine encounters in utopic/ dystopic narratives

9. Robots, Cyborgs, Androids and AI in speculative fiction *(science-fiction, fantasy* etc.)

10. Robots, Cyborgs, Androids and AI in Cinema

11. Robots, Cyborgs, Androids and AI in comics strips, computer games, commercials and other forms of media

12. Robots and virtual beings: *Sophia*, *Alexa*, *Hatsune Miku*

13. Apocalypses, Surveillance and Control in AI era

14. Medical Utopia and technology: life quality improvement and immortality

15. Literature and the Anthropocene: AI in ecological narratives

16. Historical perspectives about technological utopias and dystopias

17. AI and Posthumanism: redefining humanity in the digital era

18. Simulacra and AI: Reality in the virtual era

19. Labour, automatization and the new economies of AI (including the impact of Automatization on the traditional feminine/ masculine jobs and possible changes)

20. Feminism, Gender studies and socio-identitarian construction in Transhumanism. Sexualization of the robots and of virtual beings in literature and media

21. AI and Rase Discrimination in Utopian/Dystopian texts

22. AI, Prosthetics, physical disabilities, inclusion

23. Urban space in utopian/dystopian fiction in the context of AI challenges

24. The problem of creativity and originality in AI production

Bibliography

- Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulacres et Simulation*, Paris, Éditions Galilée, 1981. Ediția în limba română: *Simulacre și simulare*, traducere de Sebastian Big, Cluj-Napoca, Idea Design & Print, 2008.

- Bostrom, Nick, *Superintelligence. Paths, Dangers, Strategies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014.

- Braidotti, Rosi, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge & Malden, Polity Press, 2013. Ediția în limba română: *Postumanul*, traducere de Ovidiu Anemțoaicei, București, Hecate, 2016.

- Claeys, Gregory, *Utopianism for a Dying Planet: Life after Consumerism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2022.

- Ferrando, Francesca, *Philosophical Posthumanism*, London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

- Fisher, Mark. *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Zero Books, 2009. Ediția în limba română: *Realism capitalist: Nu există nicio alternativă?*, traducere de Paul-Teodor Cristescu, Cluj, Tact, 2022.

- Fry, Hannah, *Hello World: How to Be Human in the Age of the Machine*, London, Transworld Publishers-Penguin Random House, 2018.

- Haraway, Donna J., „A Cyborg Manifesto. Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century", în *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, New York, Routledge, 1991, p. 149-181. Ediția în limba română: *Un manifest al cyborgului. Manifestul speciilor însoțitoare*, traducere de Sînziana Cotoară și Vasile Mihalache, București, frACTalia, 2021.

- Harvey, David, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Cambridge, Blackwell, 1990. Ediția în limba română: *Condiția postmodernității. O cercetare asupra originilor schimbării*

culturale, traducere de Cristina Gyurcsik și Irina Maftei, Timișoara, Amarcord, 2002.

- Hayles, N. Katherine, *How We Became Posthuman. Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, Chicago & London, University of Chicago Press, 1999.

- Horkheimer, Max; Adorno, Theodor W., *Dialektik der Aufklärung. Philosophische Fragmente*, New York, Social Studies Association, 1944. Ediția în limba română: *Dialectica Luminilor,* traducere de Andrei Corbea, Iași, Polirom, 2012.

- Jameson, Fredric, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, New York, Verso, 2005.

- Jameson, Fredric, *Postmodernism, or: The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham, Duke UP, 1991. Ediția în limba română: *Postmodernismul sau logica culturală a capitalismului târziu*, traducere de Alex Văsieș și Vlad Pojoga, Sibiu, Editura ULBS, 2021.

- Kroes, Peter; Verbeek, Peter-Paul, *The Moral Status of Technical Artefacts*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2014.

- Lyotard, Jean-François, *La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir*, Paris, Éditions de Minuit, 1979. Ediția în limba română: *Condiţia postmodernă*, traducere de Ciprian Mihali, Cluj-Napoca, Idea Design & Print, 2003.

- Măruță, Mihnea, *Identitatea virtuală. Cum și de ce ne transformă rețelele de socializare*, București, Humanitas, 2023.

- Picard, Rosalind W., *Affective Computing*, Cambridge (MA), MIT Press, 1995.

- Wolfe, Cary, *What is Posthumanism*, Minneapolis & London, University of Minnesota Press, 2010.

On-site and online Panels. Presentations of no more than 20 minutes.

For those interested, we intend to publish the congress papers in *Vatra* (Romanian), as well as in a thematic number of Echinox Journal (English or French).

Deadline: 15 May 2025

Proposals should be sent via email: **algcr@yahoo.com**. They should include your complete name and institutional affiliation, a 5 lines Abstract and a Short Biographical Note. Please specify how do you want to attend the event: onsite or online.

Best regards,
Corin Braga
ALGCR President