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**Annali d'italianistica**

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### **Editorial Policy**

*Annali d'italianistica* seeks to promote the study of Italian literature in its cultural context, to foster scholarly excellence, and to select topics of interest to a large number of Italianists. Monographic in nature, the journal is receptive to a variety of topics, critical approaches, and theoretical perspectives. Each year's topic is announced ahead of time, and contributions are welcome. The journal is published in the fall of each year. Manuscripts should be submitted electronically as attachments in Word. Authors should follow the journal's style for articles in English; articles in Italian should also conform to the journal's style sheet for articles in Italian. Visit the journal's website (<https://annali.org/>) for further information on the contributions' style. For all communications concerning contributions, address the editors at [annali@elon.edu](mailto:annali@elon.edu).

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This section occasionally publishes extensive review articles and dialogues and interviews with authors. Prospective contributors should contact one of the co-editors in chief ahead of time.

### **Italian Bookshelf**

The purpose of *Italian Bookshelf* is to identify, review, and bring to the attention of Italianists recent studies on Italian literature and culture. *Italian Bookshelf* covers the entire history of Italian culture and reviews books and journal issues exclusively on the basis of their scholarly worth. To this purpose, junior and senior colleagues will be invited to collaborate without any consideration of academic affiliation and with an open attitude toward critical approaches. Contributions to this section are solicited. Scholars who intend to contribute are encouraged to contact the editors. Book reviews, to be submitted electronically, should be sent to [italianbookshelf@gmail.com](mailto:italianbookshelf@gmail.com).

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*Annali d'italianistica*

2027

Volume 45

**Rites/Rights of Passage: Liminality, Liminoid, and Limivoid  
in Italian Culture**

Humans live in a constant flux, witnessing every day emotional, mental, and bodily transformations linked to social, political, and environmental changes. This process of continuous change implies a condition of liminality—an all-encompassing in-betweenness—that has been studied by anthropologists and has inspired seminal studies in various disciplines. The notion of liminality was introduced by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) in his *The Rites of Passage* (Paris: Nourry, 1909; English translation Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1960; Italian translation Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1981). In Van Gennep's theory, liminality constitutes the second phase of the rite of passage, following the previous phase of separation and before the final one of integration. Liminality is the threshold, the border, the limit, which individuals, a group, or a society must cross to enter a new or renewed condition through ritualistic ceremonies. The conceptual framework set by Van Gennep has been further developed by Victor Turner and Bjørn Thomassen with the concepts of the "liminoid" and "limivoid," respectively.

The anthropologist Victor Turner, in his seminal essay "Liminal to liminoid, in play, flow, and ritual" (*Rice Institute Pamphlet - Rice University Studies* 60.3, 1974, 53-92), expands the concept emphasizing its power to transform and create new cultural meanings, social structures, individual and national identities. In the face of complex societies constantly involved in transformative processes, Turner proposes a more fluid view of liminality: "liminoid." This concept relates to occasional and individualistic practices within the realm of leisure and entertainment, implying a simultaneous drifting between multiple conditions, without belonging to any individual one. Liminal and liminoid experiences are rapidly expanding with new devices introduced by technological developments, such as VR and AI.

Bjørn Thomassen, in his book *Liminality and the Modern. Living Through the In-Between* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), shifts from the "liminoid" to the "limivoid" to analyse the sense of "ontological excess" contained in private and public near-death experiences. In his work, the concept of liminality is turned into a prism to interpret processes of historical, political and cultural transformation. He also applied the concept of liminality to the field of Italian Studies in the co-authored volume *Italian Modernities. Competing Narratives of Nationhood* (Cham: Palgrave MacMillan, 2016).

This issue of *Annali*, 70 years after Van Gennep's death, will explore the afterlives of the concept of liminality within various fields of study, and its manifestations in different aspects of Italian culture. It does not aim to celebrate liminality, but to use the concept as a critical lens to question and redefine the rites in and outside the frames of its passages. The purpose is to investigate how these concepts travel in social and cultural fields where "rites" become "rights," that are reinstated, declined and continuously negotiated within liminal spaces. Liminality is central to different kinds of transformative encounters, in real life or in virtual reality. It takes Italian culture as an observatory, based on recent studies that define transnational Italy as an "in-between" space and Italianness as a sign or lens moving between (inter)national and local spatialities (Emma Bond, "Towards a Trans-national Turn in Italian Studies?," *Italian studies* 69.3, 2014, 415-24; Charles Burdett, and Loredana Polezzi, eds., *Transnational Italian Studies*, Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2020).

This notion can entail the diasporic experiences of migration and border-crossing. Migrant and diasporic authors are exposed to multiple rites of passage—the journey, the period of awaiting legal status or cultural integration, the acquisition of a new language, entailing the experience of a liminal space, a condition often marked by uncertainty and transformation. Similarly, in border studies the border area is itself a liminal zone, a dynamic and often contested threshold rather than a fixed space. Identities, languages and cultures intersect and blur in and around these spaces.

Rites are also performative and aesthetic processes. They are essential to different stories of transition that resist standardized, socially accepted frameworks for life changes and group norms (e.g., prisoners' and other marginal subjects' reentry into society, disability as a prolonged liminal phase, alternative rituals of aging, and self-established forms of initiation). Rites and rights are also reclaimed and put into action: in decolonial studies, highlighting the importance of indigenous knowledge; in ecocriticism, conceiving transition as a collective project; and in feminist and queer studies, contesting heteronormative interpretations of liminality.

Scholars interested in exploring rites of passage and liminality in Italian studies are invited to submit a proposal for a special issue of *Annali d'italianistica* to be published in the fall of 2027. A 300-500-word abstract and a short biographical note must be submitted by December 31, 2025. Proposals are invited to build on the theoretical concepts outlined above and their more recent developments. Essays are due in the early fall of 2026.

Areas and topics include, but are not limited to:

- Representations of liminality in Italian literature and culture from the Middle Ages to the present day.
- Rites as performative and aesthetic processes in literature, media, and performative arts.
- Transitions and border crossings in postcolonial, transnational, and migration studies.
- Approaches to rites of passage and liminality within posthuman / more than human studies.
- Processes of transformation in environmental studies and ecocriticism.
- Rites, rituals, and indigenous knowledge in decolonial studies.
- Transitions and intersectionality in gender, class and race studies.
- “Betwixt and between” states of liminality (disability, mental and physical illnesses).
- Markers of passage in stages of aging (including menopause, andropause, midlife, giving birth).
- Reintegration and transformation in life writing by marginalized subjects.
- Resistance against (hetero)normativity in works of liminality.
- The in-between of liminal spaces (borders, bridges, airports, hotels, theatres, performance spaces, etc.) and time zones (dawn, twilight, sunset, nocturnal settings).
- Liminal objects (sacred, magical, recycled, disposable, *objet trouvé*).
- Transgression as liminality (begging, robbing, killing, red districts, banlieue).
- Spiritual and religious thresholds (conversion, pilgrimages, mystical journeys, and the negotiation between faith and uncertainty in literary and artistic forms).
- Narratives of exile, return, and displacement (diaspora writing, political exile, and imagined homelands).
- Liminal affect and emotional states (melancholy, nostalgia, desire, anxiety, and the phenomenology of in-between emotions).

Authors should write in the language they are most familiar with, either Italian or English. Typically, articles range between 6,000 and 10,000 words. They should conform to the stylesheet of *Annali d'italianistica* for “Notes” and “Works Cited” (<https://annali.org/publishing/>). All articles will be refereed according to the peer-review policy of the journal (<https://annali.org/peer-review-statement/>).

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## PREFACE

### BOOTING UP THE VOLUME: DIGITAL HUMANITIES, AI, AND ITALIAN STUDIES

As the minutes recount, by the time of the December 2022 *Annali* editorial board meeting, it was clear that volume 43 (2025) of the journal would be dedicated to the topic of “Digital Humanities.” At that point, there were two fundamental questions: first, what title to give the volume; and, second, who would comprise the team of guest editors. The timing for a volume focused on the digital seemed especially relevant, given the release of OpenAI’s ChatGPT on November 30, 2022. This game-changing advent led the board to reflect on the impact of artificial intelligence on the field of Italian Studies: in both disciplinary research and the scholarship of teaching and learning. Thus, it was decided to address “AI” specifically, and the title was formulated—“Digital Humanities and Artificial Intelligence: From Theory to Practice.” The search for guest editors quickly led us to the accomplished scholars whose names appear on the cover and whose ideas for subsections attracted the submissions that substantiate this original, timely edition. Each guest editor will offer a detailed introduction to the subsection they focused on. Thus, this preface will offer a brief summary of those introductions and the sub-section content to orient the reader to what is in store. It will also explain an AI-based experiment that the guest editors undertook. Namely, we wanted to see how Google’s NotebookLM, a self-professed “AI Research Tool & Thinking Partner” (<http://notebooklm.google>) could be used in the process of organizing such a volume and disseminating its content.

The first section, edited by Massimo Riva, deals with the topic of “The AI Emergence/y.” The three essays illustrate AI both as an *emergence*—a source of new methods for reading, categorizing, and visualizing texts—and as a possible *emergency*, since these same tools challenge traditional scholarly practices, raise questions about trust and authority, and destabilize traditional frameworks of interpretation. The authors here experiment with generative AI in the field for the purpose of exploring how AI-based tools reshape research practices, enable hybrid human-machine methodologies, and open new avenues for textual and visual analysis. **Caterina Agostini**, in “Deciphering the Past: AI-Enhanced Reading of the Manuscripts of Galilei and Harriot,” examines how machine-aided reading builds on paleographic and editorial traditions to extend human interpretation into a technological dimension through tools such as OCR, HTR, and custom-trained models. **Pablo a Marca**, in “A New Classification of Fairy Tales Using Topic Modeling,” shows how statistical methods and topic

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modeling can shift fairytale studies from plot-based to thematic categorizations, generating new comparative insights. **Cecilia Marchetti**, in “I giardini fantastici e perduti del Ducato Estense: intelligenza artificiale e archeobotanica nell’*Innamoramento de Orlando* di Boiardo,” explores reversible text-to-image and image-to-text transformations with generative models such as DALL·E 3, demonstrating how such tools can enrich iconographical and literary analysis. Collectively, these essays illustrate how scholars in Italian Studies are embracing the transition to AI, while also grappling with questions of trust, creativity, and the future of humanistic inquiry.

The three essays collected in the second section, edited by Adele Bardazzi, on “Italian AI Poetics: Immortality and Spectral Logics of Authorship,” examine how generative AI reshapes the Italian literary tradition by reviving voices, reconfiguring authorship, and producing uncanny afterlives of texts. Each contribution engages with the tension between human creativity and machinic simulation, revealing both the emancipatory potential and the spectral risks of AI. **Giuliano Cenati**, in “Il bot e il boomer: il dialogo narrativo semiartificiale *Non siamo mai stati sulla Terra* di Rocco Tanica e Out0mat-B13,” investigates one of Italy’s earliest collaborative works between human and machine, where humor and nonsense emerge as shared ground, dramatizing a new, spectral co-authorship between writer and chatbot. In “If This is an Author: Sci-Fi and AI in the Literature Classroom,” **Giovanni Miglianti** turns to Primo Levi’s “Il Versificatore” to frame classroom experiments with ChatGPT, probing whether generative machines can be treated as “authors” or whether they remain haunted echoes of human intention. Finally, **Ruoci Song**, in ““Segni de l’antica fiamma”: Mapping Intertextuality between Virgil and Dante in *The Divine Comedy*,” employs computational analysis to detect Virgilian presences in Dante, showing how AI-assisted mapping revives the continuity of tradition as an immortal dialogue between texts across centuries. Together, these studies articulate an Italian AI poetics in which immortality and spectral logics of authorship converge—where human voices persist in machinic echoes, and authorship itself is reimagined as a haunted, reversible dialogue.

The next section, edited by Paola Italia, on “Author, Authorship and Literary Creativity,” underlines how the Italian literary tradition has long emphasized the centrality of the author, from Petrarch’s draft codices to modern authorial philology. Today, however, the digital transition and the rise of artificial intelligence compel us to reconsider authorship, creativity, and the relationship between author, reader, and machine. The studies explore new hermeneutic paradigms, forms of co-creation, and the shifting boundaries of literary authority in the age of AI. **Pietro Mazzarisi**, in “A Diegetic-Mimetic Axis Analysis of Author’s Agency and Exclusive Language in

Literature,” proposes a new model of textual analysis that combines diegesis and mimesis across time, using Andrea Camilleri’s works to demonstrate how computational approaches reveal changing patterns in language and society. **Iuri Moscardi**, in “*Twitteratura: ridefinizione di autore e lettore nell’ambito della lettura digitale*,” examines Twitter-based reading projects (2012-17) that transformed classic Italian texts into collective, digital commentaries, highlighting the active role of readers in shaping meaning. **Gilda Policastro**, in “The Development of I/O Techniques in Literature: From Nanni Balestrini’s Autocoder to K. Silem Mohammad’s Flarf and the Advent of Chatbot Poetics,” explores how AI-produced texts redefine authorship through deviation, error, and empathetic reception. Finally, **Daniel Raffini**, in “Intelligenza artificiale e scrittura letteraria: lo spettro dell’autore e le nuove forme dell’autorialità,” examines how AI-produced texts redefine authorship through deviation, error, and empathetic reception. Together, these essays illuminate the evolving nexus of author, text, and technology in Italian Studies.

The penultimate section on “Born-Digital Literature and Hybrid Archives,” edited by Michelangelo Zaccarello, examines the first Italian authors to adopt personal computers, the challenges of preserving their born-digital documents, and the methodological protocols needed to secure, analyze, and edit such fragile materials. The essays gathered here trace the transition from typewriter to word processor, from analog to digital, and address the wider implications of archiving electronic literary records. **Lucia Giagnolini**, in “Riflessi digitali: indagine sugli archivi d’autore contemporanei,” reflects on the broader problems of archiving digital texts in Italy, emphasizing the lack of standardized practices and the limited awareness among authors of the value of their digital records. **Emmanuela Carbé and Mariangela Giglio**, in “Filologia forense e digitale d’autore, con un esempio sul caso Fortini,” analyze the interdisciplinary issues raised by Franco Fortini’s legacy, showing how philological work on floppy disks requires integrating digital forensics with literary and historical methods. Finally, **Carmen Ragusa**, in “Gli esordi della videoscrittura letteraria in Italia: una prima analisi della produzione di Luciano De Crescenzo,” explores how De Crescenzo’s early use of computers shaped both his workflow and his literary style, highlighting the stylistic differences between analog and digital composition. Together, these essays outline the urgent need for shared protocols and institutional initiatives to safeguard Italy’s born-digital literary heritage.

The final section, edited by Brandon Essary, on “AI, Games, and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning,” investigates the intersection of digital humanities, artificial intelligence, and pedagogy, with a focus on Italian language and culture. The essays collected here demonstrate how generative AI and interactive technologies can be experienced as playful, game-

like simulations that can foster motivation, engagement, and intercultural competence. The contributions frame interaction with AI and games as “ludic” practices that reshape both teaching and learning. **Alessandro Puglisi**, in “Insegnanti d’italiano L2/LS e ChatGPT: usi, credenze, atteggiamenti,” surveys Italian language teachers’ beliefs and practices, finding both caution and curiosity about AI’s role in the classroom. **Stefano Maranzana and Sandra Descourtis**, in “Using AI-Generated Audio and Dialogues to Improve Italian Listening Comprehension,” illustrate how large language models and text-to-speech tools can produce customized listening materials for teachers and students. **Aria Zan Cabot**, in “‘Sono qui per aiutarti!’ Practical Applications of Generative AI in Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced Italian Language Courses,” offers concrete classroom strategies across proficiency levels, highlighting ChatGPT’s potential for language practice, activity design, and self-directed learning. Finally, **Ryan Calabretta-Sajder and Claudia Devich**, in “Teaching Italian through Virtual Reality and Digital Games: From Preparing Bucatini to Shopping at the Prati Market,” present VR-based simulations that integrate linguistic, cultural, and career-readiness skills. Together, these essays balance opportunities with challenges, showing how AI and gameful learning can be harnessed to reimagine the scholarship of teaching and learning.

In keeping with the topic of the issue and out of curiosity about how generative AI could contribute to the organization of such a volume, the team of guest editors decided to experiment with Google’s NotebookLM based on previous individual experiences. While some of us only recently became familiar with the tool, Massimo Riva has begun, as part of the Virtual Humanities Lab, to experiment with AI applications, including NotebookLM, to make a “re-writing” or re-edition of Italo Calvino’s “L’incendio della casa abominevole,” which was one of the results of Calvino’s involvement with Paul Braffort’s ALAMO (Atelier de Littérature Assistée par la Mathématique et les Ordinateurs). These experiences led the team of guest editors to believe NotebookLM could be an ideal tool for a sort of meta-educational experiment, a proverbial AI *mis en abyme*.

We were focused mainly on the application’s ability to create podcasts to summarize the volume’s content. Our hope was that this feature could help disseminate the volume in a new way and to new audiences. The first podcast was created by uploading into NotebookLM the PDFs of all the volume’s articles. NotebookLM made, in just a few minutes, a 27-minute podcast (in English) that the guest editors felt reflected well the contents of the articles. The podcasts included two AI-generated “hosts,” a man and a woman; it felt well-produced, polished even; and its summaries were delivered in an engaging way. That said, after meeting to discuss the podcast, we realized that it was too long, and, given its length, it might confuse listeners and

could not convey to them, for instance, the purpose of the subsections, the nuances of them, and their purpose in the bigger picture of the field of the volume and the field of Italian Studies. So, we set out to run a second round of experimentation, this time uploading into individual “notebooks” (not one big notebook) in NotebookLM the PDFs of the articles from each section of the volume. This update allowed us to focus on the specific articles and theme of a given section, even if the AI still did not understand or explain the big picture. This change led us also to discover a limitation of the “free version” of the application. We wanted each podcast to last no more than 5 minutes to keep them short and manageable for listeners, but the free version does not offer this functionality. So, we upgraded the account to NotebookLM Plus, which offers advanced settings, including customization of the “Audio Overview” function that controls the length of the podcasts.<sup>1</sup>

The shorter versions ranged from five minutes and thirty-six seconds to seven minutes and twenty-seven seconds, with an average duration of six minutes and twenty-five seconds. These new versions were more focused and still faithful to the article content, summarizing them well and speaking about them in an engaging, conversational style, and we were pleased with the results. This kind of podcast would be useful to university students or listeners at large as a primer before reading the article, for instance. As a result, we will make them available on [www.annali.org](http://www.annali.org) for each thematic section. However, we did not find the summarize feature of NotebookLM (textual or audio)<sup>2</sup> to provide as much depth and nuance as we wanted to achieve in each of our introductions. So, we felt excited to affirm our authorial, human role in the creative process and obligated to explain these details in each of the section introductions. However, we admit that we were somewhat apprehensive in the beginning, wondering if (and dreading that) the tool might perform our roles as well as (or better than) we could.

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<sup>1</sup> The customization options include “length” and a “What should the AI hosts focus on?” function. The podcast length can be set to “shorter,” “default,” and “longer.” The user can input into the focus textbox any number of requests, including those suggested by NotebookLM itself, e.g., “Focus on a specific source (‘only cover the article about Italy’); “Focus on a specific topic (‘just discuss the novel’s main character’); “Target a specific audience (‘explain to someone new to biology’).” Currently, the duration setting is only available for English, although NotebookLM does offer “Italian” as a text and audio output language.

<sup>2</sup> To the point made previously about the rapid evolution of the technology: when the guest editors were experimenting with NotebookLM in July 2025, only textual and audio functions were available. As of this writing in August 2025, there is now a “Video Overview” function, too (available in English only at this point, with the promise of more languages to come).

We found, as do many of the articles of the volume, that the use of AI in academic research shows both strengths and limitations. On the one hand, AI-generated outputs can provide—with the click of a button—clear, accessible summaries that can be created more quickly than traditional writing. On the other hand, such simplifications often fail to capture the interpretive depth, contextual framing, and critical perspective that scholarship requires. The most productive approach has emerged through comparison and dialogue between AI-generated drafts (or podcasts, in this case) and human contributions. Rather than replacing scholarly work, AI can serve as a provocative stimulus that challenges interpretation, refines critical viewpoints, and highlights the creative, personal dimension of research and human researchers. In the case of the podcasts, it can also expand the ways of summarizing and disseminating research results. This vantage point reflects a broader paradigm shift in knowledge production, one that demands ongoing reflection and adaptation. For instance, an advanced “modeling” for the humanities—a sort of “humanistic engineering,” as Riva refers to it in the introduction to section one—might open the way to forms of interaction that go beyond the reversible prompting allowed by the new generation of transformers. In sum, this volume demonstrates the diverse and innovative ways in which scholars are grappling with the promises and perils of artificial intelligence in Italian Studies. From the reshaping of research practices and archival preservation to the redefinition of authorship, poetics, pedagogy, and play, the essays collected here invite readers to reflect critically on how digital tools transform our engagement with literature, culture, and learning. At once theoretical and practical, sometimes skeptical and more often optimistic, they affirm that the digital turn—far from being a passing trend—has become a defining feature of contemporary scholarship, opening new avenues for collaboration, creativity, and critical inquiry in Italian Studies and beyond.

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Paola Italia  
Massimo Riva  
Michelangelo Zaccarello