EDITORIAL:

Technotext: Text and Technology in Literature, Linguistics and Media

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This special issue of INTERFACE brings together articles that engage with the nexus of text and technology from both historical and contemporary perspectives. These articles were prompted by recent debates concerning generative Artificial Intelligence and its possibilities, as well as a series of broader shifts in academic discourses that these debates have occasioned within a range of humanistic disciplines. This general theme was already the topic of the journal's recent flagship conference, INTERFACEing, held at National Taiwan University in August 2024, with the title "From the Invention of Writing to the Emergence of Artificial Intelligence: Cultural Approaches to Information Technology". We welcome in this special issue several articles born out of the stimulating conversations that took place at that time, as well as several contributions that engaged these topics independently in a way that enriched and at times even challenged the perspectives that took center stage during the conference.

The possibilities of new technologies and their impact on writing, textuality, and language have today met with a mixture of excitement and distrust, just as they have in the past. Plato had Socrates complain that writing will destroy the art of memory, at the same time as writing became a newly accepted evidentiary standard in the Athenian courtrooms and Aristotle took it to be an exciting new practice. The sacred texts of Vedas resisted textualization, but oral technologies of memory were devised and refined over centuries to preserve their form as per-

fectly as possible. Perhaps since the earliest inscriptions on stone, bone, or clay, writing has contentiously situated itself as a crucial but always variable form of technology – in turn engendering all manner of questions regarding how to best record, preserve, and disseminate human knowledge. Further, it is not just the technology of textuality but societies themselves that have been transformed by further paratextual technological innovations such as the book, the library, or the printing press.

Over the past five decades, digital technologies have further altered the landscape of text creation, distribution, and interpretation. From word processors to e-books and online platforms, digital tools have democratized access to text while also raising new questions about authorship, authenticity, and intellectual property. AI merely represents the latest frontier in the intersection of text and technology as externalizations of human capabilities. As machine learning algorithms begin to generate, analyse, and even interpret texts, new challenges emerge, forcing us to renegotiate the understood boundaries of creativity, authorship, and meaning. Amidst these concerns we find ourselves also engaged with AI's attendant ethical problems –including questions of social inequality, bias, the erosion of privacy, and the renegotiation of social liberties.

To a very great extent, the current debate seems to be a new "edition" of a debate that has occurred every time a new form of Information Technology has been introduced. But the angles of attack shift, as do the societal emphases, with every version of this debate – producing a historiographic problem and an urgent, even constant need to reassess the old with the new. The papers in this volume, each in their own way, do precisely this – driving at localized concerns from the framework of the reopening of this always fruitful field of inquiry.

Reframing the new edition of the debate, the idea of *technotext* thus emerges as a pivotal outline for understanding the complex relationship between text and technology. "Technotext" refers to texts, taken in a broad sense, that are fundamentally shaped by the *mediation* through which they are produced, distributed, and consumed. This conception goes beyond the mere use of technology as a tool for textual creation; it

includes the ways in which technology transforms the very ontology of textuality, societies, individuals, and the environment.

The notion of Technotext then invites us to reconsider the materiality of the text – sometimes going beyond traditional views of what a text should be – and the ways in which technological affordances shape our engagement with it. The notion of "technological affordances", developed in the field of psychology, allows us to understand how technological properties of the environment are being perceived by humans as potential for actions and interactions with and thanks to these affordances. They foreground symbiotic relationships, highlighting co-creative processes within human, non-human and environmental agencies. By questioning the value of the idea of Technotext, we gain insights into the broader cultural and ethical implications of technological advancements, especially in regards to the field of Humanities, eventually permeating other fields of research. In this special issue, the articles collectively explore the multiple dimensions of Technotexts, from ancient practices to contemporary digital innovations. Each contribution offers a unique perspective on how the idea of Technotext can inform our understanding of the creation, dissemination, and interpretation of different types of texts, allowing the reader to build from the insights into an evolving landscape of textuality and societies in the digital age.

To open the discussion, the article "An Ear for an Eye: the Visual Listening of Writing in Ancient Greece" by Mia Pancotti, examines the ancient Greek perception of written words as a form of vision. Mia Pancotti explores how the oral culture of ancient Greece understood reading as an act of "seeing with the ear", emphasizing the acoustic reception of content. The study highlights the cognitive-perceptual phenomenon known as the McGurk effect and its implications for understanding the interchangeability of visual and auditory modalities in ancient Greek writing perception.

Building on the theme of ancient textual practices, Claudio Sansone's article, "Spectral Etiologies in *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*", analyses the representation of the invention of writing in the Sumerian

epic. Claudio Sansone argues that the poem is haunted by predetermined outcomes and explores how these spectral etiologies contribute to the broader discourse on historical progress models in Sumerian literature. The article connects the invention of writing to the shifts from nomadism to agriculturalism and city life within narratives that offer linear "progress models" that rewrite history to suit presentist political contexts.

Transitioning to classical philosophy, Hua-kuei Ho's article, "Generating a Living Creature? Plato on Writing and Two Kinds of Generation", examines the parallels between generative AI and Plato's critique of writing in the *Phaedrus*. Hua-kuei Ho argues that Plato's concerns about writing's lifelessness and its inability to engage in genuine dialogue are relevant to contemporary discussions about AI-generated content. The paper explores the necessity of active engagement in the process of examining truth and the potential for AI to serve as a partner in this endeavour, while also highlighting the risks of passive consumption of information.

Moving forward to 20th-21st c. intermedia practices, nonetheless still related to ancient yogic philosophies through the contemporary practice of mindfulness, Charlène Clonts' article, "Sound, Poetry, and Meditation in Electronic Intermedia Performance: The Example of Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening", explores the interplay between sound, poetry, and meditation within electronic performance. Charlène Clonts highlights the transformative impact of sound technologies in mixed-art practices, particularly through Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening approach. This work integrates electronic sound manipulation with meditative and poetic elements, fostering a deeper connection to otherness and enhancing human creativity and awareness. The article underscores the role of *technotext* in challenging conventional artistic boundaries and promoting a holistic approach to creativity and community engagement.

Continuing with the exploration of digital writings, Margherita Cerri's article, "From Chronology to Cartography: Spatial Configurations in

Three Works of Electronic Literature", analyses how spatial structures shape narrative construction and reader interaction in works such as "80 Days" by Inkle, "Not*A*Number" by Xavier Leton, and "Winnipeg: The Poem That Crossed the Atlantic" by María Mencía. The study situates these works within the framework of the spatial turn and electronic literature studies, offering insights into how digital maps reconfigure narrative space and expand the possibilities of literary cartography.

Shifting focus to investigative practices with digital media, Barış Çoban's paper, "Use of Artificial Intelligence in Turkey's Alternative News Media", examines the transformative impact of AI on journalism within Turkey's contemporary media environment. Barış Çoban discusses the dual-edged potential of AI tools in enhancing investigative reporting and audience engagement while also addressing ethical dilemmas and operational risks. The research highlights the importance of robust ethical frameworks and interdisciplinary collaboration to mitigate risks and foster responsible AI adoption in journalism.

Exploring the intersection of human creativity and AI through an interventional study, George Spirakis and Chrysoula Kapartziani's article, "Echoes of Phobic Realism: Exploring Sociotechnical Phobias in Technotexts through Dystopian Collaborative Narratives of AI and Human Creativity", examines narratives authored by inmates and AI-generated stories. The research reveals how storytelling practices can offer a critique of the ethical and societal implications of AI in punitive systems, emphasizing the importance of literature in navigating the challenges of an AI-driven world and advocating for a balanced approach to technological innovation.

Finally, Dmitry Andereevich Yarochkin's paper, "Опыт дообучения языковой модели – от бытового языка к философскому" [Experience of Fine-Tuning a Language Model – From Everyday Language to Philosophical Language] explores the integration of Aristotle's thought with artificial intelligence. Dmitry Yarochkin details a project focused on fine-tuning a language model to enhance its ability to process and generate philosophical texts, aiming to improve AI's reasoning and

conceptual comprehension. The study employs both quantitative metrics and qualitative expert evaluations to assess the model's performance, contributing to the development of more explainable and ethically grounded AI systems.

Together, these articles offer a multifaceted exploration of technotexts, and the intersections between text and technology, providing valuable insights into the evolving landscape of textuality in the digital age. We are confident that this special issue will stimulate further discussion and research on these critical topics.