REDEFINING POETRY: AN ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF HUMAN AND AI COLLABORATIVE POETRY ON TRADITIONAL POETIC STRUCTURES

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ABSTRACT

Historically in the Western world, poetry has been used to tell culturally significant stories and myths, while simultaneously conveying emotion and evoking feeling in its readers. This has become a key part of poetry, the definition of which - much like its content - is up to the individual reader. The growing omnipresence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) will push poetics to adapt to our modern and evolving digital world, a fact which will undoubtedly alter the definition of 'poetry' itself. This article explores the effects of AI mimicry on traditional poetic forms by well-known English poets, studies the possibility for authorial collaboration with AI, and offers insight into the perceived lack of originality in computer-generated poetry. This article argues for the use of AI as a tool in poetry, investigating the current human 'aversion' to AI-produced text, and explores what a human and AI partnership could bring to the modern world of poetics (Kobis and Mossink, 2021, pp.2-3). The implications of AI authorship across all disciplines are 'frightening', but human and AI collaborative poetry could offer a utilisation of human skills in a surely inevitable integration with AI, pushing an evolution in this ever-broadening form (Runco, 2023, p.5). This redefining of poetry, like other modern poetical works, would also bring the format of poetry into the present day, thus encouraging new readership and making more accessible a form that seeks most prevalently to speak to the human soul.

INTRODUCTION

The definition of poetry is as a form so malleable that its ambiguity has become integrated with its identity. Poetry can encompass the traditional Western structures of sonnets and epics, the freer form of the haiku, and can be experienced in several ways, for example through reading, song, or spoken word. As such, there is no single definition of the word itself, and its boundless possibilities are what makes it so unique. Poetry spans a range of cultures and is individually created by writers from their life experiences, and the 'artificial creativity' of sole Artificial Intelligence (AI) authorship could threaten or dilute the creative integrity of poetry (Runco, 2023, p.2). This article will explore the differences and correlations between AI and human poetry through poetic techniques. These will most prominently include structure (the physical make-up of the poem, including rhymes and paragraphs) and metre (the rhythm of the poem and how it sounds when spoken aloud). The motivations for human poetry versus that of AI will also be investigated, as well as the 'creativity' (or lack thereof) that AI is capable of (Köbis and Mossink, 2021, p.2). I will do this through the examination of AI generated poetry and co-authored human/computer generated poetry to compare and contrast the elements humans bring to the form, and how this differs from sole AI poetry. This article argues for the inclusion of AI as a tool to aid human creativity in poetry, desiring to understand the implications that technological omnipresence may have on this written form.

AI MIMICKRY AND STRUCTURAL REPRODUCTION

In trying to encapsulate and effectively communicate the extent of AI's potential, analyses have been undertaken by Hopkins and Kiela (2017) and Hitsuwari et al. (2023) to examine how well AI can create imitations of existing human works. The works of traditional Western poets are most commonly examined, and therefore the structurally strict sonnet, such as those of Shakespeare, is often used as a basis (Hopkins and Kiela, 2017, p.176; Hitsuwari et al., 2023, p.3). The sonnet, in a broad sense, is a poem of fourteen lines with a set rhyme scheme that must be followed, with a concluding rhyming couplet formed of lines 13 and 14. Using AI, research by Hopkins and Kiela (2017) shows that human accuracy in determining 'classical' poetry vs AI authorship results in just under 49% of poems being falsely attributed to AI, and nearly 54% being falsely attributed to humans (Hopkins and Kiela, 2017, p.168). These statistics emphasise the fact that AI is easily able to impersonate existing human poetry to such an extent that humans find it hard to tell the difference. Given this level of computer intelligence, it is understandable that poets and other artists feel threatened by the abilities of AI, and this inability to differentiate could become even less discernible as AI improves. An article by Hitsuwari et al. (2023) explores a later analysis in 2018, which concluded that the sample group (one expert in English literature) deemed the structure and metre of AI to be superior, yet the better readability lay with human poetry (Hitsuwari et al., 2023, p.3). In this case, AI usurps the human, even in a structure we have utilised for hundreds of years, despite its comparable shorter lifespan as a poetic resource. However, the better

readability of poetry lying with humans suggests that poets cannot adequately be replaced in a way that would not negatively impact the poem's quality.

The following section will now compare these results with those of haiku poetry. A haiku is a short, Japanese poetic form of seventeen syllables which celebrates its own customary ambiguity. Hitsuwari et al. (2023) examined human, human/AI collaborative, and solely AI-generated works through feelings evoked in the sample group, such as nostalgia, empathy, and connection. The study concluded that 'human-AI collaboration will lead to better creativity and that AI's generative power is comparable to that of humans in creative fields, at least for haiku production' (Hitsuwari et al., 2023, p.8). This suggests that haiku poets would be able to fully embrace the potential of AI without sacrificing creativity, unlike the sonnet whose authors only gain the benefits of structure and metre. These examples argue that the impact of AI may take different forms, even under the literary umbrella term of poetry. Emphasised however is the improving ability of AI and humans trying to negotiate its place in creating poetry.

THE QUESTION OF ORIGINALITY

One persistent question with the growing capabilities of AI is that of original creativity. 'The Lovelace Test', which is based on the proposal by Ada Lovelace, is weighted on the thought of a computer 'originating an idea' of its own and how the process of generating an idea works (Runco, 2023, p.3). Runco (2023, p.1) states that 'AI can only produce artificial creativity' and explains that the plethora of information available to AI is being used and reconstructed by the computer, which is subsequently being mistaken as similar to human original thought. Runco (2023, p.1) proposes that 'the process used by humans when they are creative is impossible for AI'. This highlights that the author's individual aim, thought processes, and impetus for writing the poem are critical to its composition, a factor which cannot be adequately met by the creative process of AI. Runco (2023) uses this quote to highlight the difference in intent between computerised poetry following instructions, and a creative method of thinking akin to the human brain. As discussed, this difference in intent does not make distinguishing between the two any easier. Runco's (2023) overall argument of distinct human creativity could be comforting to poetic artists today, whose role AI would not currently adequately be able to fill, and reasserts the ongoing need for human intervention in poetry. Runco (2023) therefore argues that computers have not yet passed the Lovelace Test of creating a completely new idea. Solely AI-generated poetry would stagnate and jeopardise modern poetry, as a nuanced understanding of structure and language gained through human experience is what prompts new innovation and utilises poetic elasticity.

Having examined two types of poetry so far, and bearing Runco's (2023) argument in mind, the next section will explore human creativity in a third poetic form: the epic. The epic is, in a broad sense, a long-form poem which may feature muses, evil monsters, and gods as it follows a hero's journey towards victory. As a result of these factors, the epic has been used Eurocentrically, and this integral association now makes it impossible to separate the form from its colonial implications (Clark, 2022, p.528) . In order to fully express his feelings as an indigenous, queer American poet, Tommy Pico re-invented the long-form in his 'Nature Poem', a decidedly urban work which does not conform to the language and structure of his colonisers (Clark, 2022, p.523). The structure can be compared to a stream-of-consciousness string of text messages, rather than a difficult piece of prose full of classical references, thus making Pico's long-form more applicable to a modern audience. Clarke (2022, p.529) also argues that Pico's structure 'extends the particularity of Pico's experience into a nontraditional medium that is itself evolving unpredictably'. Pico's unique reinvention of structure also demonstrates his desire to construct the poem in a form that is accessible to his audience. This acts in opposition to the traditional epic and other Western poetry, which has an elite 'institutional status', often making it inaccessible to the lower classes (Clark, 2022, p.529). AI as a tool may be the answer to creating poetry for a contemporary audience today and its modernity already creates a substantial break with accessibility-related short-fallings of traditional structures. However, the creativity of poets like Pico is born out of human experience and, alongside Runco's argument of potentially insufficient creative 'ideas' by AI, proposes the notion that AI may be much better suited as a tool for human poets, even as the technology itself improves.

CONCLUSION

In an ever-evolving world of technological advancements, the presence of AI will likely move increasingly into the foreground. The pliable nature of poetry will be forced to adapt to accommodate this growing presence, and this begs the question of exactly what the future of the form could look like. The malleability of 'poetry' has made its very identity connotative of change and pushing boundaries, either in the name of structure, form, or inclusivity. With AI's potential to imitate the poetic styles of individual writers, and a 'superior' understanding of human structures than us ourselves, it is understandable why there are fears and reservations surrounding the place of AI in poetry. However, the more nuanced and specified comprehension of language denotations, connotations, histories, and cultural significance attached to the human experience certainly makes for more emotive poetry. Writer David Means (2023) argues that AI will never be able to do what he can do because 'AI has never felt what I've felt. It will never move through the emotional matrix of living a singular, individual life'. This points to the

fundamental difference between human and computer thought processes and highlights that poetry, as it is, needs human contribution even as it evolves. The growing digital world improves accessibility in the traditional, formerly elitist structures of poetry, and continued collaboration alongside AI will better human understanding of its capabilities and maximise poetic potential. The world of poetry still needs human writers, and embracing AI technology as a tool for writing offers another redefining of the ambiguous 'poetry', as its continually broadening boundaries expand.

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