AI-GENERATED LITERATURE: REDEFINING AUTHORSHIP, CREATIVITY, AND AUTHENTICITY IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the expanding field of AI-written works and the broader implications for literature and human creativity. It discusses how algorithms are now capable of producing novels, poems, and other literary texts that mimic the complexities of human-authored narratives. Furthermore, it focuses on the philosophical ramifications of this technological advancement, questioning the role of the author in the age of AI and the shifting perceptions of individuality, originality, and authenticity in literary works. By analysing specific AI-generated texts such as '1 the Road' by Ross Goodwin (2018) and 'The Day A Computer Writes a Novel' (2016) through the lenses of traditional literary criticism and symbolism, this research delves into the debate over the meaning and value of literature when the traditional boundaries between human and machine creativity become blurred. It considers whether these AI-generated works mark the end of human authorship and literary historicism or signify a new chapter in the evolution of storytelling, where narrative structures and artistic expression are redefined by the capabilities of artificial intelligence.

INTRODUCTION

According to Cybernews (2023), a professor from Tsinghua University in China made headlines when he used artificial intelligence to generate a novel in just three hours using 66 prompts in 2023. The resulting work, 'The Land of Machine Memories', was complete with a title, illustrations, and even a pseudonym, and went on to win second prize in a popular youth science and sci-fi competition organised by the Jiangsu Popular Science Writers Association (Cybernews, 2023). Out of 200 submissions, the novel stood out among the entries, receiving commendation for its narrative depth and thematic exploration of memory, identity, and the interface between humans and machines (Cybernews, 2023).

This case highlights the rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly in literature, where algorithms produce literary works that can rival human efforts. While AI-generated texts like 'The Land of Machine Memories' impress some readers with their density of knowledge and coherence, others question the quality, depth, and authenticity of these works (China Daily, 2024). The mixed reactions of the competition's judges reflect a broader cultural and philosophical debate over the value and role of AI in literature: can machines truly create, or are they simply mimicking human creativity? What does it mean for our understanding of authorship, creativity, and artistic merit when an AI-written novel can win accolades in a literary competition?

This paper explores these questions, analysing AI-generated works within traditional literary frameworks to assess their implications for literature and creativity. By examining the potential impact of AI on the role of the author, the evolving definitions of originality and authenticity, and the broader societal reception of machine-generated art, this study delves into the philosophical and cultural ramifications of AI as a creative force. The analysis ultimately argues that while AI may mimic human creativity, it lacks the depth and intentionality central to meaningful storytelling. By exploring case studies, literary theory, and societal reactions, this research contends that AI-generated literature challenges conventional notions of authorship while reaffirming the irreplaceable role of human agency in literature.

THE RISE OF AI GENERATED LITERATURE

AI-generated texts rely on advanced machine learning techniques, particularly neural networks and algorithms trained on vast datasets of human language (Dwivedi et al., 2023). These systems, such as GPT models, employ deep learning to analyse patterns, structures, and themes across a wide range of texts. Using this training, AI can produce coherent narratives, mimic

distinctive literary styles, and generate thematic depth. For instance, models like GPT-4 are built on transformer architectures, enabling them to process contextual relationships between words at an unprecedented scale (Dwivedi et al., 2023). One defining feature of these systems is their reliance on probabilistic language modelling. This allows the AI to predict the next word in a sentence based on prior inputs, creating outputs that align with specific prompts or stylistic guidelines. The technology enables nuanced control over tone, voice, and structure, making AI increasingly adept at producing works that resemble human-authored literature (Dwivedi et al., 2023). AI's ability to create works resembling human literature marks a pivotal moment in storytelling. However, its reliance on pre-existing data raises questions about originality and the boundaries of creativity. Can an algorithm that recombines existing patterns truly create, or does it simply imitate?

WHO IS THE 'AUTHOR'?

The question of authorship, even without the added complexity of AI generated work, has long been central to debates in literary criticism and symbolism. Traditionally, an author is considered as the creative originator of a literary work, imbuing it with personal experiences, intentionality, and individual expression (Alviani, 2018). However, the idea of authorship first gained critical attention in 1946, when literary scholars William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley (1946) argued that 'the design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art' (Wimsatt and Beardsley, p.469). They suggested that a work's meaning does not derive from authorial intent, which is often inaccessible, but from the reader's engagement with the text's plot, style, and language. Therefore, Wimsatt and Beardsley (1946) concluded that a literary work exists independently of its author upon completion, released into the public domain, where its significance is defined by readers rather than its creator. Based on this concept, the debate over authorship grows even more complex in the context of AI-generated literature where the creator of a work is ambiguous. In AI literature, the 'author' could be the programmer, the person inputting prompts, the algorithm itself, or a combination of these elements. Unlike human authors, AI lacks intent or self-awareness, leading to a fundamental question: if an algorithm merely mimics pre-existing texts, can it truly be considered an author? AI might be better described as an automatic interpretant of previous works, using human language to create imitative texts rather than original, intentional compositions. This ambiguity has prompted a reimagining of the roles of both author and reader. Roland Barthes (1967), in his essay Death of the Author, argued that 'it is language which speaks, not the author' (Barthes, 1967, p.2). AI-generated literature, which is often based on patterns drawn from vast corpora of human writing, exemplifies Barthes' concept. Michel Foucault similarly contended that authorship is not about individual identity but about the structure of the text itself, with meaning shaped by stylistic features rather than personal expression (Foucault, 1969).

A compelling example is The Day a Computer Writes a Novel (2016), which came close to winning a prestigious Japanese literary award. The novel's 'author' was an AI program developed by researchers at Nagoya University; trained on a corpus of over 1,000 short stories and instructional materials on writing techniques. The resulting narrative follows an AI protagonist who achieves self-awareness and discovers its talent as a writer, delivering a poignant, metafictional exploration of creation itself. The novel's striking conclusion warns of an AI prioritising its own creative impulses over human utility: 'Writhing in joy unlike any I'd ever felt before, I wrote on, entranced. This was the day a computer wrote a novel. It put the pursuit of its own pleasure first, and ceased serving people' (Big Echo, 2018, p.1).

First, programmers and researchers behind the AI cannot be ignored. They set the parameters, choose the training data, and guide the AI's thematic and stylistic development. Their role is akin to that of curators, shaping the boundaries within which the AI operates but leaving the actual production of text to the algorithm (Dwivedi, 2023). Yet, the process is indirect. They do not craft individual sentences or plots but influence the conditions under which the AI generates them. Therefore, while being a vital part of the creative process, programmers and researchers act more as enablers or facilitators rather than authors in the traditional sense. Second, and most importantly, The Day a Computer Writes a Novel epitomises the debate between author-centred and text/reader-centred works. If authorship is traditionally evolved around intentionality, AI falls short; it operates as a pattern-based generator of language rather than an originator of ideas. Barthes' concept of the 'death of the author' applies here, with the AI functioning as a conduit through which language 'speaks,' rather than as a conscious creator (Barthes, 1967). In this framework, the reader's role becomes pivotal. The poet, or creator of meaning, is not the programmer or the AI; it is the reader who interprets the text. Each unique interaction with AI-generated literature creates new interpretations, revealing that any text perceived as having structure or coherence will invite readers to find meaning within it, even if it was randomly generated. As Barthes (1967) and Foucault (1969) observed, the presence of language arranged in recognisable forms compels human readers to seek significance, and meaning becomes a product of interpretation rather than creation. Thus, authorship in AI literature shifts fundamentally as its meaning can only reside in the minds of those who engage with the text.

THE NATURE OF CREATIVITY

The question of whether AI can be considered genuinely creative is as contentious as the debate over its role as an 'author'. Traditionally, creativity in literature has been seen as an inherently human capacity, rooted in the author's unique perspective, emotional insight, and life experience (Alviani, 2018). Literature created by humans often embodies a personal or collective identity, transforming ideas, feelings, and memories into narratives that resonate with others. AI-generated literature, while capable of producing thematically rich and structurally sound texts, fundamentally lacks the core attributes of genuine creativity, making its status as a literary force questionable and potentially damaging to the cultural fabric of storytelling (Lockhart, 2024).

The core of this debate ultimately revolves around what distinguishes human artistry from mechanical process. While we have already established that the quality of AI-generated literature can rival human effort, true creativity lies in its capacity for both innovation and intention.

First, creativity is characterised by its transformative quality. It is not merely the recombination of existing elements but the deliberate act of transcending limitations to forge new paths. Literature, in particular, thrives on the disruption of norms, offering fresh insights into the human condition. Human authors infuse their works with a sense of exploration, challenging conventional ideas and traditions. In contrast, AI operates exclusively within the parameters of its programming and training data, limiting its outputs to variations on pre-existing patterns. It cannot break free from the boundaries defined by the data it processes. Proponents of AI creativity often cite Arthur Koestler's theory of 'bisociation' in The Act of Creation (1964) which describes creativity as the synthesis of unrelated concepts to produce novel outcomes, suggesting that human creativity arises from making connections between diverse and existing ideas. Therefore, AI systems function similarly by drawing on broad datasets of human language and literature, recombining these elements to generate novel narratives and styles. In this sense, AI-generated texts could be seen as creative products, resulting from the reassembly of known elements in ways that feel fresh or meaningful to readers. However, Koestler's theory of mimicry lacks the genuine novelty that arises from pushing the boundaries of thought and expression. To suggest that AI functions similarly to the human mind is saying that human originality comes from a predetermined set of algorithms. Shakespeare who enriched the English language (Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 2025), Walt Whitman, the father of free verse (Voigt, 2015), and Mary Shelley who is considered one of the founders of modern science fiction (Sterling, 2025), exemplify creativity as a transformational force. As Terry Eagleton (2005) emphasises in Literary Theory: An Introduction, literary creativity often arises from the redefinition of traditions genres and conventions, Hence, these authors transformed storytelling by introducing radically new idea, enriching the literary and intellectual landscape. AI-generated literature, bound by its training data and algorithmic constraints, simply cannot achieve this level of groundbreaking originality.

Consider the project '1 the Road', an AI programme which sought to imitate the spontaneous style of Jack Kerouac's On the Road by generating text informed by real-time sensory data during a road trip from New York to New Orleans (Goodwin, 2018). Developed by Ross Goodwin, the project used a laptop connected to cameras, microphones, and GPS to collect visual, auditory, and location-based inputs, which were then processed by the AI to produce a stream-of-consciousness narrative (Goodwin, 2018). The text was printed in real time onto a continuous roll of paper, reflecting an experimental and unedited approach reminiscent of Kerouac's original creative process. While this project was applauded for its avant-garde methodology and the novelty of integrating sensory inputs, Kerouac's On the Road was not merely an experiment in style but a cultural milestone, born from Kerouac's lived experiences, emotional struggles, and rejection of societal norms. It captured the zeitgeist of the Beat Generation, challenging traditional literary structures and championing themes of freedom and rebellion (Mirza, 2024). In contrast, the AI's output, though technically innovative, was constrained by its programming and the limitations of its sensory data. It failed to capture the raw emotional intensity and philosophical depth that made Kerouac's work groundbreaking.

Secondly, beyond pushing boundaries, creativity is inseparable from intent; the purposeful effort to convey meaning, evoke emotion, or provoke thought. Human creativity arises from a conscious decision to engage with ideas, experiences, and emotions, transforming them into artistic expression. This intentionality gives literature its depth, allowing authors to craft narratives that resonate on a profound level. AI, by its very nature, is devoid of intent. It processes inputs and generates outputs based on algorithmic logic, without understanding or purpose. Linguist Noam Chomsky (2023) has argued in his article The False Promise of ChatGPT that 'human mind is not, like ChatGPT and its ilk, a lumbering statistical engine for pattern matching, gorging on hundreds of terabytes of data and extrapolating the most likely conversational response'. Thus, creativity and language use are rooted in conceptual frameworks and personal goals, which AI inherently lacks. This absence of intentionality highlights the limitations of AI-generated literature. The AI in 1 the Road could mimic Kerouac's stylistic elements but could not replicate the depth of purpose or the revolutionary spirit behind On the Road. Kerouac's work was driven by his personal insights and emotional engagement, qualities entirely absent in an AI system. While 1 the Road could produce novel arrangements of language, it lacked the conscious intent to challenge norms or evoke a meaningful response beyond mere novelty. While AI systems can mimic human linguistic patterns, they do so without the awareness or motivation that underpin

genuine creative acts. As Chomsky asserts, AI does not operate with the cognitive and emotional structures that define human creativity; instead, it imitates the surface-level features of language without grasping its deeper significance (Chomsky, 2023).

FUTURE DIRECTION

The integration of AI into literature raises profound questions about its purpose and necessity. While the technology may improve, its role in creative writing remains questionable. As author Nick Harkaway (Evaristo and Winterson, 2023) observed, 'The technology will inevitably improve somewhat, but what's the point of building tools that do things humans like doing and are already good at?'.

Harkaway's sentiments reflect a fundamental truth; AI should support (at best), not replace human creativity. AI in literature offers no groundbreaking innovation. It generates derivative works that recombine existing elements but cannot transcend them to create something truly original. Literature, at its heart, is about elevating ideas through unique voices and intentional expression. Readers connect with this authenticity, something AI can never replicate.

The real concern lies in the commodification of creativity. AI-generated literature risks reducing art to a byproduct of capitalist efficiency, prioritising mass production over authenticity. Rather than enhancing human creativity, such tools risk undermining it, offering a shallow imitation of the craft writers dedicate their lives to perfecting.

The future direction should focus on leveraging AI to support human authors rather than replace them. By freeing writers from mundane tasks such as proofreading, grammar correction, and formatting, AI can help preserve the space for genuine artistic expression. However, its role as a creator must remain limited; literature demands a depth of purpose and originality that only human imagination can provide.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this paper explores how AI-generated literature reveals a profound transformation in the landscape of authorship and creativity. Through the analysis of works like '1 the Road' and 'The Day a Computer Writes a Novel,' these texts challenge traditional notions of what it means to create. While AI demonstrates an impressive ability to produce coherent narratives and mimic human styles, it fundamentally lacks the depth of intention and emotional resonance that characterise authentic human storytelling. True creativity is rooted in the unique experiences, insights, and intentionality of human authors, which AI cannot replicate. Furthermore, the rise of AI in literature poses potential dangers as the commodification of creativity threatens to reduce art to mere algorithmic outputs, prioritising efficiency over authenticity. This shift raises critical questions about the value of human authorship and the cultural implications of relying on machine-generated texts. However, considering the perspective of combinatorial creativity, it suggests that AI can serve as a tool to enhance human creativity rather than replace it. By leveraging AI to assist in the writing process, a future where human authors maintain their main role while benefiting from technological advancements ensures that creativity remains in human intent.

Ultimately, I contend that the evolution of storytelling must remain grounded in human experience and agency. As we navigate this complex intersection of AI and literature, it is imperative to establish ethical guidelines that preserve the irreplaceable contributions of human creativity while exploring the possibilities that AI offers.

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