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Literary Analysis in the Age of Artificial Intelligence; How AI Affects Storytelling and Authorship

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ABSTRACT

The rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is a landmark in the history of narrative in that it undermines some of the most fundamental principles of storytelling, authorship, and the principles of literary analysis. This paper claims that AI is not just a novel resource that writers can use but a paradigm-altering technology that requires a paradigm shift to literature analysis. It starts with the discussion of the historical development of the authorship concept of a romantic ideal to a post-structuralist concept, and explains why AI reveals the instability of the authorial position inherent to it. Then the paper examines the mechanics of the AI story-telling process and the comparison between human cognitive narrative processes and the pattern-matching and probabilistic text generation of Large Language Models (LLMs). The paper explores such emerging phenomena as hyper-authorship, algorithmic co-creation, and synthetic orality through critical analysis of AI-generated and AI-assisted texts. It proposes a new critical methodology Critical Algorithmic Literary Analysis (CALA) which is a combination of computational analysis, hermeneutics, and a profound questioning of the socio-technical systems within which AI narratives are developed. Lastly, the paper answers the ethical and ontological questions posed by this new literary landscape in the end that the future of storytelling is not in the competition between man and machine, but in a dialectical, complex/compromise, relationship that forces us into redefining the very nature of creative expression and interpretative practice.

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Introduction

Storytelling has been long regarded as an inherently human activity a kind of sacred art, as well as a way of inviting order to the chaos, passing down culture, and delving into the depths of consciousness. The author has remained the only, absolute provider of narrative meaning, between the oral epics of Homer and the psychological realism of Proust (Mishler, 1995). The

21st century has however brought us to a new narrative threshold. Now these systems are able to generate coherent, stylistically diverse, and even emotionally charged narratives on command and this requires a basic re-consideration of what storytelling is, who/ what can be an author, and how we, as critics and readers, need to understand the process of literary analysis (Goodfellow, 2024; Beguš, 2024) .

In this paper, it is argued that AI is not a new pen or a better word processor, but a disruptive agent that disrupts the very foundations of literary studies. It makes us leave the old hermeneutics behind and adopt a new, interdisciplinary framework of analysis as much dependent on algorithms, information, and authority structures as on metaphor, character, and plot. It is no longer the main research question: Can AI tell a story? but instead how does AI storytelling change the concept of authorship, narrative structure, and the critical models by which we read texts?

To overcome this, the paper will first follow the historical and philosophical development of authorship, claiming that AI is the final trigger that will result in the death of the author in post-structuralism. It will then outline the essential differences between human cognitive narrative and computational text generation by artificial intelligence, examining the ways the differences reflect in the stylistic and structural properties of the artificial intelligence generated texts. Then present the notion of a new methodological step, which is called Critical Algorithmic Literary Analysis (CALA). Lastly, it will examine the ethical, ontological, and creative consequences of this new age and come to the conclusion that the future of storytelling is not a zero-sum game between human and machine but a complicated, co-evolutionary process that redefines what it means by creativity itself.

The Author as a Contested Construct: From Genius to Algorithm

The threat of AI on authorship is only possible to address in the framework of a long-standing philosophical discussion. The idea that an author is something special, an individual genius is comparatively a modern construction. Known by Michel Foucault in his iconic essay, What is an Author? the author-function came with the introduction of capitalism and the legal system of intellectual property that necessitated that one should be responsible to a text (Foucault, 2019). This figure was idealized during the Romantic epoch of the 18th and 19th centuries, where the author was a lonely inspired genius, whose work was the direct embodiment of his own vision of the world (Abrams, 1971). It is this authorial sovereignty that led to the establishment of the conventional literary analysis wherein the role of the critic was to discover the intention of the author.

The 20th century was a period that challenged this model radically. The Death of the Author 1967 declaration was a breakthrough by Roland Barthes. According to Barthes (1977), a text is not a one-dimensional expression of meaning that was created by a divine power, but a multi-dimensional space in which various writings, none of which is unique, interact and conflict with each other. It is not that it is found in tracing the meaning back to the psyche of the author but rather in what the reader accepts and interprets it to be. To Barthes, the author was a historical and ideological product and not a pre-condition to textual existence.

Generative AI makes the post-structuralist vision lead to its logical, yet unlikely, conclusion. The intention, consciousness of an LLM, and a personal history do not exist. It is, as the name implies, a large language model, a statistical engine that computes the sequence of tokens given a

pattern based on the observations made in a large set of human-created text. In a situation where an AI is writing a story, it does not mean that it is telling a truth inside it but rather carries out a random combination of already existing language templates. By so doing, it makes literal Barthes statement that text is a tissue of quotations, which have been pulled out of innumerable centers of culture. The author of the AI is the final scriptor, without having the slightest personal responsibility to the meaning of the text, since the script, deprived of any voice, is marked by the imprint of the gesture and not the meaning (Barthes, 1977).

Moreover, AI makes the Foucauldian author-function more complicated. What or who the author-function of an AI-generated text? Is this the human prompt engineer who is the first to give the instruction? Do the programmers and the data scientists build and train the model? Is it the millions of unidentified creators whose copyrighted content are the training data of the model? Or is it the AI system itself? It can probably be complicated and multi-dimensional, which is why some researchers call it the distributed authorship or hyper-authorship (Eco, 2014; Bridle, 2018). This disintegration makes the sovereign author be reevaluated critically: when the sovereign author is gone, the AI demonstrates that the corpse remains capable of writing, and writing extensively. The functional task then becomes not so much a question of recovering the intent of the author, but rather a question of examining the complicated socio-technical apparatus on the basis of which the text is produced.

The Mechanics of Narrative: Human Cognition vs. Machine Prediction

In order to study AI storytelling, one should know the basic distinction between human and computational narrative generation. Human narrative is closely connected to consciousness, lived experience, and what cognitive narratologists refer to as theory of mind the capacity to give mental states to oneself and others (Herman, 2017). To create a narrative, a human writer utilizes a reservoir of his or her memories, emotional experience, cultural information, a subjective sense of intentionality. It is a teleological process: the writer has a desired destination, although it may change, and uses the story to create an impact of a theme or emotion. It is based on what philosopher Daniel Dennett (1987) referred to as the intentional stance the propensity to think of things as possessing beliefs and desires in order to anticipate their behavior.

Conversely, GPT-4 and its equivalents can be described as acting on a statistical position. They are not aware of the agents with beliefs or desires. Their pattern recognition and probabilistic forecasting is a process of narrative production. They are trained on millions of text pages and acquire statistical regularities of human language such as narrative structures, tropes and stylistic conventions. When asked to create a story, they resort to autoregressive generation: provided with a prompt (e.g., write a story about a lonely lighthouse keeper), they forecast the next word in their story, the next word, and so on, recording a story one token at a time (Vaswani et al., 2017; Wolf et al., 2019).

This inherent distinction gives different textual artifacts. Narratives created by human writers tend to have a slowed pace, thematic consistency, and what Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky (2023) referred to as defamiliarization, the artistic methodology of representing ordinary things in an alien fashion in order to maximize their perception. Human writers are able to violate rules, add ambiguity, and create subtext that has a functioning outside the surface of the plot.

AI-generated stories are more likely to be hyper-competent and hyper-unoriginal. They are masters of writing texts which are grammatically sound, stylistically coherent, and narratively

sound in general. An AI is able to replicate perfectly the style of a particular genre or author. The unity is, however, often local in the sense of syntax and plot and not global, in the sense of meaning thematic unity. AI cannot cope with complicated and long-term narrative-based works without causing contradictions or disregarding themes (Manalu et al., 2024). It is also more a creation of novel combinations of existing things, an act of so-called combinatorial creativity, than a form of transformational creativity, which changes an area on a fundamental level (Boden, 2004). In addition, AI stories do not contain understories. Any perceived depth on the part of a reader is a projection, an instance of what computational linguist Emily M. Bender refers to as the phenomenon of the so-called stochastic parrot, where the model will parrot the patterns of meaning without comprehending it (Bender et al., 2021).

This difference is important in the analysis of literature. Using the old approach to the analysis, such as psychoanalytic criticism (to examine the subconscious of the author) or biographical criticism (to connect this text with the life that the author was living) is an exercise in absurdity when applied to a text that is completely generated by AI. Instead, the system should be analyzed: ideological biases of the training data, architecture of the prompt, the statistical bias of the model.

The New Shapes of Narrative: Hyper-Authorship, Co-Creation, and Synthetic Orality

Storytelling can no longer be discussed solely in the context of human versus machine-written stories. It is creating new forms and processes of narrative that disfigure the boundaries of who is the author, the reader and the text. These are hyper-authorship, algorithmic co-creation and a revival of orality in an artificial manner.

Hyper-Authorship and the Author as Curator

A new model is also called "hyper-authorship," in which a human author uses AI not to substitute himself/herself but to enhance him/herself. Human is considered to be less of a classical writer in this model and more of a curator, editor, and a strategic director. The new work of the author is the torturous work of sentence-level writing, replaced by more advanced activities of conceptualization, touchpoint, and refinement through iterations and curing AI-generated works (Hajibayova and Lee, 2025; Goodfellow, 2025). It is the same way a movie director would have his huge crew and complex technology to work with, as opposed to a single painter with an easel. The resulting text is a product of human intentionality and algorithmic serendipity, the result of a complex interaction between the human intentionality and the algorithmic serendipity. Such texts should be analyzed as the literary products of two authors, as a human can be seen as the curator of their own work and AI as the creative force that favors the generation over their thoughtful elaboration.

Algorithmic Co-Creation and the "Cyborg Author"

Beyond curation, there are more integrated co-creative modes of storytelling and this results in what could be described as the cyborg author. This is especially true of interactive fiction, generative games and experimental literature. In this case, the AI is not just a tool, which is under direct control of the author, but rather a creative partner, who is active and unpredictable. The human may initiate the first parameters, yet the AI creates new plotlines, characters, and dialogues that the human then reacts to and develops further in some kind of dynamics feedback

(Begum et al., 2025). This operation reiterates the surrealist notion of automatic writing, but is mediated by some logic of computation, which is pattern based. Such works have to be analyzed using a dynamic approach that traces the stream of agency and where the human and the algorithm interconnect.

Synthetic Orality and the Return of the Performative

It is ironical how the AI storytelling resembles the oldest type of narration: the oral tradition. The process of oral storytelling is flowing in nature with no set text, and varies according to the performance and the storyteller. Homeric epic poems were not written in modern sense as they were the creations of a tradition, each time being recreated by a bard through a repertoire of formulaic expressions and subjects- a theory that was made famous by Milman Parry and Albert Lord (Lord, 1960).

This oral tradition has several common characteristics with AI storytelling. The knowledge of an LLM is a non-determinate, diffusive storehouse of narrative formulas, tropes, and structures. Whenever the user makes a request to the model, the result (the generated story) is a recomposition, and unique, depending on the prompt and probabilistic repertoire of the model. No ultimate text of authority. This synthetic orality questions the priority of the fixed, printed text, on which literary studies since Gutenberg have been based. The story is not something to be kept in store but something that has to be acted. To the literary critic, this would require giving attention to the variability of the text, the character of the prompt (the "invocation), and the interactive context of the generation itself (Hayles, 2018).

A New Critical Framework: Critical Algorithmic Literary Analysis (CALA)

The novel forms and processes require a new toolkit of analysis. The traditional literary theory, which is incredibly important in terms of style, theme, and structure, is not enough to answer the socio-technical aspects of AI literature. The present paper suggests a framework provisionally called CALA that combines three different and yet overlapping lines of enquiry, namely Computational Analysis, Hermeneutic Interpretation, and Critical System Analysis.

The Computational Layer: Forensics and Stylometry

The initial level is a forensic, computational attitude to the writing. The fact that the "author" is an algorithm means that it needs to be studied in terms of its internal mechanics to analyze the output. This includes:

Model Forensics: Determining the precise LLM used, its architecture, its training data (where available), and its perceived biases and limitations. Was the model refined on a particular genre or corpus?

Prompt Engineering Analysis: The prompt is the main connection of human will. The construction of the prompt as a textual building block should be subject to a strict analysis. An elaborate, highly specific prompt produces an alternate artifact as opposed to a simple one. The very prompt is included in the creative apparatus to be studied (Bender et al., 2021).

Computational Stylometry: Systems used to authenticate the authorship of a text can be re-used to determine the statistical fingerprint of a machine. Scientists are working on methods to identify text produced by AI which will be based on perplexity, burstiness, and particular

stylistic tics that are overrepresented or underrepresented in machine text versus human text (Gehrmann et al., 2019; Mitchell et al., 2023). This level of analysis does not intend to apprehend AI but to learn the stylistic conventions and exceptions.

The Hermeneutic Layer: Meaning-Making in the Age of the Algorithm

Although the algorithm generates the text, it remains a linguistic work that can be interpreted hermeneutically. The meaning construction and experience of the reader is kept in focus. This interpretation however should be placed within the knowledge that the text is not a creation of a conscious mind. The task of the critic becomes a stalker of authorial will, an ontologist of possible algorithm. The questions posed at this layer are:

- How are the biases of the training data manifested or diffracted in the thematics of the text? As an example, when a narrative of doctors always switches to male heroes, it is not the sexism of an author but a statistical bias in the corpus.
- What interpretative possibilities are produced specifically due to the absence of a consciousness in the text? Is AI surrealism/nonsense generated by AI capable of providing new versions of defamiliarization?
- What is the impact of awareness of non-human source of text upon the interpretive experience of a reader? This is a novel turn on what Hans Robert Jauss has referred to as the horizon of expectations (Jauss, 1982) in which mode of production itself is a key component of the literary situation.

The Critical System Analysis: Power, Labor, and Ideology

The last and, probably, the most important interface of the CALA is a critical analysis system generating the text. This is based on the Science and Technology Studies (STS), critical theory, and media studies. It does not merely stay with the text but instead questions the political economy of AI narrative. Key questions include:

Labor: Who is the source of labor in the AI output? It involves the poorly-paid and exploited human labor in the Global South who had to do data labeling and content moderation to train the models (Dignum and Crawford, 2021; Perrigo, 2023). It also encompasses the millions of writers whose copyrighted data were web scrapped to create training data without their consent or compensation.

Data Colonialism: Does the style of narration and worldview of the AI represent the prevailing, Western-centric corpus, thus pushing aside non-Western storytelling practices and epistemological approaches? (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Bird & Soh, 2023).

Epistemic Authority: What becomes of the cultural worth of literature when narrative can be produced at scale? Is it going to undermine human creativity, or be the more valuable because of it? This is the layer that examines the ideological consequences of automation on one of the most treasured cultural practices of humanity (Zuboff, 2023). Then CALA is not the denial of traditional literary analysis, it is its extension as well. It is based on the assumption that analyzing an AI-generated story is not just to read words but to ask questions to the whole socio-technical stack, the clusters of GPUs in a datacenter, the global workforce, the statistical models, the legal systems of copyright, etc., that enabled those words to exist.

Ethical and Ontological Questions What is a Story?

The AI storytelling is multiplying, compelling us to ask such deep ethical and ontological questions as what creative writing and art are and what matters.

The Copyright Paradox and the Theft Compilation

The fact that the foundation of LLMs is based on some of the most urgent ethical concerns is the most pressing issue. It is no secret nowadays that the training data of major models is now filled with huge amounts of copyrighted content books, articles, and code scraped off the internet without the express consent of their rights holders (Opderbeck, 2023; Abbott & Rothman, 2023). Writers including Margaret Atwood and George R.R. Martin have sued claiming it amounts to mass copyright infringement and that AI firms are creating commercial products based on the unlicensed work of authors (Didsbury & Zhu, 2025; Travis, 2026). Literarily speaking, this puts the unappealing truth of the matter that all AI-created fiction is, in the literal and legal understanding of the term, a derivative work, a statistical phantom of the entire body of human text. A critical analysis that does not take this "original sin" of the technology is incomplete.

Dehumanization or Amplification

One of the most common arguments is related to the influence AI will have on the human authorship. One side, as described by writers such as Ted Chiang (2023), is an interpretation of AI as a radically dehumanising phenomenon, a technology that commodifies art, a technology that makes art meaningless because of the hard work and struggle that underlie its significance. To this perspective, AI-generated literature is the synthetic sweetener that is artificial literature as compared to real sugar: a shallow imitation that does not nourish.

On the other hand, some view AI as an excellent amplifier of man that resembles the camera or the synthesizer. It, they suggest, can democratize storytelling because it enables people who have never received formal writing education to share intricate ideas, support authors through creative stagnation, and create new types of interactive storytelling that never existed before (McGuire et al., 2024). Literary critic has to emulate this dialectic where particular texts and processes are not described as being good or bad, but are an element of a continuum of human-machine creativity.

The Ontological Shift: Narrative as Pattern vs. Narrative as Meaning

Ontological is the most challenging. The Western world has benefited most of the centuries working on the premise that narrative serves as a vehicle of meaning, a means to investigate truth, right and wrong and the human condition. AI disputes it by introducing narrative as a pattern. To an LLM, a story is not a significant narration of a phenomenon but a statistically probable pattern of tokens. What is disturbing about this is that the meaning we see in stories can be to an unnoticed degree, a reflection of our own mental set up, as projected upon complex statistical structures. This does not always nullify but compels a different form of critical self-consciousness the human experience of reading. It implies that literature may be a collaborative work not only between the author and the reader, but also between human consciousness and the statistical laws of language as such a reality that AI, in externalizing the laws, now imposes upon us (Hayles, 2018).

Conclusion: The Co-Evolutionary Future of Storytelling

The emergence of generative AI is a watershed in the world of literature not as its abolition, but rather as the most significant change. As presented in this paper, AI storytelling requires a paradigm shift in analysing literature. The AI makes us abandon old-fashioned hermeneutics by making the sovereign author obsolete, by producing the text through statistical prediction and not conscious intent, by developing new modes of hyper-authorship and synthetic orality. The suggested model of Critical Algorithmic Literary Analysis (CALA) provides the way out and combines computational forensics, interpretive hermeneutics, and critical system analysis in order to deal with the entire complexity of algorithmic writings.

Whether AI is a good writer or not is not the ultimate question, but what we as a culture will regard as important in the storytelling. The solution is not going to be a two-way decision. A more plausible future is a co-evolutionary future in which the two forms exist together, affect one another and produce new hybrid genres. Human authors will utilize AI as a research assistant, brainstorming partner, as well as a tool to create interactive worlds. Readers and critics will also acquire new literacies that will enable them to comprehend, analyze, and read between the algorithmic sources of the texts that they read.

Here, in this new landscape, the work of the literary analyst is the more, not the less, significant. As the most famous example, Walter Benjamin (2018) has put it, a mechanical reproduction of art alters its aura, its specific presence in time and place. AI, being the extreme form of reproductive technology, is blurring the authorship. In such a way, however, it establishes the other form of critical aura: the aura of the process, of the system, of the intricate relationship between human and machine. It seems, then, that the future of the literary analysis cannot be the denial of the algorithm, but the bold and brave analysis of this algorithm, so that when machines come to understand our stories, we are the ones who choose what the final meaning of our stories is.

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