

Artificial Intelligence and Authorship: Rethinking Creativity in English Literature

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Abstract: The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) in creative writing has generated renewed debates around authorship, creativity, originality, and literary agency within English literary studies. Traditionally, authorship has been understood as a distinctly human endeavor grounded in imagination, intentionality, and lived experience. However, the increasing presence of AI-generated poetry, fiction, and critical texts challenges these long-established assumptions. This review paper critically surveys existing scholarship on artificial intelligence and literary creativity, drawing on poststructuralist theory, digital humanities, and posthuman perspectives to reassess the concept of authorship in contemporary English literature. By synthesizing theoretical debates, critical arguments, and emerging case studies, the paper argues that AI does not negate human creativity but reconfigures it as a collaborative, process-oriented practice involving both human and non-human agents. The review also examines ethical concerns related to originality, intellectual property, and academic integrity, as well as pedagogical implications for English literature classrooms in the AI era. Ultimately, the paper positions artificial intelligence as a transformative force that necessitates a rethinking of creativity and authorship, urging literary studies to develop revised critical frameworks responsive to technologically mediated textual production.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence; Authorship; Creativity; English Literature; Digital Humanities; Post structuralism; Human–Machine Collaboration.

1. Introduction

The relationship between technology and literary production has always been dynamic, with each major technological shift from the printing press to digital hypertext reshaping how texts are written, circulated, and interpreted. In the early twenty-first century, **artificial intelligence (AI)** has

emerged as a transformative force in this continuum, capable of generating poetry, fiction, drama, and even literary criticism with increasing sophistication. The growing visibility of AI-generated texts has prompted renewed debates within English literary studies concerning the nature of **authorship**, **creativity**, and **originality**, concepts that have long been central to the discipline.

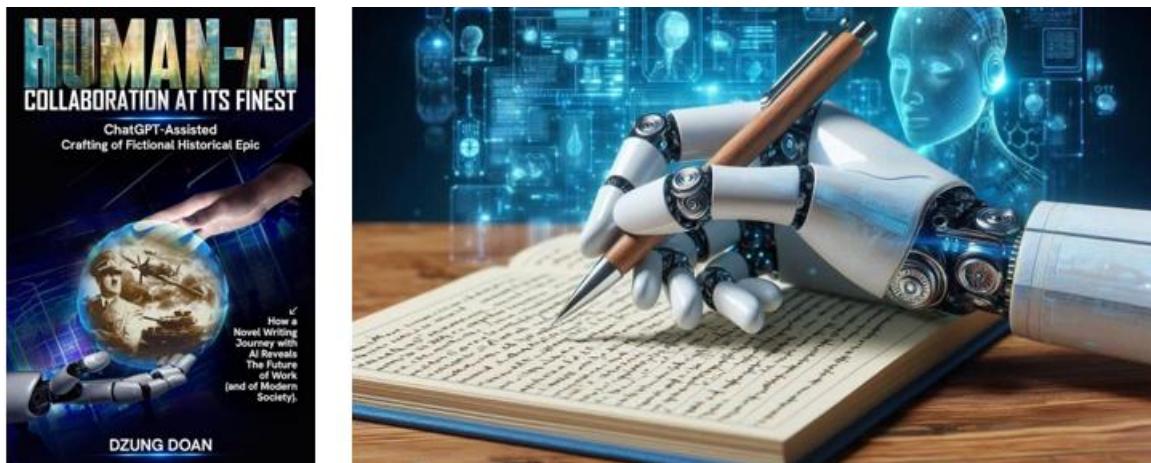


Figure 1: Artificial intelligence (AI)

Traditionally, English literature has been grounded in a humanist understanding of authorship, where the author is perceived as the originator of meaning and creativity is associated with individual imagination, intentionality, and emotional depth. Romantic aesthetics further reinforced the notion of the author as a unique creative genius, while modern literary criticism often continued to privilege human agency, even when emphasizing form, structure, or context. However, theoretical interventions in the late twentieth century most notably Roland Barthes's declaration of the "death of the author" and Michel Foucault's interrogation of the "author-function"—began to destabilize the idea of authorial sovereignty. These debates questioned whether

meaning resides in authorial intention or emerges through language, discourse, and readerly interpretation.

The advent of AI intensifies these theoretical concerns by introducing non-human agents into the process of literary creation. Unlike earlier digital tools that merely assisted writing, contemporary AI systems actively participate in generating texts by learning patterns from vast literary corpora and recombining them in novel ways. This development challenges the assumption that creativity must be exclusively human and raises critical questions: Can a machine be considered an author? Does creativity depend on consciousness and intention, or can it be understood as a

process of selection, recombination, and interpretation? How should English literary studies respond to texts produced through human-machine collaboration?

Recent scholarship across digital humanities, posthuman theory, and media studies suggests that creativity may no longer be adequately explained through individualist or anthropocentric models. Instead, creativity is increasingly viewed as **distributed, relational, and process-oriented**, involving interactions between humans, technologies, and cultural archives. From this perspective, AI-generated literature does not signal the end of human creativity but rather its transformation. Literary production becomes a site of collaboration where human authors, algorithms, and readers collectively participate in meaning-making.

Within this evolving landscape, English literature classrooms and research practices are also undergoing significant change. AI tools are being used for drafting, stylistic experimentation, and critical analysis, prompting ethical debates about plagiarism, intellectual property, and academic integrity. At the same time, these tools offer new pedagogical possibilities, encouraging students to reflect critically on authorship, originality, and the constructed nature of literary texts. Such developments make it imperative for literary scholars to reassess established critical frameworks and adapt them to technologically mediated forms of writing.

Against this backdrop, the present review paper examines existing theoretical and critical literature on artificial intelligence and authorship in English literature. By synthesizing debates from poststructuralism, digital humanities, and posthuman thought, the paper aims to rethink creativity as a collaborative human–non-human practice rather than an exclusively human achievement. In doing so, it seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions about the future of authorship and the evolving scope of English literary studies in the age of artificial intelligence.

2. Traditional Concepts of Authorship and Creativity



Figure 2: Traditional Conceptions of Authorship and Human Creativity in English Literature

The study of English literature has long been anchored in a set of assumptions that privilege the human author as the central source of meaning and creativity. Before the emergence of digital and post human theories, literary production was largely understood through a **humanist framework**, where authorship, imagination, and originality

were treated as interdependent and uniquely human attributes. These traditional concepts continue to shape canon formation, critical evaluation, and pedagogical practices, even as they are increasingly questioned in the age of artificial intelligence.

Author as Originator of Meaning

Within classical and humanist literary traditions, the author has been regarded as the **primary originator of meaning**. Texts were interpreted as expressions of the author's intentions, beliefs, emotions, and socio-historical context. Biographical criticism, intentionalist readings, and author-centered interpretations reinforced the idea that understanding a literary work required access to the author's purpose and personal vision. The author functioned as a unifying consciousness behind the text, ensuring coherence, authority, and authenticity.

This model was particularly influential in Romantic literary theory, which elevated the author to the status of a creative genius endowed with exceptional imaginative power. Poetry and fiction were seen as direct manifestations of the author's inner self, and originality was equated with the ability to produce something unprecedented. Although later formalist and structuralist approaches shifted attention to the text itself, the author's presence continued to inform interpretation, especially in canonical literary studies and evaluative criticism.

Creativity as Human Imagination

Creativity in traditional literary discourse has been closely associated with **human imagination**, emotion, and consciousness. Literary creativity was understood as an inward, psychological process through which authors transformed personal experience, observation, and reflection into artistic expression. Imagination was treated as a distinctly human faculty, separating literary creation from mechanical reproduction or imitation.

This conception positioned creativity as intentional and meaningful, rooted in lived experience and emotional depth. Writing was therefore not merely a technical act but a deeply human one, involving empathy, moral insight, and aesthetic judgment. Such assumptions reinforced a clear distinction between human creativity and any form of automated or rule-based production, a distinction that becomes increasingly unstable when confronted with algorithmic text generation.

Canon Formation and Originality

The traditional emphasis on authorship and imagination has also played a decisive role in **canon formation** within English literature. Canonical texts have often been selected and valued based on their perceived originality, stylistic innovation, and the singular genius of their authors. Literary history has been constructed around influential figures whose works were believed to inaugurate new movements, forms, or ways of thinking.

Originality, in this context, was understood as the production of something new and distinctive, rather than repetition or imitation. Intertextuality, adaptation, and borrowing were frequently viewed as secondary or derivative practices,

unless transformed by an exceptional authorial vision. This model privileged individual authorship and reinforced hierarchical distinctions between “creative” literature and other forms of textual production.

However, such criteria also obscured the inherently intertextual nature of literature, where texts continuously draw upon existing linguistic, cultural, and narrative resources. The rise of artificial intelligence, which generates texts through large-scale recombination of existing material, brings these latent tensions to the surface and compels a reconsideration of originality as a relational and process-driven concept rather than an absolute one.

Taken together, these traditional notions of authorship and creativity establish the conceptual background against which contemporary debates about AI-generated literature must be understood. As subsequent sections of this review will demonstrate, artificial intelligence does not simply challenge these ideas from outside the literary tradition; rather, it exposes the limitations of long-standing assumptions that have always been open to theoretical questioning.

3. Artificial Intelligence as a Literary Agent

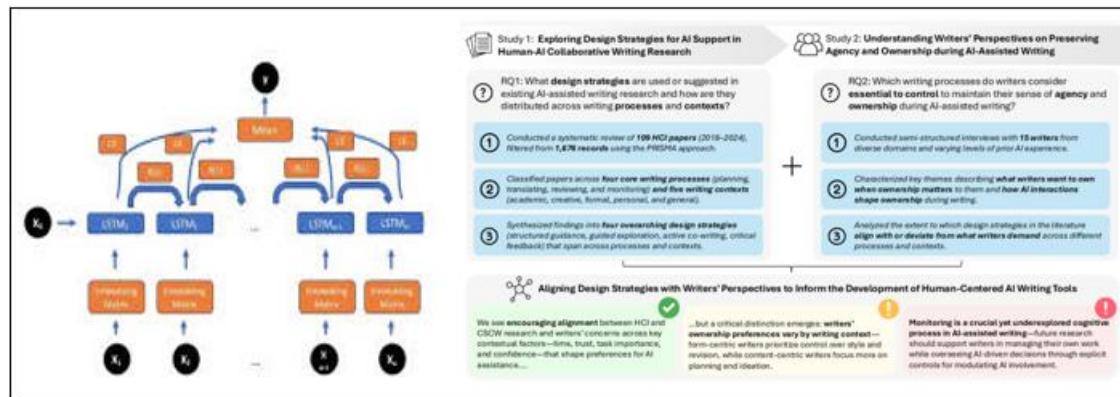


Figure 3: Algorithmic Text Generation and Literary Agency

The emergence of artificial intelligence as a participant in literary production marks a significant shift in how texts are conceived, produced, and evaluated within English literary studies. Unlike earlier digital technologies that functioned primarily as passive tools for storage or dissemination, contemporary AI systems actively generate language, narratives, and interpretive commentary. This development invites serious critical attention to the status of AI as a **literary agent** and its implications for authorship, creativity, and meaning-making.

How AI Generates Text: Training Data, Patterns, and Probability

AI-generated literary texts are produced through advanced language models trained on vast datasets consisting of books, poems, articles, and other forms of written discourse. Rather than understanding language in a human sense, AI operates by identifying **statistical patterns**, syntactic structures, and semantic relationships within this data. Through processes of pattern recognition and probabilistic prediction, AI systems generate text by selecting the most contextually likely word or phrase from a range of possibilities.

From a literary perspective, this process foregrounds the fundamentally **intertextual nature of writing**. AI does not create ex nihilo; instead, it recombines existing linguistic and stylistic elements drawn from literary traditions and cultural archives. While critics often argue that this lack of consciousness disqualifies AI from genuine creativity, others contend that much human writing similarly depends on repetition, adaptation, and transformation of prior texts. AI thus exposes the extent to which creativity long idealized as

originality has always been shaped by structures, conventions, and inherited forms.

AI as Tool versus AI as Co-Author

A central debate in contemporary literary discourse concerns whether AI should be regarded merely as a **tool** or acknowledged as a **co-author**. When treated as a tool, AI is seen as an extension of human intention, assisting writers with drafting, editing, stylistic experimentation, or idea generation. In this model, human authors retain full creative authority, and AI functions as a sophisticated aid similar to earlier writing technologies.

However, as AI systems increasingly generate entire poems, stories, and critical essays with minimal human intervention, this instrumental view becomes inadequate. In collaborative writing contexts, AI influences narrative direction, stylistic choices, and thematic development in ways that cannot be entirely predicted or controlled by the human user. This has led scholars to propose a model of **distributed or shared authorship**, where creativity emerges from interaction between human and non-human agents rather than from a single conscious source.

Such a shift unsettles conventional literary categories, including ownership, originality, and responsibility. If a text is shaped by algorithmic processes as well as human prompts, the boundaries of authorship become porous, requiring new critical vocabularies and ethical frameworks.

Machine-Generated Poetry, Fiction, and Criticism

AI-generated poetry and fiction have attracted particular attention due to their ability to imitate established literary styles and genres. Machine-generated poems often replicate

formal features such as meter, imagery, and metaphor, while AI-generated fiction demonstrates narrative coherence, character construction, and thematic consistency. These texts challenge evaluative criteria traditionally used in literary criticism, as readers may respond aesthetically to works whose "author" lacks intention or emotional experience.

Equally significant is the rise of AI-generated **literary criticism**, where machines summarize texts, identify themes, and apply theoretical lenses. While such criticism may lack interpretive depth or cultural sensitivity, it raises important questions about the nature of critical authority and expertise. If interpretation is understood as pattern recognition and textual analysis, AI complicates the distinction between human insight and computational analysis.

Taken together, these developments position artificial intelligence not merely as a technological novelty but as a **meaningful participant in literary culture**. By generating poetry, fiction, and criticism, AI challenges long-standing assumptions about creativity, agency, and authorship in English literature. Rather than viewing AI as an external threat to literary studies, this review suggests that it should be understood as a catalyst that compels the discipline to rethink its foundational concepts and adapt to new modes of textual production.

4. Rethinking Creativity in English Literature



Figure 4: Intertextual Models of Creativity in English Literature

The growing presence of artificial intelligence in literary production necessitates a fundamental re-evaluation of how creativity is conceptualized within English literary studies. Rather than viewing creativity as the product of an isolated authorial genius, contemporary critical debates increasingly frame it as a **dynamic process** shaped by language, culture, technology, and prior texts. AI-generated literature brings this shift into sharp focus by making visible the mechanisms—repetition, transformation, and recombination that have long underpinned literary creativity.

Creativity as Process, Not Origin

Traditional literary criticism has often treated creativity as an act of **origination**, locating the source of literary value in the author's unique imagination and intentional expression. In contrast, recent theoretical approaches emphasize creativity as an ongoing **process of making**, involving selection, revision, and reinterpretation. From this perspective, meaning does not originate in a single creative

moment but emerges through interactions among texts, readers, and cultural contexts.

Artificial intelligence exemplifies this process-oriented model of creativity. AI systems generate texts not by inventing new ideas independently but by reorganizing existing linguistic materials in novel configurations. This challenges the assumption that creativity requires conscious intention or emotional experience. Instead, creativity can be understood as the capacity to generate meaningful variation within established constraints. By foregrounding process over origin, AI aligns literary creativity with practices such as drafting, rewriting, and adaptation that have always been central to literary production but often marginalized in critical discourse.

Intertextuality and Algorithmic Recombination

The concept of **intertextuality** provides a useful framework for understanding AI-generated literature. Literary texts have long been recognized as part of a network of references, echoes, and influences, drawing upon earlier works, genres, and cultural narratives. AI operates explicitly within this intertextual field, learning from extensive textual archives and recombining patterns, styles, and motifs across literary traditions.

Algorithmic recombination makes visible what has often remained implicit in human writing: that originality frequently arises from transformation rather than invention. While human authors internalize literary influences through reading and cultural immersion, AI models externalize this process by statistically mapping textual relationships. The resulting texts may lack subjective intention, yet they demonstrate how creativity can emerge from structured repetition and variation. This challenges evaluative hierarchies that privilege originality as novelty and invites a reassessment of creativity as relational and cumulative.

Continuities with Past Literary Practices

Although AI-generated literature may appear unprecedented, its creative strategies bear strong resemblances to earlier literary practices such as **pastiche, parody, and collage**. Pastiche involves the imitation and blending of existing styles, parody reworks texts through imitation and critique, and collage assembles fragments from diverse sources into new configurations. These practices have been central to modernist and postmodernist literature, where originality was often achieved through deliberate borrowing and recombination.

Seen in this light, AI does not introduce an entirely new model of creativity but extends established literary techniques through computational means. What distinguishes AI is not the principle of recombination itself but the scale and speed at which it operates. By automating processes that human writers have long employed, AI forces literary studies to confront the continuity between human and machine creativity rather than framing them as oppositional.

Reconsidering creativity in English literature through the lens of artificial intelligence thus reveals both rupture and continuity. AI challenges romantic and humanist

assumptions about creativity as a uniquely human origin, while simultaneously reaffirming long-standing literary practices that emphasize intertextuality, transformation, and process. In doing so, it encourages a more inclusive and flexible understanding of creativity one that accommodates human-machine collaboration and remains responsive to evolving modes of literary production.

5. Ethical and Pedagogical Implications

The increasing use of artificial intelligence in literary creation and analysis raises complex ethical and pedagogical

questions for English literature as an academic discipline. As AI blurs the boundaries between human and machine authorship, it challenges established norms surrounding originality, ownership, and intellectual responsibility. At the same time, its growing presence in educational contexts compels teachers and institutions to reconsider pedagogical practices and ethical frameworks in light of technologically assisted creativity.



Figure 5: Ethical and Pedagogical Dimensions of Artificial Intelligence in Literary Studies

Authorship and Plagiarism Debates

One of the most pressing ethical concerns surrounding AI-generated texts is their relationship to **authorship and plagiarism**. Traditional definitions of plagiarism are grounded in the unauthorized use of another person's ideas or words without proper acknowledgment. AI complicates this framework by generating text through algorithmic recombination of existing material rather than direct copying. As a result, questions arise regarding who should be credited as the author of an AI-assisted text and whether such texts can be considered original.

Some critics argue that AI-generated writing undermines the ethical foundations of literary production by obscuring sources and bypassing human creativity. Others contend that plagiarism frameworks must evolve to distinguish between deceptive use of AI and transparent, responsible collaboration with technology. These debates highlight the need for revised ethical guidelines that recognize the distinctive nature of AI-generated texts while preserving core academic values such as honesty, accountability, and intellectual rigor.

AI in Literature Classrooms

In pedagogical contexts, AI presents both challenges and opportunities for teaching English literature. On one hand, concerns persist that students may rely excessively on AI-generated summaries, essays, or analyses, thereby weakening critical thinking and interpretive skills. On the other hand, when integrated thoughtfully, AI can function as a powerful pedagogical tool that encourages reflection on authorship, genre, style, and interpretation.

AI tools can be used to generate alternative narrative endings, imitate literary styles, or produce contrasting

critical readings of a text. Such activities allow students to engage critically with literary conventions and to compare human and machine-generated interpretations. By foregrounding the constructed nature of literary meaning, AI-assisted pedagogy can deepen students' understanding of intertextuality, creativity, and critical judgment rather than diminishing it.

Academic Integrity versus Assisted Creativity

The tension between **academic integrity** and **assisted creativity** lies at the heart of contemporary debates about AI in education. Strict prohibitions on AI use may prove unrealistic in an increasingly digital learning environment, while unregulated use risks eroding standards of assessment and scholarly accountability. A balanced approach recognizes that AI, like earlier writing technologies, can support learning when its role is clearly defined and ethically governed.

This approach involves emphasizing transparency, requiring students to acknowledge AI assistance, and designing assessments that prioritize critical engagement over mere content production. By shifting the focus from product to process, educators can encourage students to reflect on how AI influences their thinking and writing practices. In this way, AI becomes not a shortcut that replaces learning but a catalyst for deeper engagement with literary texts and theoretical concepts.

Ultimately, the ethical and pedagogical implications of artificial intelligence underscore the need for English literary studies to adapt without abandoning its core principles. By developing nuanced ethical frameworks and innovative teaching strategies, the discipline can respond constructively to AI-driven change, fostering responsible creativity while

maintaining academic integrity in an evolving literary landscape.

6. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence has emerged as a transformative force in contemporary literary culture, challenging long-standing assumptions about authorship, creativity, and textual production in English literature. By generating poetry, fiction, and critical discourse, AI disrupts the traditional human-centered model of literary creation and foregrounds the collaborative dynamics between human writers, technological systems, and cultural archives. Rather than signaling the decline of literary creativity, AI reveals its procedural, intertextual, and relational nature, compelling scholars to reconsider creativity as an evolving practice shaped by both human and non-human agents.

The growing influence of AI underscores the need for revised literary theories capable of addressing technologically mediated forms of writing. Established frameworks grounded in Romantic humanism or strict intentionalism prove insufficient when confronted with algorithmic text generation and shared authorship. In response, critical approaches drawn from poststructuralism, digital humanities, and posthuman theory offer productive pathways for rethinking literary agency, originality, and meaning-making. Such theoretical recalibration does not abandon the literary tradition but extends it, allowing English studies to engage critically with new modes of textual production while retaining its analytical rigor.

Looking ahead, the future of English studies in the AI era depends on its capacity to integrate ethical reflection, pedagogical innovation, and theoretical adaptability. As AI becomes increasingly embedded in writing, reading, and teaching practices, English literature must position itself as a discipline that not only interprets texts but also interrogates the conditions of their production. By embracing AI as an object of critical inquiry rather than a threat, English studies can reaffirm its relevance, fostering responsible creativity and critical literacy in an increasingly digital and algorithmic world.

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