



शोधामृत

(कला, मानविकी और सामाजिक विज्ञान की अंतर्राष्ट्रीय सहकर्म समीक्षित, मूल्यांकित, त्रैमासिक शोध पत्रिका)

ISSN : 3048-9296 (Online)

3049-2890 (Print)

IIFS Impact Factor-5.375

Vol.-3; issue-3 (July-Sept.) 2026

Page No- 48-55

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<https://shodhaamrit.gyanvividha.com>

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Can Machines Create Literature? Artificial Intelligence, Creativity and the Changing Concept of Authorship

Abstract : Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as one of the most transformative technological developments of the twenty-first century, reshaping not only science and industry but also the humanities. Among its most significant interventions is its growing ability to generate literary texts, including poems, stories, essays, scripts, and dialogues that often resemble human writing. These developments have generated an important debate within literary studies concerning the nature of creativity, imagination, originality, and authorship. Traditionally, literature has been regarded as an expression of human consciousness, emotional experience, and cultural memory. Writers transform their lived experiences, social realities, and imaginative capacities into artistic expression, thereby establishing literature as a uniquely human endeavour. The emergence of AI-powered language models, however, challenges this long-held assumption by producing texts that display coherence, stylistic sophistication, and creative linguistic patterns.

This paper critically examines whether machines can genuinely create literature or whether they merely imitate existing literary conventions through computational analysis of linguistic data. Drawing upon literary theories of authorship, posthumanism, and digital humanities, the study investigates how AI-generated texts reshape the concepts of originality, creativity, and literary production. The paper further analyses the collaborative relationship between human writers and AI systems, arguing that while artificial intelligence has become a powerful creative tool capable of assisting literary production, it does not possess consciousness, intentionality, emotional experience, or cultural memory. Consequently, AI-generated writing differs fundamentally from human literary creation despite its impressive linguistic capabilities.

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Keywords : Artificial Intelligence, Literary Creativity, Authorship, Machine Writing, Digital Humanities, Creativity, AI-generated Literature, Posthumanism

Literature has always been the most profound expression of human consciousness. Since the earliest oral traditions, storytelling has served as a means through which societies preserve history, communicate values, express emotions, and imagine alternative realities. In all its forms, be it epic poetry, drama, novels, or personal memoirs, literature consistently reflects the complexities of human life. Literature has been an instrument for individuals to negotiate identity, morality, memory, love, grief, conflict, and hope. Literary creativity has therefore always been considered an exclusive human faculty rooted in imagination, emotion, intellect, and lived experience.

In the present era the rapid development of Artificial Intelligence has begun to challenge this deeply established assumption. AI systems, capable of generating natural language, now produce poems, stories, essays, screenplays, songs, and even novels that often appear remarkably similar to human writing. Large Language Models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and other generative AI systems analyze billions of words from existing texts to predict and generate coherent language. Their outputs frequently demonstrate stylistic sophistication, rhetorical balance, and creative expression that blur the distinction between human and machine-generated writing.

The appearance of AI-generated literature has therefore initiated one of the most significant debates in contemporary literary studies. The question arises whether AI can generate creativity as its system generally works from computation. Can algorithms produce genuine literary art? Is it possible to create original literature when a machine learns entirely from previously existing human texts? Most importantly, who should be recognized as the author of a text produced through collaboration between a human user and an AI system? These questions extend beyond technology and enter the domains of philosophy, aesthetics, literary criticism, ethics, and cultural studies.

If we study history, we shall come to know that every major technological innovation has influenced literature in some or other way. The invention of writing transformed oral traditions into written literature. The printing press revolutionized access to knowledge and reshaped authorship by enabling mass publication. Photography and cinema challenged traditional artistic practices, while digital media transformed reading habits through hypertext, electronic literature, and interactive storytelling. Artificial Intelligence represents the latest stage in this series of evolution. Unlike earlier technologies that primarily assisted the transmission of literature, AI actively participates in the process of verbatim itself. This development has compelled scholars to reconsider long-standing assumptions regarding creativity. Classical theories generally define creativity as the production of something both original and valuable. Human creativity involves imagination, intentionality, emotional engagement, cultural understanding, and subjective experience. Writers draw inspiration from personal memories, historical events, social relationships, philosophical reflections, and psychological struggles. Their works range from complex interactions between individual consciousness and cultural milieu.

Artificial Intelligence possesses a different approach to creativity. Rather than relying upon personal experiences or emotional consciousness, AI generates text through computation of statistics of enormous linguistic datasets. AI recognizes patterns in already available literature and predicts the most probable sequence of words that follows a given prompt or command. As a result, its creativity is hi-tech rather than practical. While AI may generate striking metaphors or emotionally convincing narratives, these results do not arise from feelings or personal experiences. Instead, they are products of algorithmic probability and machine learning.

Literary theory from the 20th century is equally relevant to the discussion of AI-generated literature. In his article *The Death of the Author*, Roland Barthes notably questioned the author's authority, contending that meaning is found in the reader rather than the writer's objectives. In *What Is an Author?*, Michel Foucault further questioned the cultural role of authorship, arguing that the idea of the author is historically produced. Modern AI technologies complicate the relationship between creator, text, and reader, adding a whole new level of complexity to these discussions. When an AI creates a poem based on human instructions, ownership is no longer held by a single person but rather by programmers, datasets, users, and algorithms.

Another important theoretical perspective emerges from posthumanism, which questions traditional distinctions between humans and machines. Scholars such as N. Katherine Hayles argue that digital technologies increasingly reshape human identity, cognition, and communication. From this perspective, AI-generated literature is not merely a technological curiosity but part of a broader transformation in the relationship between humans and intelligent systems. Rather than replacing human creativity, AI may represent an extension of human intellectual capacities, creating new forms of collaborative artistic production.

Even with these technical advancements, many academics are still dubious about whether machines can truly be creative. Memory, pain, desire, morality, spirituality, and social existence are all closely related to human literature. Literary works often result from personal grief, cultural identity, political resistance, historical trauma, and ethical contemplation. These dimensions cannot easily be replicated through computational pattern recognition alone. A machine may describe grief with remarkable linguistic accuracy, yet it does not experience the trauma itself. It may compose convincing love poetry without ever having loved someone. Such observations suggest that while AI can imitate the language of emotion, it cannot reproduce the existential conditions from which literature traditionally arises.

The implications of AI-generated literature extend beyond creative writing into education, publishing, journalism, translation, and academic research. Educational institutions increasingly confront questions regarding AI-assisted assignments, originality, and plagiarism. Publishers experiment with AI-generated content while simultaneously addressing copyright concerns. Writers employ AI as a brainstorming partner, editor, translator, and stylistic assistant. As a result, it is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between machine help and human writing.

The central argument of this paper is that although Artificial Intelligence has demonstrated an unprecedented capacity to generate coherent and aesthetically sophisticated texts, literature continues to derive its deepest meaning from human experience. AI may produce language that resembles literature, but the emotional, ethical, cultural, and existential dimensions of literary creativity remain fundamentally connected to human life. The future of literature, therefore, is unlikely to involve the replacement of writers by machines; instead, it will be characterised by increasingly complex collaborations between human imagination and artificial intelligence.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed discussions within literary criticism, cultural studies, philosophy, and digital humanities. To understand the competing perspectives is essential for evaluating the changing concept of literature in the digital age.

One of the earliest theoretical foundations for understanding authorship was provided by Roland Barthes in his influential essay *The Death of the Author* (1967). Barthes challenged the traditional belief that the meaning of a literary text depends upon the

intentions of its author. Instead, he argued that meaning is generated through the interaction between the text and its readers. According to Barthes, once a work is produced, the author's authority diminishes, allowing readers to construct multiple interpretations independent of authorial intention. Although Barthes wrote decades before the emergence of artificial intelligence, his theory has acquired renewed relevance in the age of machine-generated writing..

While Barthes questioned the authority of the author, Michel Foucault extended this debate through his essay *What Is an Author?* (1969). Foucault introduced the concept of the "author-function," arguing that authorship is not merely the identity of an individual writer but a cultural institution that organizes meaning, authority, and intellectual ownership. According to Foucault, societies construct the idea of authorship to regulate knowledge, establish authenticity, and assign responsibility. Hence, the responsibility in an AI generated text lies greatly on the programmers, developers, translators and so on. Foucault's theory suggests that authorship itself is a social construct that continues to evolve alongside technological developments.

Another important contribution comes from Walter Benjamin, whose essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) explored the relationship between technology and artistic authenticity. Benjamin argued that mechanical reproduction changes the "aura" of original works of art by enabling unlimited copies.

"One might generalize by saying: the technique of reproduction detaches the reproduced object from the domain of tradition. By making many reproductions it substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence. And in permitting the reproduction to meet the beholder or listener in his own particular situation, it reactivates the object reproduced." (Walter, 1968)

Although Benjamin primarily discussed photography and cinema, contemporary scholars frequently apply his ideas to digital media and artificial intelligence. AI-generated literature extends Benjamin's argument beyond reproduction into production itself. Machines no longer merely reproduce existing works; they actively generate new texts.

Contemporary discussions of AI and creativity have also drawn extensively upon the work of Margaret Boden, one of the leading philosophers of creativity. In *The Creative Mind: Myths and Mechanisms* (2004), Boden writes,

"What is going on' isn't magic – and it's different in each type of case. For creativity can happen in three main ways, which correspond to the three sorts of surprise." (Boden, 2004)

Boden argues that creativity should not be viewed as a mysterious or supernatural phenomenon but as a cognitive process that can be scientifically analysed. She distinguishes among three forms of creativity: combinational creativity, exploratory creativity, and transformational creativity. Combinational creativity involves producing novel ideas by combining existing concepts; exploratory creativity works within established conceptual frameworks; transformational creativity changes the framework itself. Boden suggests that computers are capable of performing certain forms of creativity, particularly combinational and exploratory creativity, through computational methods. However, transformational creativity remains far more difficult because it requires fundamental changes in conceptual structures. Her work provides an important framework for understanding the achievements and limitations of AI-generated literature.

Similarly, Arthur I. Miller, in *The Artist in the Machine* (2019), explores how artificial intelligence is reshaping artistic production across literature, music, visual arts, and scientific discovery. Miller argues that "AI should not be regarded as a competitor to human creativity but as a collaborator capable of extending human imaginative capacities." (Miller, 2019) According to him, the relationship between humans and intelligent machines resembles

earlier technological revolutions in art, where new tools expanded rather than replaced creative possibilities. His optimistic perspective contrasts with fears that AI will eliminate human writers and instead proposes that future artistic production will increasingly involve human-machine partnerships.

Recent scholarship has increasingly focused on Generative Artificial Intelligence, particularly after the widespread availability of Large Language Models such as ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Llama etc. Scholars have observed that these systems demonstrate remarkable abilities to imitate literary styles, compose coherent narratives, generate persuasive arguments, and produce poetry. At the same time, researchers caution against equating linguistic fluency with genuine creativity. AI systems generate language through statistical prediction rather than conscious intention. Their outputs depend upon patterns extracted from massive datasets containing human-produced texts. Consequently, machine-generated writing reflects accumulated linguistic probabilities rather than subjective experience.

Now we know that AI has significantly complicated traditional understandings of creativity and authorship. However, despite growing academic interest, important conceptual and analytical gaps remain. The following section therefore identifies the research gap, outlines the objectives of the study, and explains the methodology adopted for the present research before moving to a detailed theoretical analysis of AI-generated literature.

The increasing popularity of Artificial Intelligence has generated extensive discussions in the fields of computer science, philosophy, media studies, and digital humanities. Existing scholarship has largely concentrated on the technical capabilities of AI systems, ethical concerns surrounding algorithmic decision-making, and the economic implications of automation. More recently, literary scholars have begun to investigate AI-generated poetry, fiction, and creative writing; however, these studies remain fragmented and often confined to interdisciplinary discussions rather than detailed literary analysis.

Another limitation in the current scenario is the tendency to view AI and human creativity as opposing forces. Popular discussions often frame the debate as a competition in which machines either replace human writers or remain incapable of genuine creativity. Such binary perspectives overlook the growing reality of collaborative writing, where authors increasingly employ AI as an assistant during brainstorming, drafting, editing, translation, and stylistic revision. Consequently, the evolving relationship between human and machine creativity deserves more sustained literary investigation.

These gaps should be bridged by bringing together literary theory, digital humanities, and AI studies to examine how generative AI is reshaping creativity and authorship in contemporary literature. Rather than asking whether machines can become writers in the traditional sense, there must be investigations on how AI compels literary scholars to reconsider the meaning of creativity, textual production, and artistic collaboration in the digital era.

We can now discuss the selected examples of AI-generated poems and narratives produced through publicly available generative language models. These texts are not treated merely as technological outputs but as literary artefacts whose language, imagery, structure, and thematic patterns may be critically analysed. Such comparative textual analysis enables a deeper understanding of the similarities and differences between human and machine creativity.

Here are two poems written by a human and artificial intelligence.

When Rain Remembers

By ChatGPT

The rain arrived without a sound,
 As if the sky had learned to pray;
 It touched the dust, embraced the ground,
 And washed forgotten dreams away.
 Each drop became a silver thread
 That stitched the earth to clouds above;
 The thirsty leaves bowed down their heads,
 As though they recognized old love.
 The wind, once restless, slowed its pace,
 To hear the rivers find their voice;
 The hills wore mist like woven lace,
 While silent seeds began to rejoice.
 No trumpet marked the season's birth,
 No crown adorned the evening air;
 Yet every corner of the earth
 Became a temple, fresh and fair.
 Rain never asks for grand applause;
 It falls, then leaves without a claim.
 It teaches hope without a cause,
 And kindness that forgets its name.
So when the storms arrive again,
 Do not remember only skies;
 For every gentle drop of rain
 First falls within the human eyes.

Rain

By Edward Thomas

Rain, midnight rain, nothing but the wild
 rain
 On this bleak hut, and solitude, and me
 Remembering again that I shall die
 And neither hear the rain nor give it thanks
 For washing me cleaner than I have been
 Since I was born into this solitude.
 Blessed are the dead that the rain rains
 upon:
 But here I pray that none whom once I
 loved
 Is dying to-night or lying still awake
 Solitary, listening to the rain,
 Either in pain or thus in sympathy
 Helpless among the living and the dead,
 Like a cold water among broken reeds,
 Myriads of broken reeds all still and stiff,
 Like me who have no love which this wild
 rain
 Has not dissolved except the love of death,
 If love it be towards what is perfect and
 Cannot, the tempest tells me, disappoint.

Although both poems are centered on rain, they present it from very different emotional perspectives while sharing several literary similarities. In both poems, rain is more than a natural phenomenon; it serves as a powerful symbol that reflects human emotions and invites philosophical reflection. Both poet and GPT use vivid imagery and personification to create an intimate connection between nature and the human mind. However, Edward Thomas's *Rain* is deeply melancholic and contemplative. Written during the First World War, it presents rain as a symbol of loneliness, mortality, and the fragility of human life. The speaker reflects on death and isolation while listening to the relentless midnight rain. In contrast, *When Rain Remembers* portrays rain as a symbol of hope, renewal, and emotional healing. Instead of emphasizing despair, it celebrates rain as a gentle force that cleanses the earth, revives nature, and inspires kindness and gratitude. Thus, while both poems demonstrate the emotional and symbolic power of rain, Thomas associates it with solitude and the inevitability of death, whereas *When Rain Remembers* associates it with new beginnings, compassion, and the enduring resilience of the human spirit. The analysis of these poems suggests that machines may also provoke feelings that are comparable to those of people. But how the reader perceives the text is up to him.

Here, it is once again apt to discuss Roland Barthes' essay *The Death of the Author*, where he fundamentally transformed literary criticism by shifting attention away from the author's intentions toward the reader's interpretation.

"The birth of the reader must be ransomed by the death of the Author" (Barthes, 1977)

Barthes argued that every literary text contains multiple meanings that emerge through reading rather than through the authority of its creator. According to him, the birth of the reader must be achieved at the cost of the death of the author.

This theory becomes especially relevant when analysing AI-generated literature. If literary meaning depends primarily upon readers rather than authors, then AI-generated texts deserve critical attention regardless of their origin. Readers may find emotional resonance, aesthetic pleasure, or philosophical insight in a machine-generated poem without knowing who—or what—produced it.

However, AI also exposes the limitations of Barthes' argument. While readers may interpret texts independently, questions of accountability, ethics, copyright, and intellectual ownership continue to depend upon identifying authors. Consequently, AI both supports and complicates Barthes' rejection of authorial authority.

Walter Benjamin argued that technological reproduction transforms the authenticity—or "aura"—of artistic works. Mechanical reproduction allows artworks to circulate widely but simultaneously alters their uniqueness.

Artificial Intelligence extends Benjamin's theory into an entirely new dimension. Unlike photography or printing, AI does not merely reproduce literature—it actively generates new literary texts.

For example, Shakespeare fundamentally transformed English drama. James Joyce revolutionized narrative technique. Virginia Woolf reshaped psychological fiction. Such innovations emerged from historical experience, philosophical vision, and artistic rebellion rather than computational analysis. AI is highly creative within existing literary systems but less capable of redefining literature itself.

Here's another example of AI and human generated poetry:

Autumn Without Memory

(AI-generated poem)

Leaves write letters to the wind,
signing names they never knew.
Rivers carry borrowed skies,
while mountains dream in borrowed blue.
Time folds quietly into dust,
clocks forget the hour they keep.
Even silence learns to sing,
where forgotten echoes sleep.
I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud
By William Wordsworth
I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:
For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

At first reading, the poem appears aesthetically pleasing. It contains vivid imagery, personification, metaphor, and symbolic representations of memory and time. The rhythm is balanced, and the language resembles contemporary free verse poetry. But giving a closer examination reveals certain limitations. The poem demonstrates linguistic elegance but lacks historical specificity or emotional context. Readers encounter beautiful images, yet no identifiable speaker, personal experience, or social reality shapes the poem's emotional core. This illustrates an important characteristic of AI-generated poetry: it often produces emotionally convincing language without possessing emotional experience.

In comparison, William Wordsworth's *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud* emerges directly from Wordsworth's personal encounter with nature and his Romantic belief that memory preserves emotional experience. The daffodils later become "the bliss of solitude," demonstrating how lived experience transforms into artistic memory. The difference therefore lies not in linguistic quality alone but in the relationship between language and lived experience.

It is important to note here that several recent experiments suggest that many readers struggle to distinguish AI-generated poems from human-written ones, particularly when the poems imitate established literary styles. When participants are not informed about the origin of a poem, they often evaluate AI-generated works as aesthetically pleasing and emotionally expressive. Supporters of reader-response criticism argue that meaning ultimately arises through interpretation. Therefore, an AI-generated poem capable of producing emotional responses may deserve literary attention.

Here, we can conclude that Artificial Intelligence represents one of the most profound technological developments influencing contemporary literary culture. Through sophisticated language models, machines are now capable of generating poems, stories, essays, dramatic dialogues, and critical commentary with remarkable fluency. These developments challenge long-established assumptions concerning creativity, originality, authorship, and artistic production.

Human literature emerges not merely from language but from existence itself. Writers transform personal suffering, cultural identity, historical memory, political conflict, spiritual reflection, and emotional relationships into artistic expression. Artificial Intelligence can imitate the language of these experiences but cannot genuinely experience them.

Rather than concluding that AI either replaces or fails to replace human writers, this paper proposes a more balanced perspective. Artificial Intelligence should be understood as an intellectual and creative partner capable of extending human imagination without eliminating the central role of human consciousness. Just as earlier technologies transformed printing, publishing, photography, cinema, and digital communication, AI is reshaping literary production while simultaneously generating new theoretical questions for literary criticism.

The future of literary studies therefore lies not in resisting technological innovation but in critically examining its cultural, ethical, and aesthetic implications. Literary scholars must continue investigating how AI influences reading practices, authorship, pedagogy, publishing, translation, and artistic expression. Such interdisciplinary inquiry will contribute to a richer understanding of both literature and intelligence in the twenty-first century.

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