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Artificial Intelligence and the Changing Concept of Authorship in Contemporary Literature

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Abstract— *The development of artificial intelligence (AI), particularly generative AI, is changing how literary texts are created, interpreted, and attributed. Traditionally, authorship has been associated with human imagination, individual experience, creativity, and intellectual expression. However, AI systems can now generate poems, stories, dialogues, and other literary forms, challenging established ideas about originality and creative ownership. This paper examines the changing concept of authorship in contemporary literature through a qualitative, conceptual approach based on secondary sources. Drawing on the literary theories of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault, alongside contemporary research on generative AI, the study analyses human-AI collaboration, originality, literary ownership, and ethical responsibility. The analysis suggests that AI does not necessarily eliminate human authorship but complicates it by introducing different levels of technological participation. The paper proposes a framework of accountable collaborative authorship based on creative intention, creative control, transformative contribution, and accountability. It concludes that literary studies must reconsider traditional definitions of authorship while recognising the importance of human judgement, transparency, and responsibility in AIassisted literary production.*

Keywords— ***Artificial intelligence, authorship, contemporary literature, generative AI, literary creativity, originality, human-AI collaboration.***

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature has traditionally been considered a form of human expression through which writers communicate their thoughts, emotions, experiences, imagination, and understanding of society. The author has occupied a central position in the creation of poems, novels, short stories, and plays. Although literary criticism has questioned the relationship between authors and textual meaning, the human writer has generally remained central to discussions of literary production.

The development of generative artificial intelligence has introduced new possibilities for literary creation. AI systems can generate narratives, poems, dialogues, and alternative expressions in response to user instructions. Writers can use these systems to develop characters, revise passages, explore themes, and experiment with narrative structures. However, these developments raise an important question: who should be considered the author when a literary work results from interaction between a human writer and an AI system?

The answer depends partly on the nature of the contribution. A writer who uses AI for grammatical correction contributes differently from someone who publishes an almost entirely AI generated story. Between these situations are numerous forms of collaboration involving human planning, machine generated language, selection, revision, and editorial judgement.

Earlier literary theories provide useful foundations for understanding this development. Barthes (1977) challenged the assumption that the author's intention determines a text's meaning, while Foucault (1977) examined authorship as a cultural and institutional function. Contemporary research further explores the relationship between AI, creative

writing, and perceptions of authorship (Formosa et al., 2025).

This paper examines how artificial intelligence is changing the concept of authorship in contemporary literature and proposes a framework for understanding human creative contribution in AI assisted writing.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study has the following objectives:

1. To examine the traditional concept of authorship in literary theory.
2. To analyse the influence of AI on literary creativity and writing practices.
3. To investigate the changing relationship between human authors and AI generated texts.
4. To examine questions of originality, ownership, and ethical responsibility.
5. To propose a conceptual framework for understanding authorship in AI assisted literature.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopts a qualitative, conceptual, and critical research design. It is based on secondary sources, including scholarly books, journal articles, literary theories, and institutional publications concerning AI and copyright.

The analysis focuses on five themes: traditional authorship, human-AI collaboration, originality, literary ownership, and ethical responsibility. Established theories of authorship are compared with contemporary research on generative AI to identify conceptual developments and continuing challenges.

The study does not use primary survey data or statistical testing. Its contribution is theoretical and interpretive, and the proposed framework requires further empirical examination.

IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Barthes (1977), in *The Death of the Author*, challenges the idea that the author's intention should be the final authority on a text's meaning. He emphasizes the role of language and readers in producing literary interpretation. This perspective is relevant to AI generated literature because a text may produce meaningful interpretations even when its production differs from conventional human writing. However, Barthes's theory concerns literary interpretation rather than legal ownership.

Foucault (1977), in *What Is an Author?*, explains that authorship performs a cultural and institutional function. An author's name influences how texts are classified, circulated, interpreted, and recognised. This perspective helps explain why identifying authorship remains important even when AI participates in producing a text.

Hayles (2008) examines the relationship between literature and digital technologies, demonstrating how technological environments influence literary production and interpretation. Generative AI extends this relationship because technology can contribute directly to the language of a literary work.

Bender et al. (2021) examine the limitations and potential harms of large language models, including concerns about training data, bias, and the relationship between fluent language and meaning. Their work encourages a distinction between the production of convincing language and the possession of human experience or intention.

Lund and Naheem (2024) investigated AI authorship policies in leading academic journals, highlighting the need for clearer distinctions between AI assistance and human authorship. Although their study concerns academic publishing, its findings are relevant to broader discussions of attribution.

Formosa et al. (2025) examined perceptions of authorship, creativity, responsibility, and disclosure in AI-assisted creative writing. Their findings indicate that the degree of AI assistance influences judgements about human authorship and creative contribution.

Research gap: Existing scholarship addresses authorship theory, technological creativity, institutional policies, and perceptions of AI-generated writing from different perspectives. This study connects these areas to develop a conceptual framework that considers creative intention, control, transformation, and accountability together.

V. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE CHANGING CONCEPT OF AUTHORSHIP

5.1 Transformation of the Traditional Author

Traditionally, the author has been understood as the person who develops an idea and transforms it into a literary work through imagination, language, and personal judgement. Generative AI complicates this understanding because it can produce substantial portions of a text.

Consider three situations. First, a novelist uses AI to correct grammatical errors while retaining control over the story. Second, a poet uses AI-generated metaphors but substantially revises them. Third, an individual publishes an AI-generated poem with minimal modification.

These situations involve different degrees of human contribution. Therefore, AI use should not automatically be treated as either the complete loss or the unquestionable preservation of human authorship. The writer's role must be evaluated according to the nature of the creative decisions made during production.

The author may increasingly function as a planner, selector, editor, and evaluator of textual material rather than as the sole producer of every sentence.

5.2 Human-AI Collaboration and Creativity

Generative AI can support writers by suggesting narrative structures, developing fictional dialogue, producing alternative expressions, and helping overcome creative difficulties. Such assistance may encourage experimentation and provide new directions for literary work.

Nevertheless, generated language does not automatically possess literary value. A passage may be grammatically correct but inconsistent with a character, theme, or narrative purpose. Human judgement remains important in selecting and revising material.

AI can also influence a writer's style. Repeated reliance on generated suggestions may encourage familiar patterns of expression and reduce experimentation if the writer accepts outputs without critical evaluation.

Consequently, human-AI collaboration should be understood as an interaction between technological capabilities and human creative judgement. Its literary significance depends on how the writer directs, evaluates, and transforms the generated material.

5.3 Originality and Literary Value

Originality is a central element of literary evaluation. It may involve distinctive language, new ideas, imaginative perspectives, or the transformation of existing material.

AI complicates this concept because it generates text through computational processes learned from large collections of data. An output may appear novel, but novelty alone does not establish the same kind of creative intention associated with human writing.

Three dimensions are particularly relevant. Linguistic originality concerns distinctive expression. Conceptual originality concerns the ideas and perspectives developed in a work. Transformative originality concerns how material is selected, rearranged, and revised to create a new literary expression.

These dimensions demonstrate that AI involvement does not automatically eliminate originality. Equally, the production of fluent text does not automatically establish significant literary innovation.

The literary value of an AI-assisted work must be examined through its language, structure, themes, relationship to existing literature, and creative development.

5.4 Readers and the Interpretation of AI Literature

The changing concept of authorship also affects the relationship between writers and readers. Following Barthes (1977), literary meaning cannot be reduced entirely to authorial intention. Readers interpret texts through their experiences, cultural knowledge, and engagement with language.

An AI-generated poem may therefore evoke powerful responses even when its production does not involve human lived experience in the conventional sense.

However, knowledge of AI involvement may influence readers' perceptions. Some readers may value a work because they believe it expresses an author's personal experiences, while others may concentrate on its language and literary qualities.

This distinction separates two questions: whether a text produces literary meaning and who deserves authorship recognition. The existence of meaningful interpretation does not, by itself, resolve questions of attribution or ownership.

5.5 Authorship, Copyright, and Ethical Responsibility

Authorship and copyright are related but distinct concepts. Authorship concerns creative contribution and attribution, whereas copyright concerns legal rights under the applicable legal system.

The United States Copyright Office (2025) explains that copyright protection depends on sufficient human authorship. Its report distinguishes between AI used as an assistive tool and AI-generated material over whose expressive elements a human has insufficient creative control. These conclusions concern United States law and should not automatically be applied to other jurisdictions.

Ethical responsibility also remains important. AI systems may generate inaccurate information, stereotypical representations, or culturally inappropriate material. Writers who publish such content must consider the implications of their editorial decisions.

Transparency about AI involvement can help readers and publishers understand the production process. However, disclosure requirements may vary depending on the extent of AI assistance and the policies of the relevant publisher or institution.

Responsible literary practice therefore requires appropriate attribution, critical evaluation of generated material, and attention to the legal and ethical circumstances of publication.

VI. PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ACCOUNTABLE COLLABORATIVE AUTHORSHIP

Based on the preceding discussion, this study proposes a framework called Accountable Collaborative Authorship. It explains AI-assisted authorship through four dimensions:

1. Creative intention: The writer establishes the purpose, theme, perspective, and intended effect of the literary work.
2. Creative control: The writer directs the process and makes meaningful decisions concerning language, structure, and narrative development.
3. Transformative contribution: The writer selects, revises, rearranges, or substantially transforms AI-generated material.
4. Accountability and transparency: The writer takes responsibility for the published work and discloses AI involvement where appropriate.

The proposed framework can be represented as follows:

Generative AI → Human-AI Interaction → Human Creative Intervention → Literary Work → Evaluation of Authorship

The final evaluation considers creative intention, control, transformation, and accountability.

The framework does not suggest that every dimension carries equal importance in every case. Nor does it establish a universal legal test for authorship. Instead, it provides a conceptual tool for analysing differences between editing assistance, substantial collaboration, and the publication of largely AI-generated texts.

Its central argument is that authorship should be evaluated by examining the creative process rather than simply asking whether AI was used.

VII. MAJOR FINDINGS

The conceptual analysis produces the following findings:

1. Authorship is a multidimensional concept involving creative contribution, attribution, and responsibility.
2. Generative AI changes literary production by contributing language, narrative suggestions, and alternative expressions.
3. Human authorship can remain significant when writers exercise meaningful creative control over AI-assisted works.
4. The degree of human contribution matters when evaluating originality and authorship.
5. Literary meaning and legal ownership are separate questions.
6. Transparency and critical evaluation are important for responsible AI-assisted writing.
7. The proposed framework offers a basis for future empirical research into different forms of human-AI collaboration.

These findings arise from theoretical analysis rather than primary statistical investigation.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Artificial intelligence is changing the production and evaluation of contemporary literature. Generative AI can contribute to drafting, revision, narrative development, and stylistic experimentation, challenging traditional assumptions about the author as the sole producer of a literary text.

However, the development of AI does not necessarily make human authorship irrelevant. Instead, it requires a more careful examination of how creative contribution is distributed between writers and technological systems.

Barthes's theory highlights the distinction between authorial intention and literary meaning, while Foucault demonstrates that authorship also depends on cultural and institutional practices. Contemporary AI research extends these discussions by raising questions about originality, attribution, and responsibility.

The proposed framework of Accountable Collaborative Authorship emphasises creative intention, creative control, transformative contribution, and accountability. It provides a conceptual basis for examining different forms of AI-assisted literary production without treating all uses of AI as equivalent.

Ultimately, the future of literary authorship will depend not only on the ability of AI systems to generate language but also on how writers, readers, critics, publishers, and legal institutions evaluate creative contribution. Contemporary literary studies must therefore remain open to technological experimentation while preserving critical attention to originality, literary meaning, and human responsibility.

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