**Knowledgeable Research (KR) 2026, Special Vol. (05): 03**
**ISSN: 2583-6633, CODEN: KRABAU**
**International open-access peer-reviewed refereed monthly journal**
**https://knowledgeableresearch.com/index.php/1**

# Reconsidering Literary Authorship in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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***Abstract:***
*The rapid development of artificial intelligence has significantly impacted the field of literary creation. It raises important questions of authorship, originality, and the ownership of creative works. Traditionally, authorship has been seen as an act that can only be performed by people, closely linked to their individual intentions but also creative imaginings and cultural experiences. However, AI–generated texts, while immediately recognisable as human writing in form and content, break this old view. The paper studies how collaboration between human beings and machines redefines creative authority in the era of artificial intelligence. Using key literary theories such as Roland Barthes' "Death of the Author" concept and Michel Foucault's "What Is an Author?" exploration of the author–function, this study situates AI within existing debates rather than regarding it as one radical break. It argues that AI is not a replacement for the human author but a tool to be directed by human intentions, choices of topics and interpretations. By analysing individual instances of AI–assisted literary creation and critical discussion, the study draws attention to the ever–changing boundaries between human creativity and algorithmic performance. In the end, the paper suggests that authorship in the digital age is a shared and evolving process, influenced by the mediation of technology, the surrounding cultural environment, and human agency.*

***Keywords****: Artificial Intelligence, Literary Authorship, Literary Theory, Digital Humanities, Human-Machine Collaboration.*

**Received:** 11 December 2025
**Accepted:** 24 January 2026
**Published:** 30 January 2026
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## Introduction

In the study of literary works, the problem of authorship is a long-standing issue. For hundreds of years, the author has been the lone origin of meaning, creativity, and originality in a literary text. Thus, literary works were often read as a communal record of an individual writer's thoughts, emotions and experiences; experiences which on the whole were shared by people throughout their generation, regardless of how different these may have been due to varying circumstances. While the Age of AI has begun to undermine the idea that Man is the source of all things literary. With its capacities for generating poems, short stories, and essays, even critical articles about literature, now an area once sacred to humans is being entered by it. Based on this ominous technological change, scholars of literature will have to revise their ideas concerning authorship and ownership of textual material in contemporary literature. AI-based systems have been more frequently used to produce AI-generated texts as realistic as human writing in tone, structure and style. This raises fundamental questions: Who is the author of an AI-generated literary work? Is it the machine, the programmer, or the human user who guides and edits the output? Even more, these questions are not raised in isolation, but bear deep relations to earlier literary theories. Already long

before the arrival of AI, thinkers like Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault questioned the centrality of the author. Barthes proposed the 'death of the author'. This concept shifted attention from authorial intention to the role of the reader. Foucault's thought on the 'author-function' treated authorship as a cultural and institutional phenomenon rather than an exclusively personal matter. Artificial Intelligence breathes new life into these theories.

From the perspective of Digital Humanities, AI is a powerful tool that revolutionises both the methods and range of literary research. The DH approach has attracted attention to technology in a broader perspective, for example, to the large-scale analysis of texts, patterns and themes. Performing creative production itself is carried out by AI. This new twist was anticipated in 1997. Instead of treating AI as a substitute for human writers, many scholars now see it as on the one hand, Human-Machine Collaboration, on the other hand, an inextricable part of other communication forms undergoing innovative evolution. It is human beings that give direction, choose outputs and unpack meaning within these partnerships. This makes a nonsense of the anxious prediction that machines will take human authorship to the next step. Rather, there is potential for job redefinition, as AI enables the transformation of creative functions into roles that are more structured and amenable to technological collaboration. This is the centrepiece of the question of AI and authorship. Creativity has often been viewed as an expression of imagination, emotion, and human experience, traits that have always been thought to be beyond machines. But AI systems generate texts by analysing huge corpora of pre-existing literature, which begs the question of Originality. AI, say critics, is nothing more than a copycat, generating unoriginal work by mimicking patterns. Advocates, for their part, note that human creativity itself rests heavily on imitation, influence, and adaptation. Seen in this way, texts generated by AI might be seen as a part of a continuum or "creativity spectrum," not a challenge to or replacement of human imagination.

The emergence of AI in the realm of Contemporary Literature forces writers, critics and readers to question long-held beliefs about what it means to possess a text. With the advent of AI, authorship should be considered less a solitary human endeavour and more a process mediated by technology, culture, and interpretation. Therefore, even if it can partly justify the persistence of human creativity at a time when it seems increasingly threatened by Artificial Intelligence, to reconsider the issue of authorship should not be seen in this way, but rather as enlarging the scope of what human literature production and value in the digital era is about. The resulting research will contribute an idealised, grounded, and open contribution of authorship, alongside a discussion about intellectual machines, by engaging with Literary Theory, Digital Humanities, and new creative practices.

The concerns raised in the contemporary discussion of authorship and Artificial Intelligence find an important theoretical parallel in Walter Benjamin's reflections on technological reproduction. AI challenges traditional ideas of creativity, originality, and the central authority of the author by reshaping how literary texts are produced and circulated. Benjamin's observation that mechanical reproduction leads to the "withering" of the aura of the work of art helps illuminate this shift. Just as mechanical reproduction detached art from its unique position within ritual and tradition, AI-generated and AI-assisted literary texts further distance literature from the notion of a singular, original creator. In the age of Artificial Intelligence, literary works are no longer solely anchored in an individual author's intention but are shaped by algorithms, datasets, and reader interaction. This transformation fundamentally alters the relationship between the work, the creator, and the audience, echoing Benjamin's insight into changing modes of

cultural production. By extending Benjamin's argument to the digital and algorithmic age, authorship can be understood not as a fixed origin of meaning but as a fluid process, mediated by technology and collective participation, which aligns with the evolving realities of contemporary literary practice:

"That which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art. The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being embedded in the fabric of tradition. Mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual, and in doing so, it fundamentally alters the relation between the work, the creator, and the audience." (Benjamin 221)

Margaret A. Boden lays the foundation for understanding how Artificial Intelligence functions within literary production through her discussion of machine creativity, which expands on this transformation of authorship and artistic value. If, in the terms of Benjamin, technological mediation changes the relation of the piece, the producer, and the audience, Boden expands that notion, showing that creativity need not be bound to human agency. Via this definition, her statement that computer systems can yield results deemed creative when judged by human standards questions whether imagination and originality are solely human attributes. When it comes to AI-aided writing, creativity arises through the navigation of rules, patterns, and constraint-bound conceptual spaces, processes that mimic, rather than stand in opposition to, human creative strategies. By viewing them as separate, it changes the conversation from whether machines can take the place of a human author to how human and machine creativity can live together and interact. Instead of an independent agent, AI operates as a co-conspirator, opening up new avenues for artistic expression but still reliant on human agency, choice and interpretation. Such an insight solidifies the notion that authorship will further take on a collective and procedural form in an age of Artificial Intelligence, mediated by the ongoing device of human imagination and algorithmic generation.

"Computer systems can exhibit behaviours that would be judged creative if produced by humans. They can generate novel and valuable ideas by exploring conceptual spaces defined by rules and constraints. The question is not whether machines can be creative, but how their creativity differs from human creativity, and how the two may work together." (Boden 30)

Taking this argument further, the posthuman framework of N. Katherine Hayles, especially her research on the increasing incorporation of Artificial Intelligence into literary composition, can provide deep insight into a growing existing landscape. If Boden is right that creative conceptual combinations can arise from the interaction of human imagination and computational system, then the growing porosity of the boundaries between human and machine, as Hayles has recently argued, goes a long way toward explaining why authorship is itself being transformed. Intelligence and creativity do not emerge merely in the human mind, located within a posthuman frame, but through the interactions between biological and technological systems. In contrast to conceptualisations of the author as a discrete, isolated agent, this view of authorship depicts it as a networked process and one that is mediated by tools, machines, and the cultural settings in which writing happens. Rather than mimicking human creativity in AI-assisted writing, the machine is now part of a co-creative space in which ideas are produced, then reworked and reinterpreted. Consequently, the divide between human artistry and algorithmic behaviour becomes more porous, and this leads to the conclusion that twenty-first-century authorship occurs in a collaborative and

dynamic virtual milieu converged with technological mediation:

"In the posthuman view, consciousness is not the essence of human identity but rather an emergent phenomenon. Intelligent machines are not opposed to human life but are continuous with it. The boundaries between human and machine, organism and mechanism, are increasingly porous, making it impossible to maintain rigid distinctions between human creativity and machine intelligence." (Hayles 288)

The ideas presented in this research, together with the theoretical insights of Benjamin, Boden, and Hayles, make it clear that authorship in the age of Artificial Intelligence can no longer be understood through traditional, human-centred definitions alone. Walter Benjamin's notion of the fading "aura" of the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction finds a strong parallel in today's algorithmic culture, where literary texts are no longer bound to a single origin or ritualised form of creation. AI-generated and AI-assisted texts circulate freely, shaped by digital systems that redefine how literature is produced, shared, and valued. In this context, the relationship between the writer, the text, and the reader is transformed, as meaning is no longer anchored solely in the author's intention but emerges through technological and cultural mediation.

Margaret Boden's view of machine creativity further deepens this understanding by showing that creative behaviour can arise from the exploration of conceptual spaces governed by rules and patterns. Rather than diminishing human creativity, AI highlights the structured and combinatory nature of all creative acts. When machines generate literary material, they do so by working within systems of language designed, selected, and interpreted by humans, making creativity a shared process rather than an isolated one. Hayles's posthuman perspective brings these insights together by dissolving the rigid boundary between human and machine. If consciousness and creativity emerge through interaction, then AI becomes part of an extended creative network rather than an external threat. Authorship, in this sense, is no longer a fixed identity but a fluid practice shaped by collaboration between human imagination and technological systems. Ultimately, reconsidering authorship in the age of Artificial Intelligence allows us to move beyond fear and resistance and toward a more inclusive and dynamic understanding of literary creation, one that reflects the complex realities of contemporary digital culture.

**Conclusion**

The increasing use of Artificial Intelligence in the creation of literature has forced many academics and authors to reconsider some of the most basic concepts about authorship, originality, and creativity. This study has demonstrated that this perception of the author as a single, isolated, self-contained bastion of meaning is wholly inadequate in an age where machines are capable of producing, rendering, and reframing literary texts; these texts are then assembled into fully new texts that ultimately immerse the reader through the membrane of the author. By situating the critical responses to digital literature in a historical trajectory of technological mediation, an ongoing process in which tools have material and historical specificity that shapes artistic expression, this paper has argued that digital literature is not old wine in new bottles but a new bottle containing the same old wine. A mechanical reproduction has changed the aura and circulation of art, whereas Artificial Intelligence is changing how texts are produced, published, and read. Instead of removing human agency, AI exposes the very ways creativity is structured by language, tradition, and cultural systems. Having said this, what we have at the end of the day is the outcome of a multiplicity of forces at work, of intention, institutional micro and macro dynamics, possible invisibility of much of the

machinery behind the final published content, and the spectrum of emergent human activities when invoking (representationally framed) written words, some call authorship. This newness of a reconfiguration of authorship should not be understood as a death but as the ever-widening of a creative landscape. As Boden hints at, AI systems effectively write like people, except their conceptual spaces are defined by rules vs intuitive patterns. They may not take away our human ability to be inventive but complement it, pointing to fresh paths for exploration and articulation. A posthuman point of view, which is also the perspective Hayles adopts, makes this point clear as the border between human and machine becomes more porous than ever: creativity is relational, not individualistic. In this co-constructed space, the writer is not just the (polyphonic) producer of discourse, but also a curator, an editor, an interpreter of the material generated by machines. That kind of change encourages a broader conception of literary production, one in which creativity is distributed across networks of humans and smart machines.

In the end, the rethinking of authorship in the age of AI calls for a wider, more inclusive interpretation of authorship. Rather than holding onto strict boundaries in human/non-human pairings, this piece concludes that the nature of authorship is a relational and context-dependent practice, co-shaped by the cultural theory, technology and the sociohistorical context in which it emerges. The future of AI in literature, Heller has a vision for what AI-generated creative output in the future might look like. However, instead of a harbinger of doom for literature, these changes present an opportunity to revitalise it. In their own right, human–machine collaboration may lead literary studies toward a fuller and more organic creativity, one both newly oriented to the realities of digital life and deeply grounded in our old drive to tell stories and create meaning.

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