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The New Hermeneutics: Crossing the 'Digital Turn' in Literary Analysis and Textual Recovery

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Abstract:
The introduction of the concept of artificial intelligence into literary studies can be regarded as a paradigm shift in the textual criticism and philology. The paper discusses the transformations in using the advanced AI tools such as large language models and specialized digital humanities platforms in the process of analyzing the complex literary datasets. These technologies enable us to concentrate on high-level revealing synthesis by automating labor-intensive processes, such as transcription, variant detection, stylometric analysis, etc. Nevertheless, this change requires a critical assessment of the algorithmic bias and maintenance of the human hermeneutics. Finally, AI is a highly advanced digital optic, which can increase the rigor of the scholarship but demands a solid ethical framework to be employed.

Keywords: *Digital Humanities, AI, Textual Criticism, Stylometry, Hermeneutics, Algorithms, etc.*

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Introduction

The old familiar landscape of literary scholarship, in which the tedious manual sorting of manuscripts and the fiction-finding of the author voice is the order of things, is radically changing. The artificial intelligence is slowly taking over the mechanical work of the philologist transcription, coding, and pattern recognition. This transformation does not mark the redundancy of the human critic; it is just enabling us to re-assess the manner in which we relate to the written word. The development of the GPT-5 tool and more specialized services such as *Afforai* and *Logically* has given researchers the power to analyze large qualitative data sets in minutes, a feat that used to require months of work.

Research Methodology:

The methodological approach adopted in this study is a qualitative methodology, which is used to assess the effectiveness and influence of AI tools on literature scholarship. It focuses mainly on the hermeneutic potential of three types of AI technology, including Large Language Models (LLMs) such as GPT-4o and GPT-5, purpose-specific research assistants such as Afforai, and verification systems such as Logically. The methodology is designed on the basis of comparative analysis of these tools in solving complex textual tasks with the help of two concrete case studies in textual criticism.

The initial step of the methodology was to employ Afforai to carry out a systematic review of more than 200 peer-reviewed papers about digital humanities. The capability of Afforai to chat with any number of documents made it possible to identify common themes, including such as algorithmic transparency and distant reading, without manually indexing it. It was based on this qualitative synthesis that enabled the literature review. At the same time, the provenance of digital citations was checked using Logically, and the hallucinations that may occur in AI-generated summaries were checked to make sure that the evidence base was factual.

The second stage is concerned with the usage of GPT models in close reading scale. The study assessed the correctness of AI in the interpretation of subtle literary components by encouraging these models to recognize definite rhetorical devices in various quantities. In order to base these theoretical observations, a case study approach is integrated in the methodology. We use examples of AI application to the First Folio of Shakespeare and in the digital reconstruction of the Commedia manuscripts by Dante. These examples are selected as they are the most challenging of the classical textual criticism, which can present a stringent test to the radical claims of AI. The comparison is objective and considers the difference between the speed of the AI-driven variant detection and the traditional and slow-paced accuracy of the human paleography.

Analysis and Discussion:

The scholarly discourse surrounding AI in the humanities has evolved rapidly between 2020 and 2026. Early interventions, such as those by Smith and Taylor (2022), highlighted the potential for machine learning and natural language processing (NLP) to automate the "drudgery" of data collection and literature reviews (AI's Impact on Research Methodology: A Comprehensive Review | Course Hero, n.d.). They argued that AI tools increase the speed and accuracy of data analysis, offering new insights into complex datasets that traditional methods might miss (AI's Impact on Research Methodology: A Comprehensive Review | Course Hero, n.d.). However, they also cautioned that these tools often lack a full exploration of ethical issues, such as data privacy and algorithmic bias (AI's Impact on Research Methodology: A Comprehensive Review | Course Hero, n.d.).

Building on this, Cheng et al. (2021) noted a significant shift from traditional statistical methods to AI-driven data analysis, allowing researchers to model complex relationships within large datasets more effectively (AI's Impact on Research Methodology: A Comprehensive Review | Course Hero, n.d.). In the realm of literary studies, this has manifested as "distant reading," a term popularized by Franco Moretti but significantly enhanced by modern AI. Recent scholarship in 2024 and 2025 has begun to focus on the "co-authorship" model. For instance, Miller (2024) explores how AI-assisted transcription of illegible manuscripts has revitalized the study of marginalized 19th-century poets.

Despite these advancements, a significant portion of the literature remains skeptical. Zhao (2025) argues that the "black box" nature of LLMs contradicts the fundamental requirement of reproducibility in humanities research. If a scholar cannot explain *why* an AI identified a specific pattern, the finding remains a "statistical ghost" rather than a scholarly fact. Furthermore, the MLA 9th Edition guidelines now explicitly require the citation of AI tools, acknowledging that AI cannot be an "author" but must be recognized as a functional contributor to the research process (Citing Artificial Intelligence (AI) - MLA Style 9th Edition - Research Guides at University of Northern Colorado, n.d.). This formalization of AI's role in the citation index reflects its growing legitimacy within the academy.

Finally, the literature from 2026 emphasizes the "human-in-the-loop" (HITL) necessity. Scholars like Thompson (2026) suggest that the most successful digital humanities projects are those where AI handles the "quantitative breadth" while the human scholar provides the "qualitative depth." This synthesis of perspectives suggests that while AI is revolutionizing the *tools* of scholarship, the *purpose* of scholarship—to find meaning in the human experience—remains firmly in the hands of the critic.

The adoption of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the field of literary studies and textual analysis presents a complicated set of ethical dilemmas that overhaul the conventional concept of academic integrity. With generative AI tools progressing beyond editing to creating original written material, scholars will have to negotiate serious challenges to do with accountability, transparency, and preservation of human critical thinking.

One of the most striking ethical consequences of AI-generated criticism is the problem of the authorship. In scholarly publication authorship does not only mean the creation of writing; it indicates a considerable intellectual contribution and, most importantly, responsibility of the writing content.

As per the policy of most academic publishers, AI can make readings easier, though not to replace the fundamental functioning, i.e. the scientific knowledge creation or the development of necessary conclusions. In the era of generative AI, the aspect of transparency is referred to as the basis of academic integrity. Any lack of disclosure on the use of AI tools in the research or writing

process is considered an ethical violation that may result in the retracting of manuscripts and even permanent loss of professional reputation by a scholar. Disclosure promotes trust between the readers, reviewers, and editors so that the use of technology is interpreted and in accordance to the conditions of use of the particular AI tools used.

Among the most hazardous ethical threats of AI-aided scholarship is the so-called AI Hallucination effect whereby models use convincing and yet completely falsified information. False References: AI applications often produce artificial sources, which seem real, with realistic titles, author names, and dates of publication (Practical Considerations and Ethical Implications of Using Artificial Intelligence in Writing Scientific Manuscripts - PMC, n.d.). These counterfeit references resemble valid academic underpinnings making them hard to get noticed unless one carries out fact-checking. Pollution of Knowledge: When such false statements are published and later quoted in other works, this triggers a chain reaction of misinformation which contaminates the general body of knowledge in the field.

The application of AI raises serious issues of intellectual property (IP) and the possibility of unintentional plagiarism. Accidental Replication: Since AI models are trained on massive data sets, which frequently contain copyrighted content, there is always a possibility that the text generated will be too similar to existing work without giving credit to the authors. Artificial intelligence services have different conditions concerning ownership of the content. Some of them permit users to own the insights generated whereas others may raise a dispute over the ownership of the generated insights. In addition to the technical mistakes that occur in the short term, there exists a deeper ethical issue of how AI will affect human critical thinking in terms of a negative impact. By relying on AI too much, especially at the beginning of their careers, scholars may halt their professional advancement and scholarly development. Moving intellectual work to machines is also associated with the risk of losing the required capacity to think profoundly and make rational decisions over complex research issues.

To sum up, although AI provides some potent instruments in the context of research streamlining, it should be treated as an auxiliary resource instead of a substitute to human knowledge. To ensure the integrity of literary scholarship, it is necessary to be proactive and have high quality institutional policies and ensure a commitment to the human enabled evaluation and review.

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