CAN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BE CONSIDERED AN AUTHOR? A LITERARY AND LINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION OF AUTHORSHIP IN THE AGE OF GENERATIVE AI

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Abstract

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed contemporary writing practices and challenged conventional understandings of creativity, originality, and authorship. This study investigates whether AI-generated poetry can qualify as authorship in the literary sense by combining literary-linguistic textual analysis with reader-response data. Two original poems, "Grief is a Room Without Walls" and "We Named the Moon Ours," were generated using ChatGPT in response to a prompt requesting poetry resembling human-authored literary writing. The poems were analysed qualitatively with attention to structural organization, stylistic consistency, lexical choice, imagery, thematic development, and indicators of intentionality. In addition, 13 participants completed an anonymous online survey examining emotional impact, aesthetic merit, perceived authorship, emotional responses, and attitudes towards AI-generated poetry. The findings indicate that the poems achieved considerable perceived aesthetic and emotional effectiveness. Aesthetic merit received a mean rating of 3.92 out of 5, while 53.9% of participants rated emotional impact at 4 or 5. In judgments of authorship, 46.2% considered the poetry probably or definitely human-authored, 46.2% were uncertain, and only 7.7% identified it as probably AI-generated. Following disclosure of AI authorship, 46.2% reported that the poetry felt less emotionally authentic, while 30.8% reported no change and 23.1% found it more impressive. Furthermore, 76.9% believed that AI can produce emotionally powerful poetry. The findings suggest that generative AI can reproduce recognizable literary conventions and produce linguistically coherent and aesthetically effective poetry, while perceptions of authorship remain strongly associated with human experience, intentionality, and emotional authenticity. The study contributes to literary and linguistic debates by connecting theories of authorship with reader responses and demonstrating how generative AI complicates the distinction between textual production and authorial agency. It further highlights the importance of reader knowledge in evaluating machine-generated literature and suggests that future research should examine genres, larger participant groups, and different AI systems.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Generative AI, ChatGPT, Authorship, Poetry