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Post-Structuralist Critiques of Authorship in Generative Artificial Intelligence Literature

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - This study examines how Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) literature challenges and extends post-structuralist critiques of authorship. It explores how AI-generated texts affect traditional concepts of creativity, originality, intentionality, and authorial authority, and provides a conceptual framework linking post-structuralist theory to algorithmic literary production.
Design/methodology/approach - The study employs a qualitative-interpretive and conceptual research design. It involves critical analysis and theoretical synthesis of post-structuralist concepts, including Barthes' "Death of the Author," Foucault's "author-function," Kristeva's intertextuality, and Wimsatt and Beardsley's intentional fallacy, applied to AI-generated literature.
Findings - Findings indicate that GenAI destabilizes conventional notions of authorship, redistributing creative agency across programmers, algorithms, datasets, corporate platforms, users, and readers. The role of readers is strengthened as active meaning-makers, especially in contexts where authorial intention is absent or unstable. AI-generated literature thus functions as a contemporary materialization of post-structuralist ideas.
Research limitations/implications - The study is theoretical and conceptual; empirical validation through user studies, case analyses, or comparative corpora would strengthen generalizability and practical applicability.
Practical implications - Insights from this study inform literary theory, digital humanities, and AI studies, guiding scholars in critically analyzing authorship, intertextuality, and distributed creativity in algorithmically mediated texts.
Originality/value - This study contributes a contemporary conceptual framework demonstrating how AI-generated literature operationalizes post-structuralist critiques of authorship and redefines reader and institutional roles in textual production.

1. Introduction

Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has become one of the most consequential developments in contemporary literary studies, digital humanities, and cultural theory. Large Language Models (LLMs), including GPT-based and other transformer-driven systems, are increasingly capable of producing poems, short fiction, dramatic scripts, essays, and extended prose that demonstrate fluency, stylistic variation, and narrative coherence. Although these systems are computationally grounded in probabilistic prediction rather than in consciousness, their outputs are often received, interpreted, and evaluated in ways similar to those of human-authored literary texts. This development has generated a fundamental theoretical problem: if literary meaning can emerge from texts produced without lived experience, intention, or self-conscious imagination, then the traditional concept of the author as the privileged source of meaning becomes increasingly unstable (Capella, 2025; Floridi and Chiriatti, 2020).

Historically, literary criticism often linked authorship with originality, creativity, individual consciousness, and expressive power. Romantic theories cast the author as an imaginative genius whose inner life and emotional depth influence the work (Bergel and Abrams, 1954; Isenberg and Abrams, 1954; Wellek and Abrams, 1954). Subsequent critical approaches—such as biographical, psychoanalytic, Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial criticism—also relied, though differently, on the author's identity, ideology, psychology, and socio-historical context as interpretive foundations (Arsene, 2023; Holub and Eagleton, 1985; Tyson, 2019, 2014). This notion is challenged by GenAI literature, since algorithmically created texts do not stem from personal memories, trauma, desires, ideologies, or embodied cultural experiences. Instead, they are generated by computational systems trained on vast text datasets, designed to produce statistically likely language sequences (Bender et al., 2021; Floridi and Chiriatti, 2020; Jandrić, 2024). Therefore, the emergence of GenAI prompts literary scholars to reconsider whether authorship remains a suitable framework for interpreting meaning in algorithmic contexts.

This issue becomes especially relevant when viewed through the lens of post-structuralist theory. Even before GenAI's rise, thinkers such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Julia Kristeva, and Wimsatt and Beardsley challenged traditional author-centered models of interpretation. Barthes' idea of the "Death of the Author" rejected the notion that meaning stems solely from authorial intent, emphasizing instead that textual meaning emerges through reading (Jandrić, 2024; McIlwain, 2007). Foucault's "author-function" view redefined authorship as an institutional role that classifies, manages, and legitimizes discourse, rather than as a natural expression of individual creativity (Alter and Harari, 1980; Foucault, 1979; O'Hara and Harari, 1981; Wood, 2012). Similarly, Kristeva's concept of intertextuality undermined the myth of absolute originality by asserting that each text is shaped by its relationship with other texts (Duncan and Kristeva, 1982; Kristeva, 1980; Kristeva et al.,

1982). Wimsatt and Beardsley's concept of the intentional fallacy questioned the reliability of authorial intention as a foundation for interpretation (Davis and Humphreys, 2024; Dickie and Wilson, 1995; Wimsatt and Beardsley, 2019). These theories provide a solid basis for analyzing GenAI research, as AI-generated texts embody the issues post-structuralism addressed: the fluidity of authorship, the dispersed nature of meaning, and the active role of readers in interpretation.

Despite the growing scholarship on artificial intelligence and textual production, a clear research gap remains in literary theory. Existing studies have examined the technical limitations of LLMs, their ethical risks, and their implications for copyright, authorship attribution, and cultural production (Bender et al., 2021; Bommasani et al., 2021; Gervais, 2022). Other works have addressed AI as a broader cultural and institutional phenomenon, emphasizing issues of power, technological infrastructure, and corporate control (Barros, 2025; Crawford, 2021; Luusua, 2023). However, relatively less attention has been given to how GenAI literature functions as a contemporary materialization of post-structuralist critiques of authorship. In particular, further theoretical clarification is needed on whether AI-generated texts merely confirm post-structuralist claims or also expose new limitations in classical post-structuralist theory, especially regarding algorithmic mediation, distributed agency, intellectual ownership, and platform-based control.

This study investigates how Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) literature challenges traditional post-structuralist notions of authorship by demonstrating how algorithmically generated texts question concepts of creativity, originality, intentionality, and authorial authority (Roland et al., 2025). Recent research indicates that the growing use of GenAI in creative and academic contexts complicates traditional ideas of authorship, creatorship, responsibility, and disclosure, as textual creation can no longer be attributed solely to a human agent (Formosa et al., 2025; Lund and Naheem, 2024). In this setting, the originality of AI-generated works has become a key legal and theoretical concern, especially since such outputs arise from prompt-based interactions, algorithmic recombination, and large-scale patterning rather than autonomous human intent (Mazzi, 2024). The distinctive contribution of this research is to argue that GenAI neither discredits nor negates post-structuralist theory; rather, it offers a modern framework in which post-structuralist ideas are observable in practice (Osmanovic-Thunström and Steingrimsson, 2023). By linking Barthes' "Death of the Author," Foucault's "author-function," Kristeva's intertextuality, and Wimsatt and Beardsley's intentional fallacy to contemporary debates on AI-generated texts, this article enriches discussions in literary studies, digital humanities, and cultural theory. The research is guided by three questions: How do post-structuralist theories of authorship relate to algorithmically produced texts? How does GenAI literature support or contest the concept of the "Death of the Author"? And where does meaning arise when literary works are generated through statistical probabilities rather than conscious intent?

The remaining sections of this article are organized as follows: The second section, Method, describes the qualitative-interpretive research design, the theoretical sources used, conceptual categories, data collection methods, and analytical procedures. The third section, Results, presents the key findings related to GenAI literature, authorship, intentionality, intertextuality, distributed agency, and reader sovereignty. The Discussion section provides an in-depth interpretation of these results within post-structuralist theory and current AI scholarship, highlighting broader theoretical, ethical, and institutional issues. Lastly, the Conclusion summarizes the main contributions, mentions limitations, and proposes directions for future research.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative-interpretive approach based on theoretical and conceptual literary analysis. This method was appropriate because the aim was not to statistically measure variables or determine causal relationships but to explore how Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) literature influences post-structuralist concepts such as authorship, intentionality, originality, intertextuality, and reader interpretation. Qualitative methods are especially useful for examining complex cultural, textual, and theoretical phenomena because they allow in-depth investigation of meaning, context, discourse, and interpretation rather than reducing these aspects to numerical data (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Guba and Lincoln, 2005; Ummah, 2019). In this research, the interpretive approach involved detailed theoretical reading and critical synthesis of key post-structuralist ideas, including Barthes' "Death of the Author," Foucault's "author-function," Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, and Wimsatt and Beardsley's intentional fallacy. These concepts served as analytical tools to evaluate how algorithmically generated texts affect literary criticism. The design also aligns with qualitative textual analysis and document-based inquiry, which focus on systematic engagement with texts, concepts, and discursive formations to identify patterns, tensions, and theoretical insights (Bowen, 2009; Fairclough, 2010; Ji, 2024). Additionally, the study follows the logic of conceptual research, critically examining, re-linking, and extending existing theories to clarify emerging phenomena (Jaakkola, 2020). Overall, this research develops a structured conceptual framework that connects traditional post-structuralist theory with current discussions on GenAI, LLMs, and AI-generated literature.

2.2 Research Site, Population, and Sample

Since this study is primarily theoretical and conceptual, it did not involve a physical research site, a human population, or a statistical sample. Instead, the "site" of inquiry was the discursive and textual field in which post-structuralist theories of authorship intersect with current debates in Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) literature. The analysis mainly drew from two key source categories. The first included foundational texts on authorship, intentionality, intertextuality, and reader interpretation, such as Barthes' concept of the "Death of the Author," Foucault's "author-function," Kristeva's intertextuality theory, and Wimsatt and Beardsley's intentional fallacy (Duncan and Kristeva, 1982; Foucault, 1979; Kristeva, 1980; Wimsatt and Beardsley, 2019). The second category included recent scholarly works on GenAI, large language models, algorithmic text generation, copyright, and digital authorship, particularly studies addressing machine-generated texts, foundation models, computational language generation, and AI-related legal debates (Bender et al., 2021; Bommasani et al., 2021; Floridi and Chiriatti, 2020; Gervais, 2022; Samuelson, 2023b,a). These sources were intentionally chosen because they directly examine the conceptual connections between machine-generated texts, authorship, creativity, ownership, and interpretation. As a result, the analysis focused on theories, academic debates, and arguments rather than specific individuals. This approach allowed for a systematic exploration of how AI-generated texts challenge and broaden post-structuralist perspectives on authorship.

2.3 Research Variables and Instrument Development

Since this study is not designed as a quantitative investigation, it does not employ statistical measures or standardized research tools in a traditional empirical manner. Instead, it utilizes analytical categories and a conceptual framework rooted in post-structuralist literary theory and current studies on generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). The main analytical categories include authorship, author-function, intentionality, intertextuality, reader-response, and distributed agency. Authorship is explored through Barthes' critique of the author as the origin of meaning,

while the author-function is examined through Foucault's view that authorship serves as an institutional and classificatory mechanism rather than merely an individual act of creation (Foucault, 1979). Intentionality is assessed through Wimsatt and Beardsley's concept of the intentional fallacy, which questions reliance on authorial intent as the primary interpretive basis (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 2019). Intertextuality draws on Kristeva's idea that texts are interconnected through their relationships with prior texts, a concept especially relevant to LLM-based text generation (Duncan and Kristeva, 1982; Kristeva, 1980; Kristeva et al., 1982). Reader-response theory is applied to analyze how meaning is shaped through interpretive activity, particularly when AI-generated texts lack conscious authorial intent (Barnouw and Iser, 1979; Crosman and Iser, 1980; Fish, 1982; O'Hara and Iser, 1979). Lastly, distributed agency considers how authorship in GenAI literature is shared among programmers, users, datasets, algorithms, and corporate platforms. These categories serve as core analytical tools, enabling a systematic and reproducible examination of how AI-generated literature challenges, supports, and broadens post-structuralist notions of authorship.

2.4 Data Collection Techniques

This study conducted a conceptual literature review of key primary texts and recent scholarly sources on Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), Large Language Models (LLMs), and post-structuralist authorship theory. Since no fieldwork, interviews, questionnaires, or experiments were conducted, data collection relied on textual and conceptual materials rather than human participants. The main theoretical references included Barthes' "Death of the Author," Foucault's "author-function," Kristeva's intertextuality, and Wimsatt and Beardsley's discussion of the intentional fallacy (Duncan and Kristeva, 1982; Foucault, 1979; Kristeva, 1980; Wimsatt and Beardsley, 2019). These works were selected because they form the foundational concepts for analyzing the instability of authorship, intention, originality, and textual meaning. Secondary sources encompassed recent literature on GenAI, LLMs, AI-generated texts, algorithmic authorship, copyright, and digital cultural production, including works on stochastic parrots, foundation models, GPT-based systems, derivative rights, and legal challenges in generative AI (Bender et al., 2021; Bommasani et al., 2021; Floridi and Chiriatti, 2020; Gervais, 2022; Samuelson, 2023a,b). These sources were identified, read, and categorized according to their relevance to the study's themes: authorship, intentionality, intertextuality, reader-response, author-function, and distributed agency. This systematic process ensured that the selected materials supported the theoretical objectives and enabled an analysis of how AI-generated literature affirms, challenges, and expands post-structuralist critiques of authorship.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The study's data analysis integrated qualitative interpretive analysis, theoretical synthesis, and critical reading. It began by identifying key concepts such as authorship, intentionality, intertextuality, reader-response, algorithmic production, and distributed agency through detailed examination of selected theoretical and contemporary sources. These concepts were then organized by relevance to the research questions, particularly how post-structuralist theories address or complicate the emergence of GenAI literature. Barthes' theory helped analyze the decentering of the author and the emergence of the reader, while Foucault's author-function explored the institutional, legal, and classificatory dimensions of AI-generated texts (Foucault, 1979). Kristeva's intertextuality was applied to interpret the recombinatory nature of LLM-based writing, and Wimsatt and Beardsley's intentional fallacy offered a framework for understanding the lack of conscious authorial intent in machine-produced texts (Duncan and Kristeva, 1982; Kristeva, 1980; Kristeva et al., 1982; Wimsatt and Beardsley, 2019). These theoretical insights were then compared with recent work on GenAI, LLMs, copyright, and digital authorship to identify points of agreement, contradiction, and extension (Bender et al., 2021; Floridi, 2021; Gervais, 2022; Samuelson, 2023a,b). The final step involved synthesizing the findings into interpretive themes that reveal how AI-generated literature either supports, questions, or expands post-structuralist critiques of authorship. Throughout, this process preserved conceptual coherence, transparency, and reproducibility by explicitly connecting textual evidence, theoretical concepts, and current debates.

3. Results

3.1 Generative AI as a Challenge to Traditional Authorship

The analysis suggests that Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) challenges traditional ideas of authorship by producing literary texts without a single human author, deliberate intent, or personal experience. Typically, literary criticism links authorship to creativity, originality, expressive ability, and the author's capacity to shape meaning through purpose and imagination. Yet AI-generated works problematize this view because Large Language Models (LLMs) generate text through computational prediction and pattern recognition rather than through conscious or lived experience (Floridi, 2021). This indicates that coherent, comprehensible AI texts destabilize the notion that literary meaning must originate from an identifiable human creator. Instead, GenAI illustrates that meaning can arise from linguistic structure, intertextual recombination, and reader interpretation.

Without a conscious author, traditional methods such as biographical, psychoanalytic, or intentionalist criticism—which interpret texts as reflections of the author's psychology, ideology, or personal history—become less applicable (Holub and Eagleton, 1985; Tyson, 2019, 2014). In the context of GenAI literature, these approaches are constrained because algorithmic outputs lack biography, unconscious desires, social identity, or memory. Human influence remains, but it is distributed across programmers, datasets, platform infrastructure, and user prompts. Consequently, authorship is reconfigured from an individual act to a distributed, technology-mediated process. This aligns with post-structuralist perspectives that view authorship as unstable, socially constructed, and secondary to the interpretive systems that produce and attribute meaning (Bergel and Abrams, 1954; Isenberg and Abrams, 1954; Wellek and Abrams, 1954).

3.2 The Algorithm as the Ultimate Scripter

The analysis indicates that the system described in GenAI literature aligns with Barthes' concept of the "scripter." From Barthes' post-structuralist view, the scripter differs from a traditional author because it does not serve as the primary source of meaning, intent, or authority. Instead, it exists only during text creation and operates through existing language (Brooker, 2021). GenAI supports this because the algorithm produces literary texts without personal identity, memory, consciousness, or psychological motivation. Its goal is not to express an inner self but to generate linguistic options based on statistical patterns learned from large datasets (Bender et al., 2021; Floridi, 2021; Floridi and Chiriatti, 2020). This makes the algorithm more like the scripter than a human writer because it creates text without claiming biographical authority or control over meaning. Each output responds to a specific prompt and is shaped by model architecture, training data, probabilistic choices, and user input. Consequently, the algorithm functions as a tool for assembling text rather than as an intentional author. This demonstrates that textual creation can occur without subjective authorship. In this sense, GenAI literature shows that writing can be viewed as an act of combining text rather than expressing a single creative mind.

3.3 The Transformation of the Author-Function in AI Literature

The analysis indicates that GenAI literature redefines the concept of the author from an individual creator to a distributed system that includes institutional and technological elements. As Foucault (1979) explains, the author is not merely a biological person who produces a text but a function that classifies and manages discourse by organizing, attributing, owning, and controlling it. This perspective is especially pertinent to AI-generated literature, where the text no longer originates from a single identifiable human. Instead, it involves multiple actors and infrastructure—such as model developers, programmers, platform owners, training datasets, algorithms, and users who input prompts—in the creation process. As a result, identifying "who is the author?" becomes more complicated within traditional literary and legal frameworks.

The findings indicate that GenAI does not eliminate the author-function; rather, it reallocates and broadens it. Normally, in human-created works, the author-function is linked to a single individual whose name signifies ownership, responsibility, and interpretation. In contrast, AI-generated texts distribute this role among multiple layers of agency: the programmer establishes the technical settings for text generation, the corporation oversees the platform and its regulations, the dataset provides initial linguistic input, the algorithm performs the generation, and the user influences the outcome through prompting. This distributed arrangement questions traditional ideas of originality, accountability, and intellectual property. Current debates on AI copyright highlight this change, as legal systems attempt to identify a clear human or institutional owner and responsible party (Gervais, 2022; Samuelson, 2023a,b). Therefore, the author-function persists, but it no longer exists as a single authorial entity; instead, it operates as a networked function shaped by technological, institutional, economic, and interpretative forces.

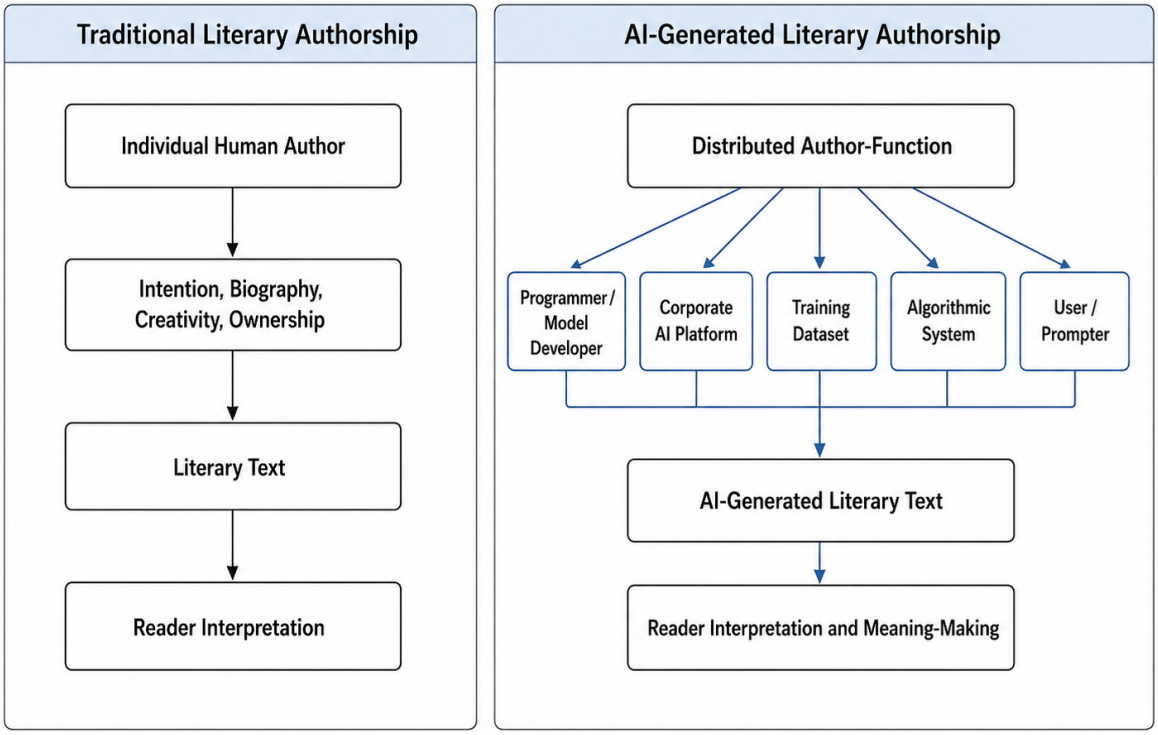

Figure 1. Transformation of the Author-Function in AI-Generated Literature

Figure 1 illustrates the transition from conventional authorship to AI-assisted authorship. Traditionally, the author-function is connected to an individual writer whose intentions, background, creativity, and ownership influence the literary work. Conversely, AI-generated literature involves a dispersed author-function that includes programmers, corporations, datasets, algorithms, and users. This shift indicates that authorship in GenAI literature is now networked, fragmented, and mediated by technology, rather than being singular, stable, or exclusively human.

3.4 The Distribution of Creative Agency among Programmer, Prompter, and Algorithm

The analysis shows that creative agency in GenAI literature is spread across a network of both human and non-human actors, rather than being held by a single author. Unlike traditional literature, where authorship is typically attributed to one person, AI-generated works emerge from the collaboration of programmers, users or prompters, algorithms, training data, and platform structures. This creates a fragmented authorship model, where each actor contributes differently to shaping the final text. Programmers design the technical setup, prompters influence the direction with instructions, and algorithms produce text through probabilistic processes. As a result, creative agency becomes relational, procedural, and technologically mediated, moving away from a purely individual or human-centric view.

Table 1 shows that GenAI authorship isn't solely attributed to the algorithm. While the algorithm produces the final text, its functioning relies on earlier human choices, dataset makeup, interface design, and user prompts. Therefore, the algorithm operates within a broader system of shared agency. This aligns with post-structuralist views that authorship isn't an absolute source of meaning but a constructed role influenced by language, institutions, and technology.

Table 2 illustrates that creative agency in AI-generated literature operates across various levels. Architectural agency precedes textual creation; directive agency initiates the process; operational agency produces the text; intertextual agency provides cultural and linguistic context; and institutional agency manages usage conditions. These types of agency are interconnected and often overlap in the creation of each AI-generated literary piece. This multi-layered model challenges the conventional view that literary creativity is exclusively the domain of a human author.

Table 3 demonstrates how the distribution of creative agency greatly affects authorship theory. In the context of GenAI, the author is no longer viewed as the only source of creativity, intention, ownership, or meaning. Instead, authorship appears as a networked process that involves

Table 1. Main Actors in the Distribution of Creative Agency in GenAI Literature

Actor	Primary Role in Textual Production	Form of Contribution	Relationship to Authorship
Programmer / Model Developer	Designs and develops the technical architecture of the AI system	Determines model structure, training procedures, system parameters, and safety constraints	Functions as an indirect authorial agent by shaping the conditions under which texts can be generated
User / Prompter	Initiates and guides the text-generation process	Provides prompts, revises instructions, evaluates outputs, and selects final responses	Functions as a collaborative agent who influences direction, tone, genre, and thematic focus
Algorithmic System	Performs the immediate generation of text	Produces linguistic sequences through probabilistic prediction and pattern recognition	Functions as an operational scripter without consciousness or intentionality
Training Dataset	Supplies the linguistic and cultural material from which the model learns	Provides textual patterns, genre conventions, stylistic tendencies, and discursive structures	Functions as a collective textual background that indirectly shapes generated outputs
Corporate AI Platform	Regulates access, functionality, and permissible forms of output	Controls interface design, usage policies, moderation systems, and ownership conditions	Functions as an institutional authorial force that governs textual production

Note. GenAI = Generative Artificial Intelligence. This table summarizes the distributed structure of creative agency in AI-generated literary production.

Table 2. Forms of Creative Agency in AI-Generated Literature

Form of Agency	Description	Main Actor(s) Involved	Example in GenAI Literature
Architectural Agency	The capacity to determine the technical conditions of textual generation	Programmer / Model Developer	Designing a model capable of generating poetry, fiction, essays, or dramatic dialogue
Directive Agency	The capacity to guide the content, genre, style, and purpose of generated text	User / Prompter	Requesting a Shakespearean sonnet, a dystopian short story, or a postcolonial narrative
Operational Agency	The capacity to produce the actual linguistic output	Algorithmic System	Selecting words, arranging sentences, and generating coherent narrative sequences
Intertextual Agency	The influence of prior texts and cultural materials embedded in the model's training process	Training Dataset	Recombining stylistic patterns, genre conventions, and thematic structures from existing textual corpora
Institutional Agency	The capacity to regulate, restrict, authorize, or commercialize AI-generated outputs	Corporate AI Platform	Applying content moderation, ownership policies, usage restrictions, and licensing terms

Note. This table illustrates how creative agency in AI-generated literature operates at multiple interconnected levels, distributed among human, technological, textual, and institutional actors.

Table 3. Implications of Distributed Agency for Authorship Theory

Authorship	Traditional Literary Model	GenAI Literary Model	Theoretical Implication
Source of Text	Individual human author	Network of programmer, prompter, algorithm, dataset, and platform	Authorship becomes distributed rather than singular
Intention	Located in the consciousness of the author	Fragmented across user intention, design choices, and algorithmic operation	Authorial intention becomes unstable and difficult to locate
Creativity	Associated with imagination, originality, and personal experience	Produced through recombination, prompting, and probabilistic generation	Creativity becomes procedural and collaborative
Ownership	Usually attached to a named individual or institution	Contested among user, developer, corporation, and public-domain arguments	Legal authorship becomes uncertain and institutionally negotiated
Meaning	Often interpreted through authorial background or intention	Constructed through text, reader, prompt context, and algorithmic mediation	Reader interpretation becomes more central
Accountability	Assigned primarily to the author	Distributed among technical, institutional, and user-level actors	Ethical responsibility becomes collective and layered

Note. GenAI = Generative Artificial Intelligence. This table summarizes how distributed agency transforms authorship from a singular human-centered category into a networked, procedural, and institutionally mediated concept.

human choices, algorithmic steps, textual datasets, and institutional constraints. This perspective supports post-structuralist critiques of the idea of a singular author, while also expanding these concepts into a technological domain that earlier theorists could not have fully anticipated. The programmer, prompter, and algorithm all contribute to the production of literary texts, yet none holds exclusive control over authorship. Therefore, research indicates that GenAI does not remove creative agency, but instead redistributes it within a complex system of textual creation.

3.5 Intertextuality and the Question of Originality in AI-Generated Literature

The analysis shows that AI-generated literature intensifies the post-structuralist view of intertextuality and originality. Traditionally, literary originality is associated with an author's unique imagination, style, and reinterpretation of experiences. Yet, the GenAI literature challenges this by using Large Language Models (LLMs) that generate text from extensive datasets of human-written content (Santini et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). These texts are not entirely original but are produced by recombining, transforming, and probabilistically arranging linguistic patterns, genre conventions, stylistic elements, and themes from the training data. This supports Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, which suggests that every text is a mosaic of prior texts, with meaning arising from the relationships among textual systems rather than from a single, definitive source (Kristeva, 1980).

In GenAI literature, intertextuality becomes more explicit and functional. While human authors also draw on earlier texts, cultural memories, and genre conventions, AI systems make these connections clear through technology. The model does not create literature from personal experience or awareness; instead, it blends texts based on learned patterns from linguistic data. This challenges the Romantic view that originality

depends on individual talent and aligns with the post-structuralist perspective that all writing is relational, derivative, and culturally shaped (Abrams, 1971; Barthes, 1977). However, further analysis indicates that AI intertextuality differs from human intertextuality. Humans engage with texts through consciousness, interpretation, emotion, ideology, and historical context, whereas AI recombines texts computationally. Consequently, AI-generated literature does not eliminate originality but redefines it as a procedural and relational concept. Here, originality is less tied to individual consciousness and more connected to the interaction of prompts, datasets, algorithms, and reader interpretation.

3.6 The Rise of Reader Sovereignty in AI-Generated Texts

The analysis shows that AI-generated literature emphasizes the reader's role as the main creator of meaning. Unlike traditional interpretation, which aims to uncover the author's intentions, biography, ideology, or emotional state to fix meaning, AI texts preclude this approach because they lack a conscious author. The algorithm has no intentions, memories, emotions, or desire to communicate. Therefore, meaning is not linked to an author's consciousness but is built through the reader's interaction with the text.

This observation aligns with Barthes' idea that the "birth of the reader" occurs as the author's authority diminishes (Brooker, 2021). The rise of GenAI-created literature heightens this effect, since the absence of a conscious author renders reader interpretation even more essential. Readers must ascribe coherence, symbolism, emotional depth, and cultural significance to texts generated by statistical models rather than human intention. This aligns with reader-response theory, especially Iser's concept that readers actively fill in gaps in the text and Fish's view that meaning is constructed within interpretive communities (Barnouw and Iser, 1979; Crosman and Iser, 1980; Fish, 1982). In AI-produced texts, this interpretive role is increasingly important because there is no consistent author figure to verify or limit possible interpretations.

The findings also indicate that reader sovereignty in GenAI literature extends beyond just interpreting texts after they are produced. By prompting, readers actively participate in shaping the text through evaluating outputs, modifying prompts, refining stylistic instructions, and choosing the most suitable versions of the generated content. This process diminishes the traditional divide between reader and writer. Readers become not only interpreters of meaning but also co-creators of the text. As a result, AI-generated literature transforms the concept of meaning from being solely the author's intent to a collaborative and interactive process. In this context, meaning arises from the ongoing interaction among prompts, algorithmic outcomes, textual structure, and reader responses.

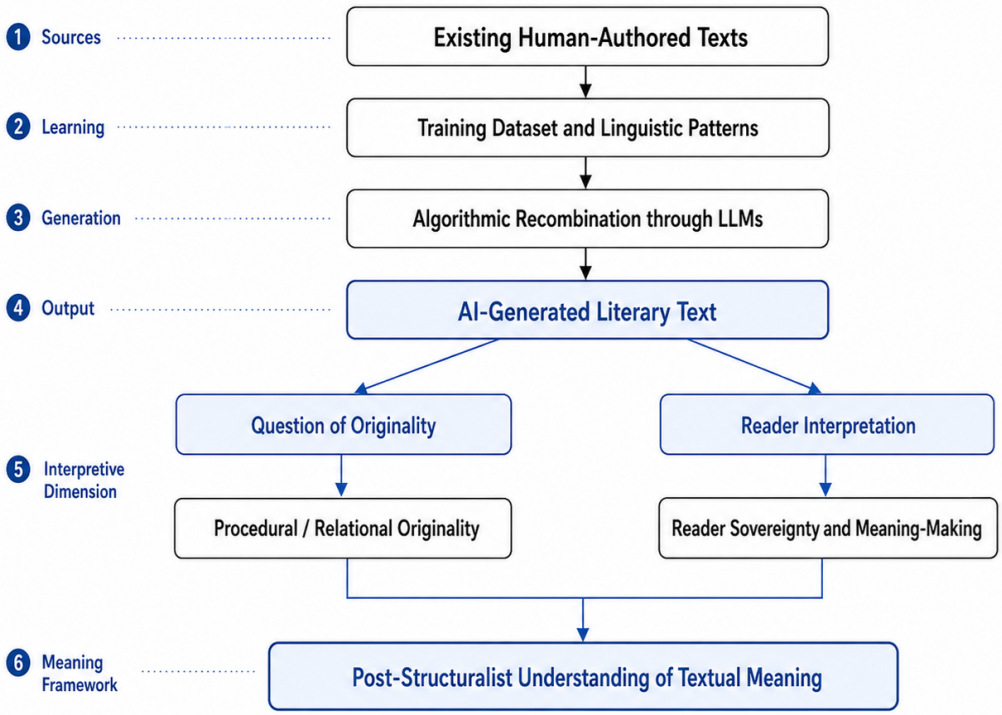

Figure 2. Intertextuality, Originality, and Reader Sovereignty in AI-Generated Literature

Figure 2 illustrates how AI-generated literature intertwines intertextuality, originality, and reader sovereignty. Human-authored texts are incorporated into the system through training datasets and linguistic patterns. The system's algorithms, based on large language models, then reassemble these materials to produce AI-created literary works. This leads to two important theoretical implications: first, it questions the notion of originality, as the output is shaped by prior texts and algorithmic recombination; second, it empowers reader sovereignty, since meanings are not determined by a single conscious author. These outcomes support a post-structuralist perspective that textual meaning is relational, interpretive, and shared, rather than fixed, intentional, or author-centric.

4. Discussion

The results show that the literature on Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) applies post-structuralist ideas by making certain claims observable that were previously mainly conceptual. AI-produced texts emphasize the fluidity of authorship, the relational aspect of originality, and the decentralization of interpretive authority. Barthes' (Barthes, 1977) statement that meaning is not solely tied to the author's intent is exemplified in algorithmic texts, where no human consciousness directly guides the writing process. Similarly, Kristeva's (Kristeva, 1980) concept of intertextuality is evident in large language models remixing patterns from various sources, showing that textual creation is inherently interconnected rather than solely driven by individual creativity. These findings highlight that GenAI represents not only a technological innovation but also a theoretical development in literary studies, making post-structuralist ideas observable in practice (Bender et al., 2021; Floridi, 2021; Formosa et al., 2025).

Algorithmic writing challenges Barthes' notion of the "Death of the Author," since AI-produced texts lack a traditional author. Wimsatt and Beardsley's (Wimsatt and Beardsley, 2019) concept of the intentional fallacy is supported: interpretation does not require human intention. Authority, however, is not eliminated but redistributed. It now resides with programmers, corporate platforms, and the design of AI models, aligning with Foucault's (Foucault, 1979) notion of the author-function as an institutional tool for classification, accountability, and control. Reader-response theory is reinforced, as readers no longer depend on authorial intent to construct meaning. In AI contexts, readers also act as co-creators through prompt engineering, feedback, and iterative refinement, extending post-structuralist perspectives on readerly agency (Fish, 1982; Barnouw and Iser, 1979; Crosman and Iser, 1980; Arsene, 2023).

This study also highlights a shift from individual to distributed authorship. Traditional literary theory emphasizes the author as the central source of creativity and interpretation (Abrams, 1971; Eagleton, 2008). In contrast, AI-generated literature emerges from interactions among multiple agents: programmers shape model architecture, datasets provide intertextual references, algorithms produce outputs, corporate platforms regulate access, and users guide generation through prompts. No single agent entirely controls the final text, reflecting a networked and distributed notion of authorship (Mazzi, 2024; Hayles, 2017). This challenges Romantic and humanist conceptions of originality, showing that creativity can be procedural, collaborative, and system-mediated.

These results have practical and theoretical implications for literary criticism. Approaches that emphasize biography, psychology, or authorial intent become less effective when evaluating AI-generated texts (Tyson, 2014; Eagleton, 2008). Critics must consider computational mediation, dataset influence, and interface governance in their analyses. In digital humanities, GenAI demonstrates that non-human actors participate actively in textual creation, allowing scholars to integrate computational methods with literary theory (Hayles, 2017; Bender et al., 2021; Bommasani et al., 2021). Close reading, discourse analysis, and examination of technological infrastructure are essential for understanding AI-generated literature.

Distributed authorship also raises ethical, legal, and institutional concerns. Training data biases, misinformation, and copyright complications challenge traditional notions of responsibility (Bender et al., 2021; Gervais, 2022; Samuelson, 2023a,b). Corporate platform governance affects access, output, and intellectual property, shifting authority from individual authors to institutional and technological actors (Crawford, 2021; Barros, 2025). These dynamics illustrate that authorship functions not only as a creative identity but also as a social and legal construct (Foucault, 1979).

Finally, the findings both confirm and expand post-structuralist theory. Concepts such as Barthes' decentering of the author, Foucault's author-function, and Kristeva's intertextuality remain relevant in the context of GenAI (Barthes, 1977; Foucault, 1979; Kristeva, 1980). AI scholarship extends these ideas to include technological and institutional actors such as machine learning models, corporate governance, and large datasets (Floridi, 2021; Formosa et al., 2025; Samuelson, 2023a). Current research shows that meaning can emerge independently of human consciousness, but interpretive authority is shared across human and non-human networks (Floridi and Chiriatti, 2020; Bender et al., 2021; Hayles, 2017). This integrated perspective connects classical literary theory with digital humanities, critical AI studies, and legal frameworks, offering a comprehensive approach to understanding authorship in AI-mediated literature.

5. Conclusion

This study finds that literature on Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) significantly reshapes the concept of authorship in modern literary studies. AI-produced texts demonstrate that literary meaning can emerge without a single conscious human author, challenging traditional notions of creativity, originality, intentionality, and authorial authority. Rather than eliminating authorship, GenAI redistributes it across a network of actors, including programmers, algorithms, datasets, corporate platforms, users, and readers. This shift indicates that textual creation in the AI era is no longer solely driven by individual human imagination but is mediated by complex interactions among technological, institutional, and interpretive systems. The findings also highlight the increasing role of readers as co-creators of meaning, particularly when texts are generated without fixed authorial intent, thereby extending post-structuralist theories on the decentralization of authorial authority. Overall, GenAI literature not only supports but also broadens post-structuralist critiques of authorship within the digital age. Future research should explore the ethical, legal, and cultural implications of AI-generated texts, including questions of intellectual property, accountability, bias, and the evolving functions of literary criticism in environments dominated by algorithmic production. These avenues will further clarify how distributed agency and computational mediation transform both the theoretical and practical understanding of authorship.

Ethical Statement

This study is theoretical and conceptual in nature and did not involve human participants, animals, clinical materials, or sensitive personal data. Therefore, formal ethical approval was not required. The research was conducted through the analysis and interpretation of publicly available scholarly literature, theoretical texts, and academic sources. All sources used in this study were appropriately cited and acknowledged in accordance with academic integrity and publication ethics.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable. This study is theoretical and conceptual in nature and did not involve human participants, interviews, surveys, experiments, clinical materials, or identifiable personal data. Therefore, informed consent was not required.

Author Contributions

Philip Abayomi Olorunfemi contributed to the conceptualization of the study, theoretical framework development, methodology design, literature review, formal analysis, interpretation of findings, and original manuscript drafting. The author also conducted critical revision, manuscript editing, and final approval of the submitted version.

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Data Availability Statement

No datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study. All analyses were conducted through theoretical and conceptual interpretation of existing literature, primary texts, and post-structuralist frameworks. Any additional information or materials supporting the study's findings can be provided by the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article. The research was conducted independently, and all interpretations, analyses, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the author.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

The author declares that no generative artificial intelligence tool was used to produce the research data, theoretical analysis, findings, or scholarly conclusions of this study. Any language refinement support, if used, was limited to improving readability, grammar, and formatting, and did not replace the author's intellectual contribution, critical interpretation, conceptual analysis, or responsibility for the content.

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