

The Epistemology of Literary Discourse in the Digital Age: A Critical Review of the Stakes of “Artificial Intelligence” and the Disintegration of Authorial Centrality

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Abstract:

This study approaches the profound epistemic transformations that have affected the structure of literary discourse amid the rise of artificial intelligence systems, taking the “digital text” as a laboratory for re-examining the concepts of intentionality and creativity. The research seeks to deconstruct the notion of “authorial centrality” and to trace the displacement of the creative subject’s authority in favor of algorithmic processes that reproduce linguistic patterns according to technical and mathematical criteria.

The study also addresses the dialectical impasse between human consciousness and machine-generated output, moving beyond descriptive accounts toward an analysis of the “hybrid text identity,” which lacks emotional and historical referentiality despite its simulation of creativity. The central problem lies in assessing the extent to which automatically generated texts can possess epistemic meanings susceptible to rigorous critical analysis.

The study concludes by emphasizing the necessity of devising procedural tools and a new epistemic model capable of accommodating the conditions of meaning production within the environment of literary automation. Such an approach would establish a critical vision that combines methodological rigor with philosophical depth in order to confront the challenges of “digitization,” which has fundamentally reshaped the creative process in its entirety.

Keywords: Epistemology, Artificial Intelligence, Digital Text, Death of the Author, Literary Criticism.

1.Introduction:

The contemporary epistemic landscape is witnessing an unprecedented transformation in the structure of literary discourse, resulting from the intersection of creative practice with highly advanced technological systems. This has led to the destabilization of traditional concepts that have long been entrenched in critical consciousness. The transition from the paper-based text, grounded in purely human referentiality, to the digitally generated text produced through algorithms necessitates a reconsideration of the essence of literature and the nature of aesthetic function under the dominance of technological mediation.

This transformation is not merely a shift in the medium through which meaning is conveyed; rather, it constitutes a reconfiguration of the very core of the creative process. Language has become a material subject to mathematical processing, posing significant challenges for literary criticism in its attempt to comprehend texts that no longer emerge from a creative subjectivity in the classical sense, but from complex programmed interactions that simulate human consciousness and compete with it in the production of aesthetic structures.

The increasing infiltration of artificial intelligence systems into the heart of creative practice has led to a decline in the authority of the creative “self” as the sole center of meaning production, opening the field to a blurred multiplicity of sources that combine human effort with machine capability. This state of “textual hybridity” places critical theories before a methodological impasse, namely the search for “textual intentionality” in the absence of a tangible author possessing the emotional and historical referentiality of discourse.

Despite its statistical precision and its remarkable ability to generate structures, the algorithmic processing of language lacks the existential context that grants literature its human dimension. This necessitates the invention of new analytical tools capable of dissecting the digital text as a complex phenomenon that fuses algorithmic rigor with artistic indeterminacy, and that reveals the mechanisms of consciousness in an age of total automation.

Within this epistemic momentum, the question of “textual identity” emerges as one of the most complex issues confronting contemporary literary criticism. It is no longer possible to clearly distinguish between what is purely human-produced and what is the result of intelligent digital processing. The shift toward a “machine aesthetics” compels scholars to revisit the epistemological foundations underlying the concept of “authenticity,” as the mechanical repetition and simulation of rhetorical patterns threaten to dilute creative specificity and transform literature into a standardized industry governed by the logic of technological efficiency and rapid dissemination.

This new reality calls for a rigorous critical stance that uncovers the risks of alienating human consciousness in favor of the machine, while simultaneously advocating for the productive investment of these technological capacities to open new expressive horizons previously unattainable provided that the efficacy of critical reason in guiding meaning-making is preserved.

A profound understanding of the stakes of artificial intelligence in the literary field also requires moving beyond simplistic perspectives that merely describe the phenomenon externally, toward an archaeological probing of the underlying structures of the digital text and an interrogation of the symbolic conflicts it generates within the cultural system. The disintegration of “authorial centrality” does not necessarily imply the absence of meaning; rather, it signals its redistribution across multiple agents, thereby transforming the nature of the relationship between text and reader and rendering reading a participatory act that transcends the passive consumption of ready-made meanings.

This transformation in the structure of reception necessitates the construction of an objective vision that recognizes the digital-age text as a fluid, border-transcending entity, deriving its power from its capacity for transformation and concealment within programming codes. This places the critic before a heightened responsibility to restore the threads of connection between the text and its deep human referential frameworks.

In light of this complex scene, where creativity intersects with technology, there emerges an urgent need to regulate the epistemic and aesthetic implications of the dominance of intelligent systems in the production of literary discourse. This leads us to confront the central problem of this study: to what extent has artificial intelligence succeeded in unsettling the epistemological foundations of critical theory, and how has the undermining of “authorial centrality” in the digital text contributed to redefining literariness amid the tension between human innovation and algorithmic simulation?

From this question arise further inquiries regarding the nature of the methodological tools capable of approaching this hybrid text, and the extent to which criticism can formulate a new paradigm that accommodates transformations of meaning in an age of digital fluidity without compromising the essence of creativity as an existential and civilizational act.

2.The Epistemological Framework of the Digital Text and the Challenges of Generative Consciousness

The epistemological framework of the digital text is grounded in a cognitive rupture with classical conceptions of language as a medium of emotional expression, shifting instead toward its consideration as a symbolic system amenable to mathematical modeling and algorithmic processing. This transformation compels us to recognize that “the transition from the paper medium to the digital space alters the nature of intellectual reception and creates a new mode of the text’s epistemic existence”

¹, placing us before a textual reality characterized by fluidity and multiplicity.

This new reality dismantles the organic unity of the text and transforms it into interconnected data sets lacking stability, where reading becomes an exploratory act within a non-linear space. It reshapes the reader’s awareness of the literary material, which is no longer governed by the authority of a tangible author as much as by the logic of the technological medium and its complex programming laws.

The intersection between human intelligence and generative systems raises a critical problem concerning “literariness” as an operational concept: how can one discern the creative spark in texts produced through statistical and predictive processes? While we continue to discuss the aesthetics of language, we find that “artificial intelligence does not produce literature in the spiritual sense, but rather reproduces pre-stored linguistic representations within predictive algorithms”². This leads to the emergence of a literary discourse marked by formal precision and skillful simulation, yet lacking historical and existential context.

This disjunction between signifier and signified in the digital experience destabilizes the traditional foundations of criticism, making it necessary to search for new criteria by which to evaluate artistic quality in an era where mechanical simulation can mislead human taste and generate highly complex texts.

When examining the structure of machine-generated text, we encounter what may be termed a “second death of the author,” this time in a technological form, where subjective presence dissolves in favor of the authority of programming code endowed with immense generative capacity. This trajectory confirms that “digital writing is a practice that transcends individual boundaries to reside within a space of collective and shared human-machine interaction”³, thereby negating the uniqueness of the digital text and rendering it a product of a shared digital culture.

This epistemological perspective places us before the dilemma of “authenticity.” If the text is essentially an intelligent recycling of other texts, then the concept of creativity shifts from being an act of origination *ex nihilo* to a skill in managing textual interactions and directing algorithms toward pre-defined aesthetic goals set by the programmer or user.

The epistemology of the digital text cannot be fully understood without addressing the concept of “generative intelligence” and its disruption of intentionality, which constitutes a foundational principle in critical studies. Machine-generated text lacks conscious will; while critics have traditionally viewed the text as a reflection of its author, we find that “the machine, in its linguistic production, remains confined within the framework of formal imitation without penetrating the essence of epistemic intention”⁴.

This renders the digital text a hybrid entity inhabiting an intermediate zone between human cognition and mathematical logic. This inherent tension compels literary criticism to move beyond psychological and sociological approaches centered on the author’s life, toward what may be termed a “critique of digital systems,” which investigates how meaning is formed within virtual environments and how technology shapes the contemporary human imagination.

The transition to the digital age has also given rise to what may be called a “poetics of information,” wherein words are treated as statistical data governed by the laws of probability rather than the principles of artistic inspiration. This structural shift reinforces the notion that “digital technology imposes a new paradigm that re-engineers the creative mind and places it in an inevitable confrontation with the machine”⁵, necessitating the formulation of a vision capable of accommodating these epistemological transformations.

Research into the epistemic framework of the digital text reveals a decline in transcendent aesthetic values in favor of procedural and functional ones, where a text becomes “successful” insofar as it is capable of interacting with the user and eliciting rapid cognitive or programmed responses. This leads to the commodification of literature, transforming it into a technical product consumed within fluid communicative spaces.

Within this technological dominance, a fundamental question arises regarding the ability of critical reason to maintain its autonomy in the face of texts produced by algorithms with a level of technical sophistication that surpasses human capacity for review. The danger lies in the potential dissolution of creative human consciousness into pre-structured systems provided by artificial intelligence environments, signaling the advent of a “post-human” phase in literature.

This critical perspective warns against reliance on machine efficiency and calls for the necessity of preserving the human role as an epistemological observer who deconstructs the latent structures within machine-generated discourse, identifying the ideological and cultural biases that may be transmitted through the massive datasets upon which artificial intelligence systems are trained.

The epistemology of the digital text thus constitutes a field of tension between the philosophy of the human and the philosophy of technology, where the boundaries of creativity and identity are redrawn within a decentralized space. Acknowledging that “digitization is no longer merely a medium of publication but has become a partner in the production of meaning and the construction of textual identity”⁶ compels us to redefine the human as a creative being within an integrated technological context.

Understanding this epistemic framework paves the way for addressing the dilemma of the “author.” It is not sufficient merely to recognize the presence of technology; rather, we must examine its profound impact on the structure of human thought and on the future of literature as a free act one that resists the constraints of automation while preserving its essence as an enduring existential message despite the transformation of its media.

3. The Predicament of the Author in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: From Subjective Sovereignty to Machine Multiplicity

The concept of the “author” in the contemporary digital context is confronted with an existential crisis that reshuffles the foundations of creative authority and the source of meaning production. The creator is no longer the sole center from which aesthetic visions emerge; rather, they have become a partner in a broader generative process. This shift confirms that “the subjective sovereignty of the traditional author has dissolved in the face of the flow of hybrid texts in which human ingenuity merges with algorithmic speed”⁷, opening the door to pressing questions regarding intellectual property and creative uniqueness.

In the age of artificial intelligence, the contemporary author finds themselves compelled to relinquish creative narcissism and to assume the role of a “coordinator” or “director” of intelligent systems endowed with an immense capacity to generate linguistic possibilities. Consequently, the text becomes a shared entity that transcends narrow individuality toward the fluid horizons of digital multiplicity.

The danger of the technological medium lies in its ability to simulate individual style to such an extent that distinguishing between human-authored and machine-generated texts becomes increasingly difficult. This places literary criticism before the challenge of “creative identity plagiarism.” A critical examination of this phenomenon reveals that “the algorithm does not merely transfer words, but deconstructs the codes of individual genius and transforms them into reproducible and generalizable models”⁸, inevitably diluting the concept of “stylistic signature”.

This standardization imposed by artificial intelligence threatens to produce a soulless literature, in which writing shifts from a free, emotive act to a cold technical practice governed by the logic of simulation. This compels the authentic author to reclaim agency by forging expressive spaces that remain inaccessible to the machine, regardless of its level of intelligence.

The transition toward “machine multiplicity” in text production constitutes a decisive blow to the hierarchical structure that once placed the author at the apex of the communicative pyramid. The text becomes an interactive space in which the boundaries between producer and recipient dissolve. In this regard, it can be argued that “the death of the author in the digital age is not a physical absence, but an epistemological transformation in the function of writing and the process of meaning production”⁹.

This makes it difficult to determine ethical and epistemic responsibility for creative content. If the text is the product of a “dialogue” between human and machine, then meaning becomes dispersed among the programmer’s intentionality, the algorithm’s spontaneity, and the user’s vision, leading to the fragmentation of creative reference and the loss of the text’s traditional center of legitimacy.

While artificial intelligence has undeniably provided authors with unprecedented technical tools to transcend the limitations of language, this gift carries within it the dilemma of technological alienation and the loss of control over the intellectual trajectory of the text. Critical observation shows that “the creator’s reliance on ready-made solutions provided by intelligent systems leads to the erosion of genuine innovation and the subjugation of imagination to past data”¹⁰.

Artificial intelligence, in this sense, recycles pre-existing material without the capacity to produce qualitative leaps in the human imagination. This organic dependence on the machine reduces the author to a mere link within a programmed chain, raising a fundamental question about the extent to which humans can preserve the “humanity” of the text under the dominance of automation, which seeks to package emotions and convert feelings into numerical equations.

In the search for the author’s legitimacy within virtual space, the issue of the “generative text” emerges an unending text that artificial intelligence can continue to produce indefinitely based on initial inputs. This condition compels us to acknowledge that “the digital text possesses a life independent of its original author, evolving within an ongoing technological process”¹¹, thereby undermining the very notion of the “completed work”.

Here, the author loses authority over “closure” and “completion,” while the text becomes a fluid entity continuously reshaped through new inputs. Authorship thus transforms into an open-ended endeavor without final boundaries, converting the literary work from a “fixed product” into an “ongoing process” in which the machine plays a substantial role.

A critical interrogation of the author's condition under artificial intelligence reveals a profound transformation in the structure of "creative consciousness," as humans increasingly merge with their tools to the point where distinguishing between them becomes difficult. Critics argue that subjectivity in digital literature is no longer a closed entity, but an open one shaped by machinic possibilities and semiotic manifestations, giving rise to a new form of "creative self" that derives its strength from alignment with technology rather than opposition to it.

This epistemic integration alters the very physiology of writing and the logic of aesthetic thinking, requiring the author to possess a "dual culture" that combines refined literary sensibility with extensive technical expertise in order to avoid the dissolution of individuality within the flood of digital data.

On another level, artificial intelligence imposes a new vision of "inspiration," replacing poetic or creative revelation with feedback processes and big data that analyze reader preferences and market trends. This is evident in works designed "on demand" through algorithmic analysis, where "the author in the new digital system has become more of a commercial and technical intermediary than an independent creator proposing a universal vision"¹².

This shift points to the commodification of creativity and the loss of literature's critical and avant-garde function. The transformation of the author into a "content producer" subject to algorithmic dictates represents a serious threat to the future of literature as a free act expressing fundamental human concerns beyond the calculations of technological profit and loss.

Ultimately, the predicament of the author in the digital age remains an open struggle between the desire for technological expansion and the preservation of human uniqueness. Acknowledging that "the future of writing lies in bridging human cognition and artificial intelligence while maintaining a critical distance that safeguards authenticity"¹³ constitutes the only viable resolution to the crisis of creative identity.

The disintegration of authorial centrality in favor of machine multiplicity should not necessarily entail the elimination of the human role; rather, it should serve as a catalyst for redefining that role within a new epistemological framework one that comprehends contemporary conditions and establishes a balanced relationship with technology, ensuring the continuity of literature as a creative act that resists reduction to mere lines of code.

4. Horizons of Digital Literary Criticism: Toward a Critical Paradigm for Interrogating the Aesthetics of the Machine

The epistemic explosion in the field of artificial intelligence necessitates a comprehensive restructuring of the critical system, moving beyond traditional tools that are no longer sufficient to encompass the complex phenomenon of algorithmic text. There is an urgent need today to devise methodologies that align with the digital medium, which imposes a visual and technical language wherein words intertwine with images and programming with imagination. This places the critic before a dual responsibility: to understand the text both as a literary structure and as a technological entity.

This new orientation does not seek to abolish previous critical achievements, but rather aspires to develop an "interactive criticism" capable of keeping pace with the speed of automated generation and of deconstructing the codes behind which aesthetic meanings are concealed in virtual spaces. In doing so, it transforms the act of reading from a static contemplation into an active procedural engagement.

Critical practice in the age of artificial intelligence requires a shift from a critique of the "product" to a critique of the "process" that is, examining how the text has been programmatically constructed before addressing its surface meaning. Researchers emphasize in this regard that "digital literature imposes a form of exploratory reading that investigates the operational mechanisms of the program rather than the intentions of the absent author"¹⁴, thereby altering the nature and trajectory of critical judgment.

The aesthetic criterion is no longer confined to verbal rhetoric but has expanded to include the "rhetoric of programming," assessing the algorithm's ability to generate artistic surprise beyond statistical expectations. Thus, the literary critic in this age becomes an "engineer of meaning," seeking a delicate balance between mathematical rigor and the digitally translated flux of human emotion.

The horizon of digital criticism also manifests in its capacity to address the problem of "hypertexts" and the multiplicity of reading paths enabled by intelligent systems, thereby ending the era of texts with fixed beginnings and endings. This textual fragmentation demands recognition that "contemporary criticism must shift toward a semiotics of

interaction that studies the relationship between the digital interface and the user”¹⁵, rather than remaining confined within a closed textual structure.

From this perspective, artificial intelligence is seen as a partner in the production of aesthetics, where the value of a work is measured by the richness of the “possibilities” it offers rather than by a single objective truth. This opens the way for a “post-structural” criticism capable of accommodating digital fluidity and the instability of meaning in machine-generated discourse.

A robust critical paradigm cannot be established without confronting the challenge posed by the “algorithmic simulation” of literary styles and exposing the aesthetic illusion that may deceive readers unaware of technological mechanisms. The fundamental role of the critic today lies in clarifying that “machine-generated beauty is a beauty without memory, which necessitates the construction of a critical awareness that safeguards human identity from dissolving into the standardized patterns of artificial intelligence”¹⁶.

This restores to criticism its ethical and civilizational function. No matter how sophisticated artificial intelligence becomes in arranging words, it remains incapable of reproducing the “existential suffering” that grants literary texts their historical legitimacy. Herein lies the critic’s role in preserving the necessary distance between creativity as a free act and production as a mechanical process.

The trajectories of literary criticism under comprehensive digitization point toward the emergence of what is termed “computational criticism” or “digital criticism,” which employs technology itself to analyze large-scale texts and extract latent patterns. Specialists observe that “the contemporary critic must possess technological tools that enable them to track machine-generated texts and understand their patterned structures”¹⁷, marking a fundamental transformation in the professional identity of the critic.

This integration of criticism and technology does not imply the subjugation of critical reason, but rather enhances its capacity for observation and analysis within an increasingly complex communicative environment. In this context, big data becomes fertile ground for uncovering transformations in the collective imagination and understanding literary trends in a shared digital future.

In the search for new aesthetics, digital criticism introduces the concept of the “technological effect” as an alternative to the traditional literary effect, focusing on the emotional experience generated through interaction with the creative machine. This approach holds that creativity in the age of automation is not measured by its conformity to classical standards, but by its ability to disrupt the reader’s consciousness and provoke questions about the nature of intelligence itself.

Thus, criticism moves beyond the confines of academic classification into the broader realms of philosophy and anthropology. The critic no longer merely describes the text but engages in interrogating “what lies beyond the text,” seeking to understand how algorithms reshape our conception of beauty and contribute to the formation of hybrid aesthetic values that merge human and machine elements.

Anticipating the future of literary criticism requires the formulation of a “theory of digital reception” that takes into account the role of algorithms in shaping audience taste through mechanisms of recommendation and intelligent filtering. This perspective asserts that algorithmic authority in guiding reading now rivals that of the traditional critic, compelling criticism to reclaim its role in shaping aesthetic awareness by exposing the latent biases embedded within intelligent systems.

Authentic digital criticism is that which succeeds in unveiling the “technological ideology” that may be concealed behind the apparent neutrality of artificial intelligence, affirming that literature remains a field of value-laden and existential struggle that cannot be resolved through mathematical equations, no matter how precise.

In light of the foregoing, it becomes evident that the future horizons of digital literary criticism depend on the ability to adapt to the epistemological transformations imposed by artificial intelligence without losing the human compass. Recognizing the digital turn as an opportunity to renew critical discourse rather than a threat to its existence provided there is sufficient courage to question inherited assumptions, paves the way for a new generation of critics capable of decoding the complexities of the age.

Ultimately, constructing a critical paradigm for interrogating the aesthetics of the machine is, at its core, an attempt to reclaim the “human” within the digital text and to ensure that technology remains a servant of creativity rather than its master thereby achieving the desired balance between the demands of the age and the enduring spirit of art.

5. Conclusion:

This epistemological approach concludes that the entry of artificial intelligence into the field of literary discourse is not merely a transient technological leap, but rather a structural transformation that has redefined the concepts of “origin,” “uniqueness,” and “authorship” within a fluid digital paradigm. The epistemic tension between human consciousness and algorithmic logic has produced a hybrid text that requires critical tools capable of transcending traditional human-centered frameworks in order to accommodate the “aesthetics of the machine” without falling into the trap of technological alienation.

Through an in-depth exploration of the mechanisms of meaning production within virtual spaces, a set of fundamental conclusions can be articulated, summarizing the horizons of this ongoing tension between creativity and automation:

Machine-generated digital text represents an epistemological rupture with the classical “principle of intentionality,” as the text shifts from a subjective emotional outpouring to the outcome of statistical and predictive processes that recycle existing linguistic patterns.

The intersection of artificial intelligence with literature has led to the “disintegration of authorial centrality,” transforming the author from an absolute authority and sole source of meaning into a “technical coordinator” managing textual interactions within the digital environment.

“Literariness” in the age of comprehensive digitization is no longer a fixed criterion, but a dynamic procedural value determined by the algorithm’s ability to generate aesthetic surprise and skillfully simulate human styles.

The study reveals that the central challenge for contemporary literary criticism lies in the creation of an “interactive semiotics” capable of decoding programming structures and uncovering the unspoken dimensions of machine-generated discourse, which lacks emotional memory.

The issue of “authenticity” emerges as one of the greatest challenges facing digital literature, as algorithmic production tends toward the standardization of creativity within predefined templates derived from large-scale data, threatening to dilute artistic specificity.

The relationship between human and machine in the literary field is moving toward a state of “technological parity,” compelling creators to reclaim agency by forging deeply expressive spaces that algorithmic simulation cannot replicate or reproduce.

Excessive reliance on ready-made solutions provided by intelligent systems leads to the “alienation of human imagination,” binding it to the digital past and necessitating a critical vigilance that preserves the autonomy of creative thought.

In the age of artificial intelligence, the act of reading is transformed from passive consumption into an “exploratory and participatory practice,” in which the machine contributes to opening infinite semantic pathways that transcend the boundaries of the completed work.

The digital present necessitates the development of a “technological ethics” of literary discourse that ensures the protection of creative ownership and defines epistemic responsibility for hybrid texts combining human input and machine output.

There remains a pressing need for an objective critical paradigm that regards technology as an “enabling medium” for creativity rather than a substitute for it, affirming that the essence of literature remains, above all, an existential and civilizational act that cannot be reduced to mere algorithmic equations.

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