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THE TECHNOLOGICAL LABYRINTH OF AUTHORSHIP IN DEATH OF AN AUTHOR (2023) BY AIDAN MARCHINE

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ABSTRACT

This study deeply examines the novella Death of an Author (2023) to show the integration of AI in literature is challenging the traditional beliefs of authorship in literature. Traditionally, literature or a text is written by just one author who pours his emotions or experiences to mould the narrative, the AI generated writing challenges this idea because texts are now created using machines, data and human input together making it a whole network. This study uses postmodern theory to explain the shifts caused in authorship and creativity due to digital era. Roland Barthes idea that the author is not the only source of meaning stands true with AI writing as there is no single identifiable author. The notion of 'technological labyrinth' is used in this study to show how authorship has become sophisticated and multi-layered with complicated networks of AI systems, data and human prompts. By analysis this novella, this study will demonstrate how AI generated literature is an amalgamation of postmodern concepts such as fragmentation, simulation and multiple meanings. It also shows how introduction of AI in literature directly affects creativity and cultural texts hence focusing on the idea that authorship is no longer simple but rather a component of larger technical frameworks.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, Authorship, Postmodernism, Technological Labyrinth, Digital Culture

1 INTRODUCTION

In today's world, AI is changing how we create and understand literature. Before, literature was thought to come from one author, shaped by their own experiences and thoughts. Now with artificial intelligence writing things this idea of author producing thoughts is not so simple anymore. Texts can be generated using machines, some data and prompts from the human; this change brings up an important question about who the author is? What creativity means with AI in the picture? And how does the reader find meaning?

A key example for looking at this change is the novella *Death of an Author* (2023) written by Aidan Marchine. It was mostly made using artificial intelligence, with some human help in editing. This change can be better understood using postmodern theory, especially the ideas of Roland Barthes who actually wrote "Death of an Author" (1967). He stated that the author must not be seen as the main source for generating meaning out of the text. Barthes claimed that meaning comes from the reader, the intent of the author is not important, while Barthes gave this theory before AI started assisting in generating text but it is applicable.

This paper helps us understand how *Death of an Author* (2023) helps in thinking about authorship in a new way. The idea of an author is no longer attached to just one person but is spread across many algorithms, human interactions and data analysis. By looking at the novella through the lens of postmodern theory and digital culture, this paper shows how AI writing reflects changes in how we think about knowledge and creativity. This change is significant because it shows that literature is not as static as it originally was imagined to be. Traditional belief that every text has meaning assigned to it by the creator gets questioned and now it all depends on how readers assign it the meaning which makes the reading process more active as now the readers must think about what the text is saying rather than simply trying to comprehend what the authors intentions were.

Through AI generated texts one can also look at how knowledge is evolving and is now developed through systems that involve technology and data rather than readers just believing in a single individual. These systems also complicate and confuse individuals on how knowledge is produced as it becomes difficult to trace the origins the concept presented to the readers or learners. In this regards, AI writing has a strong connection to postmodern concepts which states that there is no single truth or set meaning to anything.

The novella *Death of an Author* (2023) is particularly intriguing in this sense as it is not just a tale but also an example of this new AI generated style of writing. It shows how AI and literature are coming together to create something unique but it also raises the question whether creativity is limited to humans or whether machines may participate as well. At the same time this uniqueness may also create confusion about trusting AI generated texts and also doubt their value in comparison to human written works yet one cannot deny that AI is playing an increasingly essential role in how literature is written and interpreted today.

For all these reasons, examining AI written novella *Death of an Author* (2023) allows us to better understand how literature, authorship and creativity are evolving in the modern world.

2 FROM THEORY TO TECHNOLOGICAL REALITY

Postmodern philosophy particularly Roland Barthes' theories can help us better understand this development. He argued that the author should not be viewed as the primary source of meaning in a work. In his essay "The Death of the Author," (1967) Barthes argued that meaning is derived from the reader rather than the author's goal while this was previously the only a hypothesis in present time AI generated texts make it a reality. According to this research, *Death of an Author* (2023) by Aidan Marchine presents a fresh perspective on authorship and how it functions. The author is no longer the sole authority but rather the author is expanded over various data, algorithms and human interactions. This study examines postmodern philosophy and digital culture to demonstrate how AI generated texts has induced a shift in our perception of creativity. Roland Barthes proposed the concept that after the text is written the author dies, he challenged the long believed idea that the author is the primary authority through which meaning of the text can be generated. Barthes believed that a text is composed of several influences and cannot be traced back to a single source, "a text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture." (Barthes 146)

This suggests that writing is a combination of several ideas rather than being entirely original. The reader is important in this context since meaning is determined by how they interpret the text, while Barthes theories were originally written about literature but post the introduction of AI in writing texts his theories are widely applicable. AI written texts are generated using enormous amounts of data,

they are generated using several styles and narratives, in this manner, AI generated texts supports Barthes' concept of a text as a collection of quotations. AI goes farther by removing the human author as the central figure and generated writing by a combination of human inputs and machine learning.

This signifies that authorship is shared by many people. The topic of who is the author may also be examined through Michel Foucault's work, in which he asks, "What is an author?" Foucault argues that the author is not only a persona but he has a role to play, the role is to organize and categorize writings. This position is vague in AI written texts since the author's identity is not clearly established. The name 'Aidan Marchine' reflects this ambiguity, as it refers to a collaborative effort between a human and machine rather than just an individual; this where the fragmentation happens and the concept of authorship is disintegrated, pointing towards postmodernist cultural developments.

3 THE TECHNOLOGICAL LABYRINTH OF AUTHORSHIP

The concept of a labyrinth helps us appreciate the complexities of AI authoring. A labyrinth includes multiple routes and finding your way around involved careful decision-making as there is no single path that leads to the centre. In AI writing, authorship is similar to a multi-layered technical labyrinth. These layers compromise the human user who provides prompts as well as the reader. Even the data needed to feed the model is compromised along with the understanding of the readers, a lot of layers are contribute to the writing yet none of them can be viewed as the only author instead authorship is produced when these components interact.

This results in a complex system, which is similar to the model of a labyrinth. A labyrinth has no centre hence no central authority and in traditional writing the author is commonly seen as the primary guide however with AI produced texts there is no single directing voice anymore hence so central authority. The text is produced using a combination of human thoughts and machine learning which like the labyrinth is intricate and unpredictable. Just like labyrinths Ai writing has several pathways and the results depends on the prompts and data provided to it, this is an epitome of how authorship is not fixed and emphasizes how it varies over time.

Focusing on the concept of technological labyrinth helps us understand how AI alters the way a narrative is formed, it shifts the emphasis from one person's creativity to a network of systems where

meaning emerges from interactions rather than a single creator.

4 POSTMODERNISM, SIMULATION AND AI WRITING

Postmodern philosophy helps us understand better about how AI is affecting literature as it rejects universal truths in favour of individuality and diversity. Jean-François Lyotard believed that today's culture lacks 'grand narratives' that explains everything, without these grand narratives knowledge is spread across several systems instead of being limited to one. This concept exactly fits to how AI generated texts operate, the plot and narrative of these AI generated texts is shaped by variety of influences and data patterns rather than a single distinct vision hence, the texts shows fragmented characteristic of postmodern knowledge.

Jean Baudrillard also contributes to this shift, his idea of simulation which states that modern civilizations are full with pictures that generate their own reality and not reflect the reality (hyperreality) is how AI generated literature functions. In such texts human experience or originality is not important, as Baudrillard states, "simulation is no longer imitation," (Baudrillard 2) instead it's a system that produces its own reality. In this sense, the novella *Death of an Author* (2023) is more of a simulation than a narrative. It duplicates writing styles without the requirement for a traditional author which shows how authorship now is a shared activity. Fredric Jameson stated that people struggle to grasp the systems that influence their lives as postmodern culture is very diverse and fractured. He named this struggle as "cognitive mapping," (Jameson 54) AI generated texts show this struggle as the methods used to produce the text are frequently buried which makes it difficult for the readers to pinpoint where exactly the narrative came from.

This lack of clarity contributes to confusion about which the author is hence by analysing the novella *Death of an Author* (2023) we see how this confusion and struggle plays out in real life. The novella is full of elements that represent the shifts in authorship brought about by technology and postmodernist thought. One of the most important features to be analysed is the narrative framework, the plot follows patterns from fiction genre particularly the narrative style of a detective fiction which shows that AI has learnt and repeated previous literary writing styles. At the same time the narrative may have inconsistencies or shifts in tone which comes from default setting of how AI writes, these inconsistencies show that there isn't a stable

authorial voice and that the texts comes varied influences.

Another important element to look at is the intertextuality in the novella, the novella includes elements from various literary traditions making it familiar but hard to trace back to a single source. This characteristic fits with Barthes' idea of the text as a "tissue of quotations," as the author's identity is not revealed and by using a pseudonym AI blurs the distinction between a human and machine writing. This makes it difficult for the readers to determine who or what wrote it and hence the readers also have to navigate the technological labyrinth where narrative is a complicated combination of human input, cultural data and machine learning rather than the work of a single creative mind.

Analysis of *Death of an Author* (2023)

Death of an Author (2023) novella is a great example of how these theories apply in real life. It shows how AI writing complicates the concept of authorship and fragments the material in several locations at once. The format of the novella is the first thing that stands out, the narrative follows a pattern like followed in a mystery novel therefore it feels familiar to the reader. This is most likely because AI has been trained and fed a large number of existing novels and stories allowing it to learn from them and follow their narrative style, as a result the plot of the novella doesn't entirely feel new but more like a combination of something that readers have already read before.

When we look at the narrative of the novella it's not smooth or consistent, sometimes the tone shifts abruptly or the writing becomes inconsistent in different sections, this happens because AI does not think like a human it blends several styles and concepts fed to it rather than sticking to a single distinct voice. The result is a text that lacks a strong and solid narrative and appears as if several different voices are speaking together which leads to the failure of the concept of a single voice single author. Another key aspect to look at in the novella is intertextuality which states that the text is linked to several other texts or takes references from them. Readers may notice similarities to other genres or writing styles as AI learns from a significant quantity of existing material and uses it to generate new language.

The identity of the author of this novella is another factor to look at. The identity of the author stays unclear in the novella, the names chosen 'Aiden Marchine' is a made up persona rather than a genuine person's name. It depicts both humans and

machine working together as a result it becomes impossible to determine who actually contributed more to the material- did the person supplied proper prompts? Or was it AI that generated the entire work? There is obviously no obvious answer to these questions which makes the concept of an author problematic in such texts.

This ambiguity is precisely why the novella might be seen as technological labyrinth, it contains multiple voices and not a single author which makes it very similar to a labyrinth. The text is generated in several levels through aspects which are interconnected and each of them contributes to the overall structure and narrative of the text. Hence *Death of an Author* (2023) is not just a fiction; it also shows how literature is changing in the digital age. The writing is no longer about one person's original idea but about a whole system working together which makes authorship a complex and confusing term, in the digital age everything is related yet difficult to fully comprehend.

5 AI, CULTURE AND CREATIVITY

As digital technology becomes more integrated into artistic production, traditional notion of authorship and originality, the emergence of AI generated literature has a significant impact on culture and creativity. Some scholars, like N. Katherine Hayles believes that the interaction between humans and machines shapes today's society, creativity according to them is no longer a human trait only rather it is a collaborative cultural output through the use of technology.

Technology enables new forms of artistic expression while also making us question who owns the art states Lev Manovich, according to him digital culture creates and organizes cultural output through the use of technology. Therefore, in cultural studies, AI generated literature supports the move towards collaborative knowledge generation instead of focusing on a single person. Now in a production of a cultural text several people and technological systems are involved. Recent studies also show that AI is actively being used in education to improve learning and assessment, showing that its impact is not just theoretical but already practical (Agrawal 2026), which makes its impact on authorship and creativity even more important to study.

This shift presents significant ethical and philosophical issues like who should be recognized as the author of an AI generated text? How should intellectual property be defined and claimed when it comes to machine generated texts? And lastly, what does it mean to be creative in a world where a

machine can generate and copy those exact emotions through prompts? These questions indicate a necessity to reassess established notions of authorship and creativity and push us to reconsider the relationship between humans, technology and culture.

AI written texts may completely transform the future of art and literature, with them being able to produce stories, poetry and novels with just some prompts the job of human authors may alter forever. Human may become a mentor who influences the AI through various prompts or data, this does not mean that the creativity will disappear but it points towards the fact that creativity will now be shared by humans and machines. This new shift in creativity will also create the confusion and make individuals question the value of human made art. As it is traditional belief that art stems from genuine feelings and personal experiences but AI generated texts have given a new perspective that if something looks and feels like art, it still counts regardless of how it was made.

Another aspect to question is uniqueness of the text. AI learns from existing data and words and therefore it always associates the work it produces with something new or simply rearranges the previous fed ideas, this takes us back to the premise that creation is never totally original but it is in fact influenced by prior works. AI therefore is transforming not just how literature is written but also how we perceive art and creativity. It makes us question the traditional beliefs and points us at the future where innovation may not belong to people alone but rather would come from a mix of humans and technology working together.

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6 CONCLUSION

Death of an Author (2023) novella reveals how artificial intelligence has altered what it means to be an author in contemporary world and literature. The combination of postmodern concepts and the metaphor of a labyrinth demonstrate that writing is now a collaborative process involving many individuals and systems. Barthes' work helps in grasping this shift while Foucault, Lyotard and Baudrillard situate it within the greater context of postmodern culture.

The concept of technical labyrinth allows one to look at the issues of AI generated literature. It demonstrates how information is now linked and is constantly evolving. Meaning is no longer derived from a single creator but rather from huge networks. As AI advances, these changes which are minor now are expected to become increasingly significant. As a result, understanding how AI influences authorship and creativity will remain an important issue in literature and culture. As AI advances, literature is likely to change much more in the future. Writers may not always sit down and write everything on their own instead they may use AI for assistance or to develop an idea into a text.

This means AI makes writing faster and more accessible but it may also lead to the loss of personal touch that readers associate with the human authors. AI can provide new opportunities and help those who struggle with writing by providing them with fresh ideas and a new voice which will directly broaden the scope of literature. This whole system working together with the author makes the future of literature both confusing and exciting at the same time.