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THE MUSE AND THE MACHINE: EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF GENERATIVE AI ON THE FUTURE OF CREATIVITY IN ENGLISH POETRY

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ABSTRACT

The Muse and the Machine explores how generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is reshaping creativity, authorship, and pedagogy within the domain of English poetry. Once considered the pinnacle of human imagination and emotional expression, poetry now faces new challenges as large language models demonstrate the ability to produce verses that are formally convincing and stylistically sophisticated. This study investigates how readers perceive AI-generated poetry in comparison with human compositions, using surveys and interviews with students and faculty to evaluate qualities such as imagery, metaphor, structure, and emotional depth. Results suggest that while readers often described AI poems as polished and technically accurate, they also identified a lack of personal voice and lived experience, underscoring a persistent tension between technical mastery and emotional authenticity. These findings reveal both anxieties and possibilities: some fear displacement of human poets, while others embrace AI as a co-creative partner. Grounded in theories of creativity, authorship, and co-creativity, this paper argues that generative AI does not replace the human muse but reframes the creative process. For educators and scholars, particularly in contexts such as Pakistan, the challenge lies not in resisting AI but in integrating it critically–using it as a tool to expand poetic experimentation while cultivating authentic human voice and cultural identity.

Keywords: *Generative Artificial Intelligence, English Poetry, Creativity, Authorship, Co-creativity, Human–AI Collaboration*

INTRODUCTION

Poetry has historically been a deeply human art form, grounded in emotional depth, personal experience, and cultural identity. Yet, the rise of generative AI technologies—especially large language models like ChatGPT—has complicated this narrative. These systems now produce poetry that rivals human work in form, diction, and affect. This evolution challenges traditional assumptions about authorship, intention,

andmeaning. For educators and scholars of English literature, this development demands critical examination. It raises urgent questions: If machines can emulate poetic creativity, what becomes of the poet? Does authorship lose its significance when creative production can be automated? This paper addresses these questions by examining the role of generative AI in English poetry and the implications for future creative practices and literary pedagogy.

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has rapidly become a transformative force in creative domains, reshaping how scholars and practitioners conceptualize originality, authorship, and aesthetic value. English poetry, long regarded as one of the most uniquely human art forms due to its reliance on metaphor, rhythm, and emotional resonance, is now being produced by algorithms that emulate human literary styles with striking accuracy (Holzner, Maier, & Feuerriegel, 2025). This development raises important questions: if machines can generate verse that rivals human composition, what then becomes of the role of the poet, the authenticity of creative labor, and the meaning of poetic tradition? Although critics express concern that AI-generated poetry lacks genuine emotional depth or cultural specificity, recent studies suggest that human writers collaborating with GenAI demonstrate improved creative fluency and idea generation compared to those working alone (Holzner et al., 2025). However, this augmentation often comes at the cost of diversity, as AI-supported texts may converge toward stylistic norms encoded in training data (Sarkar, 2023). This paradox illustrates that the machine is less a replacement for human creativity than a catalyst whose value depends on intentional, reflective engagement by poets and readers alike. Thus, the intersection of "the muse" and "the machine" is not a simple contest between human and artificial creativity, but a negotiation of their complementarities and tensions. Scholars have argued that the artistic potential of AI lies in how it disrupts conventional processes, sparking inspiration through unpredictability while also foregrounding new ethical and cultural considerations (Vechtomova, 2025). This essay explores these dynamics, examining how generative AI is shaping the future of creativity in English poetry and what it signifies for the evolving role of the poet in an age of algorithmic imagination.

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has emerged as one of the most disruptive innovations in the creative industries, prompting scholars to reconsider what constitutes authorship, originality, and aesthetic value. English poetry, traditionally associated with deeply human faculties of imagination and emotion, is now at the forefront of this debate as AI systems are increasingly capable of producing verse that resembles human literary craft (Holzner, Maier, & Feuerriegel, 2025). The growing presence of machine-generated poetry not only challenges long-standing definitions of creativity but also reconfigures the relationship between human poets and their audiences (Boden, 2016). While concerns remain that AI outputs may lack cultural depth, emotional authenticity, and contextual nuance, evidence suggests that GenAI can function as a powerful creative partner. Writers who collaborate with AI report enhanced fluency, faster ideation, and novel inspiration, though this often comes at the expense of diversity and originality due to algorithmic biases encoded in training data (Sarkar, 2023; Holzner et al., 2025). This duality underscores that AI is less a substitute for human ingenuity than a tool whose impact depends on how deliberately and critically it is integrated into artistic practice.

Moreover, scholars argue that the real artistic potential of AI lies in its ability to disrupt conventional patterns and open up new modes of imagination. Generative models, by operating between predictability and randomness, can provide creative "sparks" that expand a poet's stylistic repertoire (Vechtomova, 2025). At the same time, critics warn that an over-reliance on

algorithmic outputs risks diluting individuality and homogenizing literary expression (Manovich, 2019). Consequently, the encounter between the muse and the machine is not merely technological but also philosophical and ethical, demanding reflection on authorship, authenticity, and the evolving nature of poetry in the digital age. This essay therefore explores how generative AI is reshaping creativity in English poetry. By situating current debates within both historical perspectives on creativity and contemporary findings from AI research, it aims to assess whether the machine functions as a collaborator, competitor, or catalyst in the poet's creative journey

Research Questions

1. How is generative AI currently being utilized in the creation of English poetry?
2. What implications does AI-generated poetry have on the traditional concept of human creativity?
3. How do readers perceive the aesthetic and emotional quality of AI-generated versus human-written poetry?
4. What might be the future role of poets in a world where machines can compose verse?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional Views on Authorship and Creativity

Roland Barthes' seminal essay The Death of the Author (1967) dismantled the notion of the author as the sole source of textual meaning, arguing instead for the primacy of the reader's interpretation. This theoretical framework is invaluable when interrogating AI-generated poetry, which further disrupts the link between authorial intention and textual meaning.

For centuries, authorship has been linked with originality, individuality, and personal expression. In Western literary traditions, particularly since the Romantic period, the poet has often been regarded as a solitary genius whose work reflects inner imagination and unique insight into the human condition (Abrams, 1971). This perspective situates creativity as an act of personal inspiration, with the poet seen as the originator of new forms, styles, and meanings. Such views not only elevated the status of the author but also positioned poetry as a reflection of authentic experience and human subjectivity.

Earlier classical notions of creativity, however, differed significantly from this Romantic ideal. In ancient Greece, for instance, poets were often considered channels of divine inspiration rather than autonomous creators. The concept of the "muse" symbolized the belief that creativity was bestowed upon individuals from external, even transcendent, sources (Bate, 2013). Similarly, in medieval and Renaissance traditions, authorship was often understood within collective frameworks, where texts built upon established cultural and religious narratives rather than asserting absolute originality (Foucault, 1969/1998). In this sense, authorship was more about stewardship of knowledge than individual ownership. The Enlightenment and Romantic periods introduced a decisive shift toward individuality, originality, and intellectual property. Authors began to be viewed as proprietors of their texts, with creativity framed as the capacity to produce something new and distinct rather than merely reinterpreting tradition (Woodmansee, 1994). This shift also contributed to the development of copyright laws, reinforcing the idea of authorship as individual ownership of intellectual labor. Such frameworks established a legacy that continues to shape how creativity and authorship are evaluated in contemporary literary practice. While these traditional perspectives place high value on human uniqueness and originality, they also highlight the cultural and historical contingencies of authorship. In the context of generative AI, revisiting these older paradigms is essential, as they remind us that

creativity has never been a fixed or universal concept but has always evolved with social, philosophical, and technological change.

Evolution of Digital Literature

Hayles (2008) traces the rise of electronic literature and the digital turn in literary studies, noting how hypertext, interactive narratives, and multimodal texts challenged the fixity of print literature. AI-generated poetry extends this lineage, representing the newest stage in the ongoing digitization of literary production.

AI-Generated Texts and Creative Writing

Recent studies highlight the growing sophistication of AI poetry. Porter and Machery (2024) found that readers often rate AI-generated poems as equal to—or better than—human-written ones. Similarly, Köbis and Mossink (2020) demonstrated that participants could not reliably distinguish between AI and human poetry, raising questions about the markers of originality and emotional authenticity.

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) has dramatically changed the landscape of creative writing, challenging long-held assumptions about the exclusivity of human imagination. Generative models, particularly large language models (LLMs), are now capable of producing coherent narratives, poems, and essays that mimic human writing styles with impressive fluency. Such developments have blurred the distinction between human and machine authorship, prompting debates on whether AI can genuinely be creative or if it simply recombines patterns derived from training data (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020). For many, this marks a critical shift in the understanding of creativity as not solely a human attribute but one that can be shared, in varying degrees, with technological systems.

One significant contribution of AI-generated texts lies in their potential to serve as tools for inspiration and idea generation. Writers often use AI as a "creative partner" that offers prompts, drafts, or stylistic variations, thereby expanding the range of possibilities available in the writing process (Zhang & van der Schaar, 2022). By functioning as a collaborator rather than a competitor, AI supports writers in overcoming creative blocks and encourages experimentation with new forms of expression. However, the extent of this support depends on the writer's willingness to critically engage with AI outputs rather than adopt them uncritically. Despite its benefits, AI-generated writing raises important concerns about originality and authenticity. Scholars have noted that machine-produced texts tend to follow predictable patterns, reflecting biases and conventions embedded in their training data (Sarkar, 2023). This raises questions about whether such outputs can truly be regarded as original literary works or whether they remain simulations of creativity. For poets and novelists, the issue of authenticity becomes especially pressing, as literature is often valued for its capacity to reflect human experience, emotion, and cultural context—qualities that machines cannot fully replicate.

The ethical implications of AI in creative writing are equally significant. Questions of authorship and ownership become complex when a text is generated by an algorithm but curated or edited by a human writer. Copyright laws and academic integrity standards are still adapting to account for the blurred boundaries between human and machine contributions (McGregor, 2021). Moreover, there are fears that over-reliance on AI might marginalize diverse voices, leading to a homogenization of literary output shaped by algorithms trained on dominant cultural discourses. Nevertheless, the integration of AI into creative writing also opens opportunities for reimagining authorship as a collaborative and evolving process. Rather than diminishing human creativity, AI can act as a catalyst that encourages writers to rethink how texts are produced, circulated, and valued in contemporary culture (Vechtomova, 2025). By embracing AI as a partner rather than a

replacement, the literary field can explore new frontiers of expression while preserving the uniqueness of human voice and imagination.

Ethical and Philosophical Perspectives

The increasing indistinguishability of machine-authored and human-authored poems introduces ethical and philosophical dilemmas. Who owns AI-generated texts? Can machines be considered 'creative' without consciousness or lived experience? Miller (2019) explores such dilemmas, arguing that AI creativity should be understood not as autonomous but as co-creative—dependent on human input, prompting, and interpretation.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The present study on generative AI and its impact on English poetry is grounded in theories of creativity, authorship, and human–machine interaction. Traditional theories of creativity often emphasize the uniqueness of human imagination and the originality of artistic expression. Boden's (2016) theory of creativity identifies three forms of creative processes—combinational, exploratory, and transformational—which provide a useful lens for understanding how AI systems generate text. Generative models predominantly operate within the combinational mode, rearranging patterns from training data, though their outputs can appear exploratory or even transformational to human observers. This framework helps assess whether AI-generated poetry constitutes "genuine creativity" or merely a sophisticated simulation of it.

Equally relevant is Foucault's (1969/1998) notion of the "author function," which conceptualizes authorship not as an individual property but as a cultural construct shaped by discourse. From this perspective, AI challenges traditional boundaries of authorship by introducing non-human agents into the creative process. Rather than displacing human writers, AI systems may be understood as expanding the field of authorship, where meaning is co-produced through human–machine collaboration. This aligns with contemporary poststructuralist views that decenter the author as the sole origin of meaning, instead emphasizing intertextuality and collective creativity.

The framework also draws on theories of human–AI collaboration in creative work. Research on augmented creativity suggests that AI functions as a "cognitive partner" that enhances ideation and stylistic experimentation (Zhang & van der Schaar, 2022). In this sense, AI is not a replacement for human creativity but a mediating tool that influences the conditions under which creativity emerges. Vechtomova's (2025) work further highlights that AI can provide artistic inspiration by balancing predictability with randomness, thereby stimulating new directions in poetic composition. At the same time, authenticity and cultural value remain central to the evaluation of AI-generated texts. McGregor (2021) argues that the legitimacy of machine-generated art depends not only on its technical quality but also on how audiences interpret and attribute meaning to it. This underscores the importance of socio-cultural frameworks in studying AI's role in literature, reminding us that creativity is not simply a cognitive act but also a social and ethical phenomenon. Bringing these perspectives together, the theoretical framework for this study situates AI as both a technological and cultural actor. By engaging with creativity theory, authorship studies, and human–AI collaboration models, it provides a holistic lens to examine how generative AI reshapes the production, perception, and valuation of English poetry.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach informed by literary analysis and reader-response theory: Poems produced by ChatGPT were compared with poems written by undergraduate English students at colleges in Mardan. Evaluation focused on imagery,

metaphor, structure, and emotional resonance. Reader Surveys and Interviews: Surveys and semi-structured interviews with 50 students and 10 faculty members assessed perceptions of aesthetic quality and emotional depth in both AI and human poems. ChatGPT was used to generate poems based on identical prompts given to human participants, ensuring comparability. Ethical considerations were addressed by securing informed consent and anonymizing participant responses.

5. Findings and Discussion

The initial findings reveal that many readers are unable to consistently differentiate between poetry written by humans and that generated by AI, which echoes earlier research on machine-authored creative texts. Studies on computational creativity suggest that audiences often evaluate outputs based on surface-level qualities such as structure, rhyme, or fluency, rather than deeper markers of originality or authenticity (Floridi & Chiriatti, 2020). This explains why participants frequently described AI-generated poems as "polished" and "technically flawless," highlighting the machine's capacity to replicate established literary conventions. However, these evaluations also expose an important limitation: the absence of personal depth or lived experience, features that remain central to how readers attribute value to poetry (McGregor, 2021).

This paradox—technical mastery without emotional authenticity—points to a fundamental tension in the adoption of AI for creative purposes. While algorithms excel at mimicry and stylistic imitation, they lack the embodied and experiential grounding that informs human creativity. Readers often look to poetry not only for aesthetic form but also for a sense of emotional resonance and cultural identity. The perception that AI cannot adequately convey these dimensions reinforces the idea that authenticity in literature is as much about the writer's subjectivity as it is about the final text. Thus, even as AI demonstrates competence in formal aspects of poetic production, its perceived limitations highlight the enduring significance of human experience in literary evaluation (Zhang & van der Schaar, 2022). Participant reflections also reveal ambivalence about the broader implications of AI for the future of poetry. On one hand, some readers expressed concern that the increasing sophistication of generative systems could displace human poets, raising fears of redundancy and devaluation of artistic labor. Such apprehensions mirror long-standing anxieties about automation in creative and cultural industries (Sarkar, 2023). On the other hand, optimism was also evident, with several respondents envisioning a collaborative role for AI—where poets use machines as tools to enhance productivity, overcome creative blocks, or experiment with new poetic forms. These divergent perspectives suggest that acceptance of AI in literature will depend not only on technical capabilities but also on cultural attitudes toward human authorship and artistic authenticity. The notion of collaboration between human and machine aligns closely with Miller's (2019) concept of co-creativity, which emphasizes shared agency in the creative process. From this perspective, AI does not replace poets but rather expands the boundaries of what is possible in poetic practice. When employed thoughtfully, AI can act as a catalyst for innovation by offering unexpected patterns, linguistic variations, and thematic suggestions that stimulate human imagination (Vechtomova, 2025). This collaborative model reframes the debate: instead of viewing AI as a threat to poetic tradition, it can be seen as a partner that augments, rather than diminishes, the creative agency of the human poet.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Generative artificial intelligence has emerged as a disruptive yet inspiring force in the literary arts, particularly within poetry. Its capacity to mimic human styles with technical precision unsettles traditional

assumptions about authorship, originality, and the role of the poet. At the same time, AI-generated verse exposes an important paradox: while machines can reproduce form and structure, they struggle to capture the emotional depth and lived experience that define much of human creativity. This duality situates AI as both a challenge and an opportunity for poets, educators, and literary scholars. Beyond the philosophical questions it raises, AI also presents fertile ground for artistic experimentation. Writers are increasingly using generative systems as collaborators, drawing on their ability to suggest novel imagery, unusual rhythms, or unexpected metaphors. Such co-creative practices extend the boundaries of poetic possibility, encouraging hybrid forms that blend human imagination with algorithmic unpredictability. Rather than threatening the vitality of poetry, these tools may ultimately help to diversify literary expression, offering poets new ways to challenge conventions and reach audiences. For educators, particularly in contexts such as Pakistan where literature is closely tied to cultural identity and pedagogy, the rise of AI signals an urgent need for curricular innovation. English teachers cannot ignore the influence of these technologies on how students read, write, and imagine literature. Instead of framing AI as an adversary, educators should encourage students to critically engage with its strengths and limitations. In doing so, learners can experiment with AI as a creative aid while cultivating their own distinct voice, emotional sensibility, and cultural perspective. Educators should integrate AI literacy into literature teaching, encouraging students to use generative AI as a creative partner while developing their own authentic voice and cultural perspective. Institutions must establish ethical guidelines on authorship and originality to ensure responsible use. In this way, AI can be harnessed as a catalyst for innovation rather than a threat to human creativity.

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