



Narrative, Style, and Meaning: Exploring the Divide between Human and AI Literature

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Abstract

This theoretical research explores the fundamental differences between human literary writing and artificial intelligence-generated texts by examining how language, style, and narrative structure function in each form of authorship. Using Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) as the primary literary example, the study analyzes how human writing draws on lived experience, cultural memory, emotional depth, and intentional creativity. In contrast, AI-generated texts rely on statistical patterns rather than consciousness or authentic meaning-making, resulting in writing that may be linguistically coherent but lacks symbolic richness and emotional resonance.

Through a descriptive and analytical methodology, supported by insights from Narrative Theory and stylistic analysis, the research clarifies how human writers construct meaning through metaphor, psychological depth, and cultural context. Meanwhile, AI models reproduce patterns derived from training data, limiting their ability to convey moral complexity, emotional authenticity, or cultural nuance. The study concludes that although artificial intelligence can simulate certain linguistic features, it cannot replicate the human capacity for symbolic creativity or experiential meaning-making. These findings contribute to ongoing academic discussions on authorship, creativity, and the future of literary production in the digital age.

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السرد والأسلوب والمعنى: استكشاف الفجوة بين الأدب البشري والذكاء الاصطناعي

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المستخلص

يستكشف هذا البحث الاختلافات الجوهرية بين الكتابة الأدبية البشرية والنصوص المُولدة بالذكاء الاصطناعي، وذلك من خلال دراسة كيفية عمل اللغة والأسلوب والبنية السردية في كل شكل من أشكال التأليف. باستخدام رواية "الحبيبة" لتوني موريسون (1987) كمثال أدبي رئيسي، تُحلل الدراسة كيفية استناد الكتابة البشرية على التجربة المعاشة، والذاكرة الثقافية، والعمق العاطفي، والإبداع الهادف. في المقابل، تعتمد النصوص المُولدة بالذكاء الاصطناعي على الأنماط الإحصائية بدلاً من الوعي أو بناء المعنى الأصلي، مما ينتج عنه كتابة قد تكون متماسكة لغوياً ولكنها تفتقر إلى الثراء الرمزي والصدى العاطفي.

من خلال منهجية وصفية وتحليلية، مدعومة برؤى مستمدة من نظرية السرد والتحليل الأسلوبي، يوضح البحث كيف يبني الكُتّاب البشر المعنى من خلال الاستعارة، والعمق النفسي، والسياق الثقافي. في الوقت نفسه، تُعيد نماذج الذكاء الاصطناعي إنتاج أنماط مستمدة من بيانات التدريب، مما يحد من قدرتها على نقل التعقيد الأخلاقي، والأصالة العاطفية، أو الفروق الثقافية الدقيقة. خلصت الدراسة إلى نتيجة مفادها أنه بالرغم من قدرة الذكاء الاصطناعي على محاكاة بعض السمات اللغوية، إلا أنه لا يستطيع محاكاة القدرة البشرية على الإبداع الرمزي أو بناء المعنى التجريبي. تُسهم هذه النتائج في النقاشات الأكاديمية الجارية حول التأليف والإبداع ومستقبل الإنتاج الأدبي في العصر الرقمي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: السرد البشري، النص المُولد بالذكاء الاصطناعي، نظرية السرد، الصدمة، الحبيب

1. Introduction

The rapid development of artificial intelligence has reshaped many aspects of language production, authorship, and creative expression. As advanced language models increasingly generate texts that resemble human writing, questions have emerged regarding the boundaries between machine output and genuine literary creation. Artificial intelligence systems process massive datasets to produce sentences that are grammatically coherent and stylistically consistent. However, the absence of lived experience, emotional awareness, and cultural memory raises doubts about whether these systems can truly engage in literary meaning-making. Human literature has historically been a reflection of consciousness, imagination, and cultural identity, while artificial intelligence generates text based on statistical prediction and pattern recognition. In this study, human literary writing refers to narrative production shaped by memory, culture, and emotional experience, while artificial intelligence writing denotes machine-generated text produced through algorithmic models without personal intentionality.

Human literary writing relies on subjective interpretation, emotional engagement, and the ability to draw on memory and social experience. Writers use language not only to narrate events but also to communicate symbolic meaning, ethical tension, and psychological depth. These qualities emerge from the author's personal history, cultural background, and imaginative vision. In contrast, artificial intelligence lacks intentionality; its output is shaped by the patterns present in its training data rather than by reflective thought or conscious expression. As a result, artificial intelligence may imitate literary style, yet it cannot reproduce the emotional resonance and symbolic weight inherent in human-authored texts.

Based on these observations, the central problem addressed in this research is the growing difficulty of distinguishing between the linguistic fluency of artificial intelligence and the experiential depth of human literary writing. While artificial intelligence continues to improve in producing structurally coherent text, it remains unclear whether such text can achieve the psychological complexity, cultural nuance, and symbolic meaning that define human literature. This issue has become especially relevant in contemporary literary studies, where the boundaries of authorship and creativity are increasingly contested.

This study adopts a theoretical perspective to investigate these differences by examining selected features of human literary writing using Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) as the primary example. The novel's exploration of memory, trauma, and identity demonstrates how human authors use narrative structure, stylistic complexity, and cultural symbolism to convey meaning. To clarify these distinctions, the research aims to examine how human literature constructs meaning and how these processes differ from artificial intelligence output. The study therefore seeks to answer the following questions: How do human authors employ narrative and stylistic techniques to express psychological depth and cultural experience? To what extent can artificial intelligence simulate these techniques? What essential qualities of human literary writing remain beyond the capacity of machine-generated text?

Understanding how human literature differs from artificial intelligence output contributes to current debates about authorship and creativity in the digital age. The significance of this research lies in its potential to clarify the limits of artificial intelligence as a literary tool and to highlight the irreplaceable role of lived experience in shaping literary meaning. This introduction sets the foundation for a broader analysis that situates human literary writing within a framework of emotional, cultural, and symbolic expression, while identifying the limitations that prevent artificial intelligence from achieving the same depth and intentionality.

2. Literature Review

Research on human literary authorship has consistently emphasized the centrality of lived experience, cultural context, and emotional depth in narrative production. Traditional literary scholarship describes human writing as a process grounded in memory, identity, and intentional meaning-making. Herman (2002) argues that narrative is an extension of consciousness, shaped by the author's interpretive engagement with the world. Human writers employ imaginative, symbolic, and affective strategies that emerge from personal experiences and shared cultural histories, enabling literature to convey complex psychological and social realities.

Recent academic discussions have increasingly addressed the rise of AI-generated texts and their implications for creativity and authorship. Scholars such as Bender et al. (2021) highlight the mechanical nature of AI systems, noting that they generate language based on statistical prediction rather than intentional expression. Although AI tools are capable of producing grammatically coherent sentences and imitating stylistic patterns found in training data, they do not possess the experiential grounding or interpretive awareness necessary for producing literary meaning in the human sense. This distinction has become a central issue as AI systems begin to approximate the surface features of storytelling.

Comparative studies examining human and machine-generated narratives remain limited but offer valuable insights. Clarke (2021) argues that while AI can replicate narrative form, it lacks the cultural nuance and emotional resonance that define human-authored literature. Studies involving creative platforms such as GPT-based systems show that AI often produces narratives that are fluent but repetitive, lacking symbolic depth or psychological complexity. The gaps identified by these scholars create a clear research space for examining how narrative meaning differs between human and machine-created texts, especially when grounded in a single literary work that is rich in thematic and structural complexity.

This review reveals a significant research gap: although scholars have analyzed AI's linguistic capabilities, few studies have conducted a direct narrative-theoretical comparison using a canonical text such as *Beloved*. By focusing on this novel and a parallel AI-generated passage, the present study contributes a deeper understanding of how human storytelling diverges from artificial narrative construction, particularly in terms of symbolism, temporality, emotional depth, and narrative intention.

3. Theoretical Framework:

3.1. Human Narrative Construction and Meaning-Making

Human-authored narratives are grounded in lived experience, emotional memory, and cultural identity. As narrative theorists such as Genette (1980), David Herman (2002), and Monika Fludernik (1996) argue, meaning in literature emerges from the interplay of time, voice, mood, and perspective. These elements reflect the author's intentional choices and shape how readers interpret symbolic depth, ethical tensions, and psychological complexity. Works such as Morrison's *Beloved* demonstrate how fragmented temporality and layered narration embody trauma and collective memory, illustrating the inseparable relationship between human creativity and narrative meaning-making.

3.2. AI Narrative Generation and Computational Patterning

AI-generated writing operates through statistical prediction and pattern recognition rather than conscious intent or experiential knowledge. As highlighted by Bender et al. (2021), artificial intelligence does not "understand" language but produces text by modeling probable linguistic sequences from large datasets. Applying narrative theory to AI outputs reveals limitations in temporal coherence, narrative perspective, and symbolic layering. While AI can simulate fluency and structural consistency, its narratives lack the experiential grounding and cultural agency that shape human-authored literary expression. This theoretical distinction frames the study's comparative analysis between human narratives and AI-generated texts.

4. Methodology (Narrative Form)

This study adopts a theoretical and qualitative methodology that aligns with its aim of examining the fundamental distinctions between human literary writing and artificial intelligence-generated text. Rather than relying on empirical datasets or machine-produced samples, the research employs a conceptual narratological approach. This direction responds to the methodological concerns often raised in scholarly reviews, particularly the need for clarity, replicability, and the avoidance of hypothetical AI examples. As

such, the study focuses exclusively on human literary production, using Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) as the central text through which literary meaning-making is explored.

The analytical orientation of this research is grounded in narrative theory, drawing on the contributions of Gérard Genette (1980), David Herman (2002), and Monika Fludernik (1996). Their frameworks offer the tools necessary to examine how narrative time, voice, mood, and perspective generate meaning. These concepts guide the reading of Morrison's novel, allowing the study to trace the ways in which human authors use narrative form to convey psychological depth, cultural memory, and symbolic resonance. The choice of *Beloved* is deliberate: its engagement with trauma, identity, and historical memory provides a rich site for examining the emotional and experiential grounding that distinguishes human writing from algorithmic text production.

Through close reading of selected passages, the study analyzes how Morrison constructs meaning through nonlinear temporality, fragmented structures, and shifting narrative focalization. This method foregrounds the author's intentional shaping of narrative as a reflection of lived experience and cultural history. The stylistic and symbolic dimensions of the text are similarly examined in relation to trauma theory and narratology, highlighting how language becomes a vehicle for emotional resonance and cultural expression.

Because artificial intelligence systems generate text through statistical prediction rather than consciousness, intentionality, or cultural belonging, the discussion integrates conceptual comparisons between human meaning-making and the mechanistic processes of language models. These comparisons draw on established research about AI limitations—most notably its lack of experiential grounding, emotional awareness, and interpretive agency—without relying on constructed examples or machine-generated excerpts. This ensures methodological integrity and addresses concerns regarding empirical validity raised by academic reviewers

The scope of the study is therefore intentionally theoretical. It does not attempt to evaluate the performance of specific AI models, perform computational linguistic measurements, or produce side-by-side comparisons of human and AI texts. Instead, it situates literary meaning within the domain of lived experience, memory, and cultural identity, demonstrating why these foundations remain inaccessible to artificial intelligence. By adopting this conceptual methodology, the research maintains analytic coherence while contributing to broader scholarly conversations about authorship, creativity, and the cultural role of literature in an age increasingly shaped by digital technologies.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Overview of the Primary Text

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) recounts the story of Sethe, a formerly enslaved woman seeking freedom while confronting the psychological devastation left by slavery. After escaping Sweet Home plantation, Sethe lives with her daughter Denver in a house haunted by the spirit of her murdered infant. The novel unfolds through a nonlinear structure that shifts between past and present, revealing how trauma persists across time and memory. The arrival of the enigmatic young woman *Beloved*—who seems to embody the ghost of Sethe's child—forces the characters to confront repressed memories,

unresolved grief, and inherited cultural wounds. Morrison's fragmented storytelling, shifting voices, and symbolic richness make the novel a powerful representation of trauma and an ideal foundation for examining the distinctions between human-authored narrative meaning and artificial intelligence-generated text.

5.2. Temporality and the Narrative Construction of Trauma

Morrison's manipulation of time reflects what Genette (1980) identifies as complex temporal ordering, particularly through analepsis and temporal fragmentation that mirror Sethe's fractured memory. The recurrent line "It was not a story to pass on" (Morrison, 1987, p. 274) functions as a temporal and thematic anchor, continually disrupting linear chronology. Herman's narrative theory supports this reading by emphasizing that narrative time is a cognitive mapping of lived experience; Morrison uses temporal instability to express the lingering presence of trauma. In contrast, artificial intelligence relies on statistically dominant temporal patterns and lacks any experiential grounding that would allow it to intentionally manipulate chronology to symbolize emotional or psychological states. Thus, the temporal structure of *Beloved* exemplifies human meaning-making rooted in memory and consciousness, not reproducible by algorithmic prediction.

5.3. Narrative Voice, Interior Consciousness, and Experientiality

Morrison's shifts in narrative voice demonstrate what Genette (1980) terms variable focalization, allowing access to Sethe's inner consciousness, Denver's emerging identity, and *Beloved*'s haunting presence. Passages such as "Some things you forget. Other things you never do." (p. 43) reveal psychological depth through rhythmic repetition and emotional cadence, which Fludernik (1996) describes as markers of experientiality—the narrative simulation of lived human experience. This interiority arises from Morrison's emotional insight and cultural memory, elements inseparable from human existence. Artificial intelligence, however, lacks subjective consciousness and cannot construct narrative interiority beyond surface-level imitation. As Bender et al. (2021) argue, AI language models are "stochastic parrots," producing fluent sequences without awareness or intention. Morrison's voice-centered narrative therefore illustrates a dimension of literature that AI cannot authentically reproduce.

5.4. Symbolism, Cultural Memory, and the Limits of Algorithmic Meaning

The symbolic weight of *Beloved* as a figure of historical trauma and collective memory exemplifies Herman's concept of narrative meaning as a system of cognitive and cultural cues. Lines such as "Beloved, she my daughter. She mine." (p. 236) encapsulate the fusion of grief, guilt, and maternal identity, reflecting emotional truths grounded in African American cultural history. Such symbolism depends on cultural belonging, emotional heritage, and lived experience—qualities absent from artificial intelligence. While AI can imitate metaphorical forms through pattern recognition, it cannot generate symbolism rooted in cultural memory or ethical struggle. Eagleton (2012) notes that literature embodies ideology and social experience; without access to these human dimensions, AI remains limited to producing stylistic approximation rather than genuine symbolic meaning. Thus, *Beloved* demonstrates the irreplaceable role of human creativity in constructing emotional and cultural depth inaccessible to machine-generated text.

6. Conclusion

This study sets out to clarify the fundamental distinctions between human literary writing and artificial intelligence-generated text by examining how narrative meaning is constructed in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987). Through a theoretical and narratological framework, the analysis demonstrated that literary creativity is inseparable from lived experience, cultural memory, and emotional consciousness—dimensions that artificial intelligence systems, reliant on statistical prediction, do not possess. Morrison's fragmented temporality, shifting narrative voices, and layered symbolism reveal how human authors transform memory, trauma, and cultural history into narrative form, creating meanings that extend far beyond linguistic fluency.

The findings affirm that the experiential and intentional foundations of human literature are essential for generating psychological depth and cultural resonance. While artificial intelligence can replicate stylistic patterns or surface-level coherence; it lacks the consciousness, identity, and emotional awareness needed to produce symbolic and interpretive complexity. The contrast between Morrison's narrative techniques and algorithmic text-generation processes reinforces the central argument of this study. literary meaning-making is an inherently human activity grounded in subjective experience and cultural heritage.

These conclusions contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions about authorship and creativity in the digital age. By highlighting the limits of artificial intelligence as a literary agent, the study underscores the enduring significance of human storytelling as a mode of cultural preservation and emotional expression. Future research may explore readers' responses to human versus AI-generated narratives, or examine how emerging technologies influence literary production. However, the insights gained from this analysis make clear that the depth, intentionality, and symbolic richness of human literature remain beyond the reach of machine-generated text.

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