



The Digital Laureate: Examining AI-Generated Poetry

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Abstract

This study explores the intersection of artificial intelligence and creative expression, focusing on the emergence of AI-generated poetry. It overviews existing literature on AI and its integration into literature, emphasizing AI poetry specifically. At the heart of this study are three poems generated by the AI model ChatGPT 4. Through a critical analysis of these poems and their prompts, the study found that, to a certain extent, AI can mirror human poetic expression producing complex poems with numerous literary devices. However, AI’s creativity is constrained by training material, prompts, and prompters, signaling both AI’s potential and limitations in shaping contemporary poetry.

Keywords: *AI Poetry, ChatGPT, AI and Literature; English Literature; Authorship; Poetry Analysis*

1. Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of literature, the intersection with artificial intelligence (AI) marks a profound shift in the creative paradigm. As technology continues to advance, the amalgamation of AI and literature has given rise to novel forms of artistic expression, challenging traditional notions of authorship and human creativity.

AI’s foray into the realm of literature introduces unprecedented possibilities, questioning the boundaries of human imagination and ingenuity. This study is particularly salient in the domain of poetry, where the nuanced interplay of language, emotion, and creativity traditionally embodies the very essence of the human experience. As technologies like ChatGPT 4 enable the “new” generation of poetic compositions, one question becomes ever more important: *What happens to literature in times of AI?*

2. Literature Review

The advent of artificial intelligence in the creative fields marks a significant shift in the landscape of literary production and authorship. AI has been part of the literary world for decades, yet with the rapid development of Generative AI, its influence is now, arguably, more notable than ever. Though important in the creative writing segment, AI seems to help simplify other writing processes as well. For one, AI is revolutionizing the literature review process, with potential to expedite various steps (Wagner et al. 2021). Within clicks, AI tools can list previous research in a field, and summarize entire papers or selected chapters fed to the algorithm. This, in turn, plays a significant role in AI research, as well, influencing research focus, career choice,

community formation, science communication, ethical thinking, and sociotechnical future modeling (Dillon et al. 2022).

Alongside this, the field of AI poetry is rapidly advancing, too, with a focus on natural language processing and intelligent writing (Li & Zhang 2020). Research into AI-generated poetry is on the rise, too. Rafner et al. (2023) highlight the transformative role of generative AI in creative processes, indicating a paradigm shift in traditional creativity models. Vincon et al. (2023) emphasize the evolving nature of creative behavior in the digital age, underscoring the potential of AI in enhancing and redefining artistic expression while Wingström, Hautala, and Lundman (2023) offer insights into the dynamics of creativity in the context of AI, suggesting a nuanced interplay between technology and human creativity, while Köbis and Mossink (2020) discuss readers' ability to differentiate between human- and AI-generated poems. AI-powered poetry analysis is also becoming more prominent. In fact, efforts are being made to ensure that AI poetry analysis is unbiased and diverse, with the development of a poetry discovery system (Choi 2022).

Advanced, conversation-based AI models such as ChatGPT, have revolutionized text production in the contemporary era. And poetry-production has been no exception. Yet, although AI generated poems may seem indistinguishable to the untrained eye, research has found that there are clear differences between AI-generated poetry and human poetry, with AI works being seen as artistic events rather than masterpieces (Wenchao 2020). Despite these differences, the AI poetry generation continues to be explored, with a focus on the unique characteristics of poetry and the methods employed upon creating it (Linardaki 2022). But what about authorship and creative thoughts? Although concerns about “the death of the author” seem to follow AI’s rapid development, Hudson et al. (2023) find such concerns unfounded, especially when examining historical patterns of creative individuals i.e. people working in the field of art embracing emerging technologies, particularly considering shifts in authorship since post-structuralism and Barthes’ “*Death of the Author*” in 1967 and Foucault’s “*What is an Author*”. According to Boden and Edmonds (2017) AI can transform traditional art forms, including literature.

3. Why Poetry?

Though AI software such as ChatGPT can be used to produce text of various kinds, this study focuses on AI poetry in particular, mostly due to the unique flexibility poetry allows, encompassing arbitrariness and embracing absurdity. The multitude of language levels in poetry makes for an excellent backdrop for AI-text exploration. The varied styles and forms within poetry offer many opportunities to experiment and analyze AI’s productions. Additionally, the challenges posed by the intricate nature of poetry provide insight into AI systems’ capacity to comprehend and replicate complex artistic expressions and human emotions captured in poetry.

It is important to note that although, as of now, there are other AI-powered poetry-generating tools available, such as [DeepAI](#)’s poetry generator and [BoredHumans](#)’ AI poetry writer, ChatGPT was selected as the “digital laureate” of this study due to its unparalleled training dataset and hundreds of billions of parameters that help the model understand contextual clues and produce coherent text.

4. Methodology

This qualitative study employs a self-analysis approach to explore three poems generated by ChatGPT 4, along with the corresponding prompts used. The goal is to identify themes, stylistic

choices, and literary devices employed in the AI-generated poetry. The self-analysis involves an in-depth examination by the author.

4.1. Sample

This study uses a purposive or selective sample of three AI-generated poems and the corresponding prompts used to generate them. This sampling approach calls for selecting units because they have the exact features needed for the study (Patton 1990). Such a sample allows for an in-depth analysis of the chosen poems, providing targeted insights into the capabilities and creative outputs of ChatGPT 4.

4.2. Research Procedure

- a. *Poem Generation*: Using ChatGPT 4, three distinct poems were generated based on three separate prompts/series of prompts.
- b. *Self-Analysis*: The author conducted a comprehensive self-analysis of the poems, identifying prevalent themes, stylistic choices, and literary devices.

The self-analysis did not follow a specific literary theory or model rigidly; instead, a more holistic and flexible approach was adopted to allow for a comprehensive understanding of the unique characteristics of each poem and the creative capacities of AI. This approach ensured that the analysis was tailored to the distinct qualities of such AI-generated poetry.

4.3. Ethical Considerations

The study adheres to ethical guidelines by using AI-generated content responsibly. No human participants were involved, mitigating concerns related to privacy and consent.

4.4. Limitations

It is crucial to acknowledge and address certain limitations in exploring the creative potential of AI-generated poetry:

- a. *AI Bias*: The inherent biases within ChatGPT 4 may influence the generated poems.
- b. *Generalization limitations*: Findings may be limited to the specific model and prompts used, restricting the generalizability of the obtained results.
- c. *Subjectivity*: The self-analysis always introduces a subjective element, potentially influencing the interpretation of the generated poems.
- d. *Rapid changes in AI Systems*: AI systems are dynamic which may result in varying outputs over time, affecting the consistency of results.

Despite these limitations, this study provides valuable insights into AI-generated poetry, and its features, contributing to the ongoing discourse on AI and art.

5. Results and Discussion

To generate the sample of poems analyzed in the study, the following **prompts** were used:

- (1) *Hi. I have a fun task for you today. I want you to generate three distinct poems. I will give you further details below. Are you ready?*
- (2) *Here we go. Poem 1 – Write a free-verse poem, inspired by E.E. Cummings' style. Write 10 lines max. No rhyme except in the last two lines. Include themes of loneliness and solitude. Use any literary devices you deem necessary. Please title it.*

(3) *Let's continue. Poem 2 – Write a 14 line sonnet inspired by Neruda's love sonnets. Use any literary devices you deem necessary. Please title it.*

(4) *Great. One more to go! Suggest a non-trivial metaphor to use in a poem entitled "Can it be enough?" Describe the literal meaning of the poem, the story it tells, the mood it conveys, and develop the multi-level structure of its metaphorical meanings.*

*GPT generated text

Describe the content and structure of the poem in more detail.

*GPT generated text

What metric structure can it have? What kind of rhymes would be best And how could the sounds relate to the meaning?

*GPT generated text

How does it relate to the style of Roland Barthes?

*GPT generated text

Write the poem using the metaphors and structure mentioned above, ideally in the style of Barthes.

As one can notice, the prompts given to ChatGPT 4 vary in length and amount of details provided, in order to examine the potential link between information given in the prompt and the generated poem. The last prompt/series of prompts follows Sierszeń's (2022) sample prompts that, according to him, help structure an AI poem. The analysis of the AI-generated poems (below) reveals the important yet expected interplay between the specificity of the prompts and the obtained result.

The first poem, heavily influenced by E.E. Cummings' style showcases his recognizable minimalism and unconventional punctuation. The use of rhyme in the final lines, as per the prompt, provides a poignant closure to the poem, highlighting the thematic content. The prompt is detailed enough yet it does not allow for much user-training that would, in turn, result in a far more complex result.

The second poem, crafted as a 14-line sonnet, resonates with the style of Neruda's love sonnets. It adheres to the traditional sonnet structure while infusing romantic imagery, as prompted. The prompt is similar to the first one, though it lacks the thematic specification of the to-be-generated poem, testing the model's ability for creative thinking.

The last poem, generated after a series of prompts, best showcases the importance of prompting and user-training of the language model. Following the comprehensive explanations of the main metaphor, author style and rhyme and metric structure, the poem is not only significantly longer, but richer in imagery and symbolism. This perfectly showcases the difference in outputs due to user creativity/input.

The **poems** themselves, alongside the prompts, provide important insights into AI creativity and its limitations. The AI-generated poems used as this study's main sample are: "Whispers in Solitude"; "Eternal Light of Love" and "Can It Be Enough?".

5.1. Whispers in Solitude

*in this solitude, i am (un)seen,
a shadow within shadows, whispering to the void,
world(s) spin, unaware of my silent echo,
i am here (not here) in the quiet.*

*spaces between stars, like the gaps in my words,
fragmented, yet whole in their brokenness,
a paradox, wrapped in the enigma of alone,
solitude, a language only i speak fluently.*

*in this stillness, my heart finds its beat,
lonely, yet in loneliness, i meet.*

“Whispers in Solitude” stands out for its introspective quality, employing paradox and imagery to evoke a sense of mystery and depth. The poem’s exploration of presence and absence, in “*I am here (not here)*,” is particularly evocative. In terms of its **themes**, this poem explores solitude and introspection, as per the prompt’s text. As for the **literary devices**, the poem employs contrast as in “*shadow within shadows*” and “*(un)seen*” to add depth to the idea of an inner world that is rich yet unnoticed. Shadows are typically associated with darkness, mystery, or the unknown. By placing a “*shadow within shadows*,” the poem emphasizes a deeper layer of obscurity or concealment. This contrast between the singular shadow and the multitude of shadows adds richness to the imagery, suggesting layers of hidden meanings or complexities within the poem. Similarly, the use of parentheses around the word “un” creates a contrast between “seen” and “unseen.” The poem also includes metaphors of space and stars that effectively illustrate the concept of feeling small yet still significant. Alliteration is also used in some parts of the poem (“**lonely**, yet in **loneliness**”; “a **shadow** within **shadows**” etc.) which adds to the lulling effect of some of the lines.

Following the instructions, the poem is free-flowing, thus reflecting what could be interpreted as internal musings of the poet/speaker. The poem also uses parentheses (“*i am here (not here) in the quiet*”) and irregular capitalization (as in “*i speak fluently*”) as a notable **stylistic choice**. This atypical, experimental use of punctuation and capital letters is often seen in modernist, free-form poetry such as that written by E.E. Cummings’, mentioned in the prompt. In terms of emotions, the poem seems to evoke a sense of melancholy and introspection; a feeling of being simultaneously alone and at peace in one’s solitude. The final lines, “*lonely, yet in loneliness, I meet*,” beautifully encapsulate the bittersweet comfort of being alone. As for the rhyme scheme, the generated poem follows the prompt and only includes rhyme in the last couplet.

5.1.1. Graphology & Point of View

In his book *Stylistics: A Resource Book for Students*, Paul Simpson defines graphology as “*the patterns of written language [and] the shape of language on the page*” (Simpson 5). The graphology in this poem is doubtlessly noteworthy. The poem uses parentheses to create a visual representation of the speaker’s feeling of presence and absence, as seen in “*(un)seen*” and “*here (not here)*”. This visual representation adds an additional layer of meaning, suggesting a paradoxical state of being present yet absent.

The use of fragmented lines and varying line lengths visually represents the theme of solitude and fragmentation. The structure gives a sense of isolation and separation. The lack of capitalization in the poem might suggest a sense of informality or intimacy, as well as a subdued tone, fitting the theme of solitude and whispering. These graphological features are also notable in E.E. Cummings’ poems, which means that the model did nothing but imitate pre-established graphological notions of Cummings’ poetry.

As for the point of view, the poem is written from the first-person perspective, which provides an intimate and direct insight into the speaker's thoughts and feelings. The use of "i" (albeit not capitalized) emphasizes the personal and subjective experience of solitude. According to Simpson, the point of view is "*an important stylistic dimension*" and a "*perspective through which a story is told*" (p. 28), and thus it is important to be analyzed.

5.1.2. On AI's Limitations

Although the poem itself is perfectly adequate, when it comes to certain poetic subtleties, such as the rhetorical and structural variance that could enhance it, AI's limited understanding is evident. As a result, the structure of the poem is typically formulaic, not deviating one bit from E.E. Cummings' most famous pieces. This is not inherently bad, but it does indeed lower the poem's artistic value, as the poem's adherence to Cummings' minimalist style might be seen as overly derivative, potentially stifling the AI's own unique poetic voice. The length of some of the lines disrupts the flow of the poem, and the sensory details that could augment the visceral impact of the solitude described, are lacking. Obviously, Chat GPT 4 *can* follow prescribed structures and patterns yet it does not inherently understand the artful breaking or bending of the rules that human poets (such as E.E. Cummings in this case) often employ(ed) for dramatic or emotional effect.

5.2. Eternal Light of Love

*In the garden of your gaze, stars align,
Where whispers of the cosmos find their voice,
Each glance, a sonnet, in the night's embrace,
A melody of light in love's rejoice.*

*Your touch, a painter's stroke on canvas bare,
Crafting hues of passion, deep and true,
In your arms, the world fades, without a care,
Underneath the sky's ever-changing hue.*

*In the silence of our hearts, words unspoken,
Bloom like roses in an endless spring,
Each beat, a vow, a promise never broken,
In this dance of time, love's eternal ring.*

*With every breath, my soul finds its flight,
In the universe of us, eternal light.*

Similar to Neruda's love sonnets "Eternal Light of Love" is lyrically rich and romantic, with cosmic imagery effectively conveying the depth of love that serves as the poem's main **theme**. The consistent rhyme scheme adds a musical quality, while celestial imagery of "*stars*" and "*the universe*" add **stylistic** grandeur to the emotions conveyed. In addition, the poem includes numerous **literary devices** such as visual elements, "*In the garden of your gaze,*"; metaphors, "*Your touch, a painter's stroke,*" and alliteration "*A melody of light in love's rejoice*" to paint a vivid picture of passionate love. The AI's use of an extended metaphor of cosmic elements further enhances the theme of eternal and transcendental love while the (almost) consistent alternate ABAB rhyme scheme adds a certain rhythmic quality to the stanzas. It is interesting to

note that Neruda's sonnets don't typically employ such rhyme scheme. This shows that GPT used the preconceived notions of sonnet rhymes, probably part of its training material, and not Neruda's specific rhyme patterns to craft this poem. Whichever is the case, the sonnet's structure, combined with its lyrical, emotion-laden language, showcases Chat GPT's ability to not only follow the structural norms of classical poetry but also infuse it with its own, albeit trite, imagery.

5.1.1. Graphology & Point of View

The poem follows a strict, sonnet structure, with a consistent rhyme scheme and rhythm. This structure gives a sense of order and harmony, mirroring the theme of eternal and harmonious love. In addition, the capitalization of each line and the punctuation used throughout the poem contribute to its formal tone and structured appearance.

As for the point of view, the poem is from a first-person perspective, focusing on the speaker's feelings and experiences in love. The use of "my" and "I" makes the experience personal and direct, emphasizing the depth of the speaker's feelings.

5.1.2. On AI's Limitations

Although the poem undoubtedly resembles human poetry, AI's tendency to default to more common, even clichéd expressions may give the authorship away. The poem is formulaic, especially in its romantic imagery, which could have been refreshed with more original metaphors or unexpected turns of phrase. The use of the iambic pentameter is commendable, but at times, the rhythm feels forced, impacting the natural flow of the poem. A more varied metrical pattern could have furthered the dynamics of the sonnet, reflecting the ebb and flow of strong emotions such as love. Generally, these familiar images and metaphors emphasize the lack of originality that comes from the unique perspective and life experiences of a human poet. AI's (in)ability to make stylistic choices depends on the model's (limited) training that is solely based on existing literature and preconceived notions about it. This can and does predispose AI models to repeat well-established patterns, metaphors and themes.

5.3. Can It Be Enough?

*In a realm where sands whisper ancient tales,
Under a sky ablaze with a sun's unyielding gaze,
Stands a sentinel – a lone tree,
Roots clinging to life's elusive key.*

*Its bark, etched with time's unforgiving hand,
Leaves rustling with secrets of a barren land.
A testament to resilience, silent and proud,
Defying solitude, unspoken yet loud.*

*Scorched days roll into tempestuous nights,
Its silhouette a shadow against fleeting lights.
Sandstorms rage, yet it stands firm,
A stoic warrior, facing each term.*

*Rain – a rare, cherished visitor, graces its leaves,
A brief respite that the parched earth receives.
Droplets like pearls, a transient treasure,*

In these moments, the tree finds its pleasure.

*Thoughts, if trees could ponder over fate,
Would it muse on loneliness, or the strength innate?
Does it dream of forests, lush and wide,
Or relish the solace of its solitary stride?*

*Amidst the endless grains of time,
It witnesses seasons subtly chime.
A symbol of life's tenacious fight,
An emblem of a lone, enduring might.*

*Then comes the storm, fierce and wild,
Nature's wrath, unrestrained and unfiled.
The tree sways, bends, but does not break,
Amidst this fury, its spirit won't quake.*

*Years, like fleeting shadows, pass by,
Under the watchful gaze of the desert sky.
Growing, enduring, in its own space,
A stoic presence, a singular grace.*

*Can it be enough, this solitary stand?
A life spent rooted in sun-scorched sand?
In stillness lies answers, deep and profound,
In the quiet, life's truths are found.*

Through vivid imagery and strong narrative, “Can It Be Enough?” explores **themes** of resilience, solitude, and the passage of time through the metaphor of a lone tree in a desert. The poem elicits a feeling of being in awe of the strength of nature, and by extension, the human spirit against the backdrop of passing time. In addition, the poem poses philosophical questions about solitude and fulfillment, encouraging reflection on perseverance and endurance.

As for the **stylistic choices**, the poem boasts consistent structure with a coupled AABB rhyme scheme and almost constant iambic pentameter that adds a certain rhythmic value. The language used is evocative, with numerous **literary devices** such as personification (through the tree), contrast-filled phrases (“*sandstorms rage, yet it stands firm*”) and metaphors (“*Rain – a rare, cherished visitor*”) that vividly bring the scene to life. Alliteration is also found “*Rain – a rare, cherished visitor*,” alongside analogy, where the lone tree in the desert represents resilience, endurance, and the profound aspects of life.

5.1.1. Graphology & Point of View

The poem's structure, with its stanzas and consistent line length, provides a visual representation of the steady, enduring presence of the sentinel tree in the vast desert.

The visual spacing between stanzas may represent the passing of time or the shifts in the tree's experiences, mirroring the poem's exploration of resilience and endurance over time. The lack of intricate punctuation mirrors the stark and unadorned landscape of the desert, as well as the simplicity and stoicism of the tree's existence. As for the point of view, the poem seems to

shift between an external observer as a narrator and a speculative internal perspective of the tree. The use of third-person narrative (“*Its bark,*” “*Its silhouette*”) suggests an observer describing the tree, while sections like “*Thoughts, if trees could ponder over fate,*” introduce a possible speculative look into the tree’s possible inner life, inviting the reader to consider the tree’s perspective on its existence.

5.1.2. On AI’s Limitations

Despite all of the positive features of the poem noted, some stanzas feel repetitive and some parts – redundant. And although this is a viable attempt to mimic Barthes’ analytical style, the poem lacks the nuanced critique and introspection found in Barthes’ writings. While the poem attempts to mirror Barthes’ layered narrative and metaphorical complexity, it fails to fully capture the essential post-structuralist elements featured in his poems.. Barthes’ writing often deconstructs and challenges traditional literary structures and meanings, emphasizing the fluidity of interpretation and the multiplicity of meanings. “Can It Be Enough”, although metaphorically rich, lacks this level of philosophical depth and interrogation of language and meaning. It presents a more straightforward narrative, not delving into the deeper semiotic analysis that Barthes employs in his works to explore the multiple interpretations and meanings of text, sign, and symbolism.

5.4. Final remarks on the AI-generated poems

While each of the poems showcases ChatGPT’s capacity for creating emotionally resonant and thematically rich poetry, upon in-depth analysis, numerous weaknesses of such AI-generated poems are noted, which confirms Wenchao’s findings (2020). The poems seem to be clichéd, lack the deeper, more nuanced commentary on social norms, and most importantly, lack the profound, intuitive leaps and deeply personal touch that human poets bring to their work. This limitation is particularly evident when AI attempts to tackle complex emotional or philosophical themes, as it can replicate stylistic elements but may struggle to fully grasp and convey the nuanced emotional depth and subjective experiences that human poets weave into their work.

Ultimately, the analysis of these poems and their prompts shows that AI’s creativity is fundamentally influenced by the creativity of the prompt-giver as well as the patterns and data that the model has been trained on. This means that AI can but mirror the style, themes, and structures found in its training material. This reliance can lead to a lack of true originality or innovation in the poetry, which reiterates the idea posed by Hudson et al. (2023) that the author and authorship in these times of advanced AI text generators, is not dead and will not die.

5.5. AI’s Impact on Poetry

The impact of AI on poetry is complex, yet should not be deemed as fully negative, particularly in an educational setting. In the classroom, AI becomes a valuable tool, allowing students to explore various poetic forms and styles, while offering instant feedback to enhance their learning and even improve their poetry-writing skills.

AI can also help established poets and writers, giving them quick feedback, as well as inspiration and a means to overcome creative blocks. Last but not least, AI’s use in poetry-making can pave the way for the creation of new forms and styles, blending human creativity with machine intelligence. Such integration may make poetry more accessible and inclusive, especially for those without formal literary education and training.

6. Conclusion

In our contemporary literary landscape, artificial intelligence is redefining the boundaries of creativity and authorship, and AI-generated poetry is just one aspect of the complex relationship between technology and art. As shown in this study, while technically adept, AI-generated poems still fail to capture the nuanced creativity and emotional depth that human poets naturally embody. The poems are limited by the prompter's imagination and skills, which, in turn underscores the undying-importance of human creativity in any type of poetry-creating process.

As AI continues to evolve and integrate into the very essence of literary arts, the challenges and opportunities for creativity will only be enhanced. AI may change the way readers interact with poetry, and influence the publishing sphere. However, as for now, we can only speculate where the journey will take us in the years to come.

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