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Conflict and Symbiosis: The Impact of AI-Generated Scripts on Theatrical Aesthetics

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Article

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence has given rise to AI-driven theatrical creation. AI can swiftly generate large volumes of scripts that meet public acceptance and possess artistic merit. These AI-generated plays challenge traditional theatrical aesthetics, with the 'spiritual essence' rooted in human lived experience and intentionality may be weakened in current AI-generated scripts, due to the limitations of statistical simulation. Elements of artistic uniqueness that are difficult to replicate remain within traditional theatrical frameworks. The new theatrical aesthetics catalyzed by AI exhibit mechanical and repetitive qualities. This aesthetic perspective, when examined critically, acknowledges its value while analyzing potential ethical issues. AI-generated scripts raise copyright disputes: under current legal frameworks, the decentralized authorship of AI works complicates ownership attribution, and the statistical recombination of training data may increase the risk of unintentional imitation in script creation, while simultaneously causing creative alienation. The theatrical aesthetics of the AI era require continuous exploration and integration with traditional aesthetics, addressing ethical concerns while evolving into a more inclusive and open post-human aesthetic.

1. Introduction

As early as 2016, artificial intelligence first began creating scripts. In recent years, the rise of generative artificial intelligence has precipitated a paradigmatic shift in the field of artistic creation. With the advent of large language models (LLMs) such as OpenAI’s GPT-4, Anthropic’s Claude, and multimodal platforms like Suno and Sora, the act of writing—particularly in the domain of dramatic literature—has begun to exceed the boundaries of the human author. These AI systems, trained on massive corpora of human language, now possess the ability to produce coherent, stylistically adaptive, and structurally sound dramatic scripts, problematizing long-standing assumptions in aesthetics, literary theory, and dramaturgy regarding authorship, intention, and creativity. Unlike earlier forms of digital collaboration or algorithmically assisted composition, LLMs possess a generative capacity that is statistically adaptive and semi-autonomous. They do not simply *replicate* linguistic patterns; they *simulate* creative invention by predicting, contextualizing, and reassembling vast swaths of textual knowledge. Scholars such as Margaret Boden have described this mode of creativity as “combinational” (Boden, 2004), wherein novelty emerges through novel configurations of existing elements—a logic that underpins how generative AI systems produce dramatic content.

Historically, dramatic writing has been anchored in a humanist tradition that equates authorship with individual agency and creative originality. This authorial centrality—enshrined in the dramaturgical legacy of figures such as Shakespeare, Ibsen, or Brecht—has structured how dramatic texts are written, read, and canonized. Yet the incursion of

algorithmic systems into this domain calls for renewed interrogation of authorship as a construct. As Roland Barthes famously argued in *The Death of the Author*, “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (Barthes, 1977), a formulation that has taken on renewed resonance in an era where the “author” may no longer be human at all.What distinguishes the current moment is not merely the decentering of human authorship, but the emergence of computational creativity as a viable—albeit controversial—force in artistic production.

This challenges the ontological boundary between imitation and creation, raising questions about whether authorship must necessarily involve consciousness, intention, or even agency.Theater texts are not merely linguistic creations but also serve as action blueprints, vessels of conflict, and emotional carriers, forming the foundation of performance aesthetics, spatiotemporal aesthetics, and interactive aesthetics. To what extent, then, can AI-generated scripts claim aesthetic legitimacy or theatrical viability? We need to examine the linguistic beauty of AI-generated scripts—such as plot organization, pacing, and stage imagery—and analyze their impact on performance authenticity, audience interaction, and aesthetic differences across cultural contexts. The discussion should explore whether AI scripts can create beauty through scriptwriting combined with performance art, stage design, music, and sound design, while also considering the audience's perceptions, emotional resonance, and interpretation during performances.

The process of generative AI models creating narratives does not genuinely "understand" the semantic or intentional aspects of language, but rather approximates linguistic coherence through pattern recognition and frequency analysis. This process may be modeled heuristically as a three-stage framework: imitation, transformation, and reassembly.

- Imitation refers to the AI’s foundational act of reproducing the stylistic and structural conventions it has learned from training data.
- Transformation refers to the system's ability to alter these patterns through human-guided parameter tuning, temperature adjustment, and prompt engineering.
- Reassembly captures the emergent stage, wherein these fragments are synthesized into coherent, if often derivative, dramatic forms.

As Bender et al. warn, such systems are “stochastic parrots” (Bender et al., 2021)—capable of producing grammatically correct and semantically plausible output, but devoid of comprehension or intentionality. The limitations stemming from the absence of life experience and subject consciousness have sparked aesthetic debates regarding "authentic creation" and "emotional authenticity." This also prompts academia to re-examine the connotations and boundaries of "what constitutes dramatic beauty" in the digital age.

2. Related Works

The dimension of drama creation in which AI is involved Currently, role interaction design, stage design, audience participation experiences, and AI-enabled scriptwriting have all demonstrated significant potential. Performance analysis has shown that combining traditional Chinese opera with AI yields notably higher performance efficiency compared to conventional techniques (Yang, 2022). Additionally, scholars have developed a deep learning-based multimodal emotion recognition model, which is applied to real-time audience emotion detection to create music aligned with plot development and facilitate reasonable role interactions (Wang, 2024). The concept of "Theatrical Language Processing (TLP)" has been introduced alongside the development of the AI-driven creative support tool Scribble.ai, which enhances actors' improvisational skills and spontaneity—an approach that elevates audience immersion (Kang & Lee, 2025). Furthermore, research has described the implementation of conversational AI as co-creators alongside both characters and audiences in theatrical productions, granting viewers authentic control over narrative developments and even endings (Lander, 2025).

The advantages and disadvantages of AI in script writing For instance, research examining the use of GPT-3 in co-writing dramatic dialogue for improvisational performance has highlighted both its fluency and limitations in maintaining narrative coherence (Davis et al., 2023). Another study has underscored the potential of human-AI collaboration in haiku composition, as well as the underestimation of AI art stemming from algorithmic aversion (Hitsuwari et al., 2023). Additionally, scholars have delved into the necessity of balancing AI-generated content with the inherent human qualities of theatrical performances (Ren, 2024). A survey conducted by Azmat Ali Khan and colleagues revealed that while AI tools are mostly trusted for theme discovery and emotional analysis, people still doubt their ability to make literary judgments (Khan et al., 2025). Chen Ke has observed that intelligent character personality analysis provides a deeper, multi-dimensional deconstruction and reconstruction of human personality patterns, while introducing fresh perspectives, innovative methodologies, and novel approaches to dramatic research and pedagogy (Chen, 2024). Through the analysis of real-world cases, Peng and Xia have highlighted both the advantages of AI-assisted scriptwriting in primary and secondary schools—such as stimulating creativity and boosting efficiency—and its inherent limitations, including over-reliance on clichés and lack of emotional depth (Peng & Xia, 2025).

Aesthetic reflection on AI creation Lev Manovich and colleagues posit that AI art serves as a "mirror" to prompt humanity's re-examination of creativity, intelligence, and the essence of art, challenging anthropocentric perspectives and steering aesthetic concepts toward "dehumanization" (Manovich et al., 2023). Nicolas E. Neef and his team’s experiments revealed that AI-generated artworks receive more negative evaluations exclusively in

competitive scenarios against human creators (Neef et al., 2024). Research suggests that people's preference for human-created art may stem from a heightened appreciation of the human experience embedded within artistic expressions (Bellaiche et al., 2023). A comparative study of human versus AI playwriting, which employed computational methods and NLP tools to analyze two plays, found that AI is capable of producing creative literary works, though not as masterful as those crafted by creative humans (Elias et al., 2025). While AI can replicate the physical elements of human art, the unique emotional depth, motivations, and self-awareness inherent in genuine art remain irreplaceable. A study published in the Creativity Research Journal explored whether individual differences in creativity predict the quality of AI-assisted artworks, with findings demonstrating that more creative individuals can produce AI-enhanced works with greater originality—highlighting humanity's enduring influence on AI-generated artistic creation (Orwig et al., 2024). Building on this foundation, scholars have categorized AI-created art under posthuman aesthetics, arguing that the dynamic and open relationship between humans and non-humans ultimately means their interaction, influence, and coexistence cannot be conflictual or oppositional, but are destined to be symbiotic and cooperative in a "partner" manner (Jiang, 2023). Wu contends that the aesthetic revolution brought by AI should be understood from the perspective of "interaction," where the key lies not in defining "beauty" but in creating it through mutual stimulation; only in the boundary-free creative collaboration between humans and non-human entities can the true possibility of beauty be realized (Wu, 2024).

Ethical issues in AI drama writing When AI creates artworks, who should hold the copyright? Should it be the company developing the AI model, the artist providing training data, or the user who inputs the prompts? Current legal frameworks lack clear consensus on this matter, with insufficient ethical discussions. In the collaboration between AI and artists, "aesthetic loss of control" has become a typical phenomenon: artists' dominant power over aesthetic elements such as work style and composition is weakened, and the boundary between "humans and machines as tools" in traditional creation has blurred. This leads to a decline in artists' sense of belonging and subjectivity toward their works, and even gives rise to a sense of creative alienation (Xu et al., 2025). Some argue that since AI-generated art relies heavily on existing artworks as training data, these creations are essentially derivative works lacking independent originality (Zhao, 2023). Artists contend that AI companies illegally harvest their digital works to train generative models, directly infringing on their copyrights. However, others believe AI can expand artistic boundaries and even spark new creative possibilities when used as a tool (Calongne, 2024).

While these contributions are invaluable for understanding the functional affordances of AI in performance environments, they often leave unexamined the deeper structural reconfigurations that generative AI introduces into the poetics of drama and its substantial

influence on theatrical aesthetics. Current aesthetic reflections on AI creation predominantly focus on AI-generated paintings, with few sustained studies exploring how algorithmic creation reshapes grammar, compositional structures, and narrative mechanisms—thereby impacting the textual aesthetics of theater—and redefining the relationship between authorship and text under digital production conditions.

3. Methods

This study seeks to explore the profound aesthetic impacts of AI-driven theatrical creation. Drawing upon post-structuralist critiques of authorship (Foucault, 1984), media aesthetics (McLuhan, 1964), and theories of generative art (Galanter, 2008), the study interrogates how generative AI reconfigures core dramaturgical conventions. Rather than evaluating the technical quality or usability of AI-generated scripts, the paper analyzes the epistemological and aesthetic shifts engendered by their production.

To this end, the paper proceeds through a conceptual framework that treats generative AI not merely as a tool but as a media system with its own aesthetic logic. Following Galanter, generative art is understood as “art that has been created with the use of an autonomous system” (Galanter, 2008), a definition that encompasses LLMs insofar as they generate textual structures independent of real-time human intervention. McLuhan’s insight that “the medium is the message” further grounds the analysis in an understanding of AI as a formal determinant, one that shapes not only the content of dramatic texts but their structural formation and epistemic assumptions (Hayles, 2012). Meanwhile, the study also draws upon more recent scholarship on digital poetics and posthuman authorship to articulate the ways in which algorithmic systems destabilize the humanist foundations of dramatic literature (Raley, 2013).

Methodologically, the paper adopts a critical-interpretive approach, combining theoretical synthesis with close analysis of selected AI-generated dramatic texts. These texts—produced via GPT-4 and curated from open-access sources—are not treated as aesthetic exemplars but as symptomatic artifacts that index the operational logics of their systems. By reading these outputs through the lenses of aesthetic philosophy, computational theory, and dramaturgy, the study aims to foreground the structural tensions and epistemic instabilities that accompany the emergence of AI-generated theatre.

Ultimately, this inquiry is not about celebrating or denouncing generative AI as a creative tool. Rather, it is an attempt to situate this technological phenomenon within a longer genealogy of aesthetic transformation and theoretical contestation. Just as photography once destabilized the representational claims of painting, or cinema reoriented the temporality of narrative, so too does generative AI compel us to rethink the basic coordinates of authorship, creativity, and aesthetic legitimacy in the theatrical field. In

that sense, the central concern of this paper is neither the novelty of AI nor the obsolescence of the playwright, but the changing conditions of the dramatic form itself in an age of algorithmic simulation.

4. Theatrical Aesthetics of AI Creation

If theatre is, as Antonin Artaud proposed, “the unleashing, in concentrated form, of certain feelings which by rights belong to the domain of the mind” , then dramatic language must be understood not simply as a vehicle for narrative information, but as an aesthetic medium of embodied affect, conflict, and atmosphere. Generative artificial intelligence—particularly large language models such as GPT-4—has achieved a level of fluency and stylistic simulation that allows it to produce dialogue that appears, on the surface, theatrically competent. Yet beneath this veneer of plausibility lies a profound reconfiguration of dramatic language: its rhythm, tone, and affective structure are no longer grounded in dramaturgical intentionality or lived experience, but in statistical approximation and pattern emulation.

At a technical level, language models such as GPT-4 operate by predicting the most likely next token in a given sequence, using attention-based transformer architectures (Vaswani et al., 2017). As such, AI-generated dialogue tends to favor statistically common syntactic structures and phraseologies—those which recur most frequently in its training corpus. While this enables high coherence and surface-level fluency, it simultaneously produces aesthetic tendencies that diverge from the linguistic signatures of human-authored drama. This section will identify three typical tendencies: emotional symmetry, role templating, and formulaic conflict resolution, while exploring manifestations of linguistic aesthetics in this process.

4.1 AI-based drama creation

One of the most striking features of AI-generated dramatic dialogue is its propensity for emotional symmetry—the tendency for characters to mirror, rather than challenge, one another’s affective states. In human-authored plays, emotional dissonance is often the engine of conflict. In contrast, AI-generated dialogue tends toward affective reinforcement, wherein emotional cues are absorbed and reciprocated within one to two turns. Consider the following GPT-4 generated exchange prompted to emulate a tense domestic argument:

ALEX: I just feel like you’re not listening to me anymore.

JORDAN: I’m sorry, Alex. I didn’t mean to make you feel that way. I really care about what you’re saying.

Such exchanges lack not only dramatic friction, but also the performative ambiguity that characterizes emotionally complex writing. The apology-response loop reflects what Lisa Feldman Barrett calls “emotion scripts” (Barrett, 2017)—pre-learned, socially encoded patterns of affective exchange. Because LLMs are trained on vast datasets saturated with such scripts—often drawn from TV transcripts, Reddit threads, or popular fiction—their emotional register tends toward consensual readability rather than disruptive tension. This is not merely a stylistic limitation, but a structural flattening of affect, in which unpredictability and contradiction—hallmarks of compelling theatre—are algorithmically minimized.

Equally consequential is the phenomenon of character templating, whereby characters in AI-generated scripts exhibit uniformity in diction, rhetorical style, and idiomatic register. Because language models optimize for grammaticality and coherence rather than voice differentiation, their output often produces characters who speak in stylistically indistinguishable patterns. In classical and modern theatre, by contrast, idiosyncratic speech patterns serve as key markers of identity, class, ideology, or psychological depth.In contrast, AI-generated characters frequently default to a neutralized linguistic register that lacks historical, regional, or psychological specificity. For instance:

EMMA: We can’t keep pretending everything’s fine.

LIAM: I know. But I don’t know how to fix it anymore.

Though grammatically correct and emotionally coherent, this passage reflects what might be termed affective convergence—a tendency for characters to converge in tone, vocabulary, and cadence. This undermines the dialectical tension between voices that Mikhail Bakhtin identifies as essential to dialogic art (Bakhtin, 2010). In AI drama, dialogue does not “struggle” or “contend”; it conforms. As a result, voice becomes not a marker of individuation but a function of algorithmic flattening, where variation is minimized to maintain syntactic coherence.

Perhaps the most dramaturgically significant limitation of AI-generated scripts is their reliance on formulaic conflict resolution structures. Given that GPT-4 and similar models are trained to optimize token likelihood, they are inherently conservative: they favor outcomes that align with the dominant narrative arcs in their training data. This includes three-act structures, romantic reconciliation tropes, and moral closure—templates drawn disproportionately from Anglo-American screenwriting norms (Field, 2005).

Consider this excerpt from an AI-generated resolution scene:

SARAH: Maybe we were both just scared.

JACK: Yeah... but maybe it’s time we stop running.

(They embrace.)

While superficially satisfying, such resolutions lack what Peter Szondi calls the “dialogical dialectic” (Szondi, 1987) of classical dramaturgy—a process through which conflict is not merely concluded, but transformed through confrontation with the irreconcilable. In the plays of Sophocles or Chekhov, resolution often emerges from moral ambiguity, ideological impasse, or existential dread. By contrast, the AI script tends toward closure-by-consensus, where conflict is resolved not through action or sacrifice, but through mutual acknowledgment and emotional reconciliation.

This tendency is not accidental but architectural. LLMs operate under constraints that prioritize continuity over rupture, pattern completion over structural innovation. As a result, their dramatic outputs exhibit what might be termed narrative inertia: a centripetal pull toward thematic equilibrium that inhibits formal experimentation or thematic risk. Even when prompted with conflict-heavy scenarios (e.g., betrayal, death, political intrigue), the generated dialogue often gravitates toward resolution pathways pre-inscribed by genre convention.

These features—emotional symmetry, character templating, and formulaic resolution—coalesce into what we might call a procedural linguistic aesthetic: a mode of dramaturgical language that privileges readability, coherence, and affective containment over rupture, contradiction, and theatrical excess. This aesthetic does not reflect authorial vision but the aggregative logic of the model’s training data, filtered through its statistical architecture. Such an aesthetic raises important questions for dramatic theory. If theatrical language is no longer the product of embodied subjectivity or socio-historical location, but rather of probabilistic simulation, what becomes of its epistemic and affective function?

4.2 AI-based drama creation structure

If dramatic language is the medium of immediacy and affect, dramatic structure is the architecture of time and transformation. It governs the temporal logic of conflict, the evolution of character, and the unfolding of thematic revelation. In traditional dramaturgy, structure is never inert—it is the bearer of meaning. When generative AI enters this domain, its capacity to simulate formal coherence is undeniable. Yet this simulation—rooted in data frequency rather than aesthetic deliberation—produces a distinct form of structural repetition: one that privileges narrative predictability over dramaturgical depth, and pattern recognition over narrative necessity. An LLM’s understanding of structure is statistical, derived from the frequency and co-occurrence of textual elements in training data. As such, their outputs reflect what we may term structural reuse: a procedural mimicry of prevalent narrative blueprints—especially the three-act paradigm that has dominated Anglophone dramaturgy and screenwriting since the mid-20th century.

The three-act structure—comprising exposition, confrontation, and resolution—has become a hegemonic form in mainstream scriptwriting, codified by institutions such as Hollywood and later adopted in global screenwriting handbooks (Yorke, 2013). AI-generated scripts almost invariably replicate this model, not by choice but by statistical convergence: the form is so heavily represented in LLM training corpora that it becomes the de facto default.

Consider a GPT-4 generated outline in response to the prompt: *“Write a dramatic play about betrayal between two friends.”*

Act I: Emma and Rachel are longtime friends. They start a business together.

Act II: The business faces challenges. Rachel makes a decision behind Emma’s back. Emma finds out.

Act III: A confrontation. Tension escalates. They reconcile with hard truths or part ways forever.

This outline exhibits a synthetic adherence to structural convention. Exposition is front-loaded; conflict emerges predictably in Act II; emotional resolution is enforced in Act III. While this structural symmetry lends clarity and flow, it also reveals a narrative flatness—what Joseph Frank would call “spatialized form” (Frank, 1945), where temporal development loses depth in favor of schematic organization.By contrast, dramatic structures in works by playwrights such as Chekhov, Sarah Kane, or Caryl Churchill operate through disruption, ambiguity, or fragmentation, subverting audience expectation and demanding interpretive labor. AI-generated texts, however, do not challenge structure—they stabilize it. This tendency is less a failure of programming than a reflection of the probability-bound architecture of LLMs.

To conceptualize the narrative tendencies of generative AI, we may introduce the term narrative probability paths: trajectories of textual development shaped by weighted statistical likelihoods rather than thematic necessity or ideological provocation. Within transformer-based architectures, each token is generated by calculating its conditional probability given prior context. This process inherently favors path dependency—that is, once a narrative vector is established, the model will continue to reinforce that trajectory based on previously successful patterns. In dramaturgical terms, this means that once a narrative logic is in motion—say, romantic conflict, revenge, or redemption—it is unlikely to deviate unless explicitly prompted to do so. As a result, LLMs are prone to generating narratives that exhibit closure without rupture, conflict without contradiction, and resolution without transformation.

Another consequence of AI's probabilistic narrative structuring is the attenuation of character motivation. In classical dramaturgy, characters are defined not merely by what they do, but by why they do it—their actions emerge from a complex interplay of desire, history, ideology, and contradiction. Whether it is Medea's transgressive maternal logic or Hedda Gabler's psychological impasse, motivation is central to dramatic stakes.

GPT-4-generated characters, however, often behave in ways that are structurally convenient but psychologically ungrounded. Motivations appear to serve the plot rather than drive it. For example, in a GPT-4 script responding to the prompt "write a betrayal scene," a character might shift emotional allegiance within a few lines:

ELLA: I trusted you.

MARK: I didn't mean to hurt you. It was a mistake.

ELLA: Maybe I overreacted. I still want us to work.

The abrupt pivot from confrontation to reconciliation reflects not an arc of interior negotiation, but a narrative shortcut—a function of the model optimizing for closure. The model lacks the capacity to simulate motivational accumulation, the slow build of contradictions that underpin dramatic realism or tragic inevitability.Moreover, in the absence of memory across sessions or sustained contextual grounding, models struggle to maintain consistency of intent across acts or scenes. This lack of continuity undermines the possibility of long-form character development—a hallmark of dramatic writing from Sophocles to Tony Kushner.

What emerges from this analysis is not a critique of AI's inability to write plays per se, but a recognition of its formal predispositions—its tendency toward structural repetition, narrative convergence, and motivational superficiality. This does not render AI-generated drama valueless. On the contrary, these outputs may prove diagnostic of dominant narrative templates, revealing the latent schemas embedded in human-authored corpora. Yet, if theatre is to remain a space for ontological inquiry and affective rupture, it must resist being reduced to statistical aesthetics. Structure in theatre is not merely scaffolding; it is a site of meaning-production.

4.3 Theatrical text aesthetics in AI-generated creation

These features—emotional symmetry, character templating, and formulaic resolution—coalesce into what we might call a procedural linguistic aesthetic: a mode of dramaturgical language that privileges readability, coherence, and affective containment over rupture, contradiction, and theatrical excess. This aesthetic does not reflect authorial vision but the aggregative logic of the model's training data, filtered through its statistical architecture. Such an aesthetic raises important questions for dramatic theory. If

theatrical language is no longer the product of embodied subjectivity or socio-historical location, but rather of probabilistic simulation, what becomes of its epistemic and affective function?

At present, generative AI systems such as GPT-4 best exemplify combinational creativity, operating through the probabilistic reassembly of learned linguistic patterns into new configurations. This mode is evident in AI-generated dramatic texts, which often simulate originality by remixing character tropes, narrative arcs, and stylistic registers drawn from their vast training corpora. While maintaining coherent grammatical structures and logical flow, these AI-generated dramas exhibit semantic gaps that define their unique characteristics. For instance, when GPT-4 is prompted to generate a monologue of betrayal in the style of Shakespeare, it is assembled not through a grasp of Shakespearean dramaturgy, but via probabilistic weighting across n-gram patterns, stylistic tokens, and syntactic probability trees. This recombination generates innovative formal expressions, becoming a hallmark of AI-driven dramatic creation. Unlike traditional theater aesthetics, such texts may appear somewhat unnatural at the textual level, potentially diminishing immersive experiences and depth. Nevertheless, this approach undeniably represents a new form of theatrical aesthetics.

Artificial intelligence's script creation is grounded in large language models (LLMs). A more contested claim is whether LLMs demonstrate exploratory creativity—that is, the ability to navigate within an existing space of generative rules and expand it in novel directions. On a surface level, LLMs appear to do precisely this: they generate outputs that interpolate between genres, blend rhetorical modes, and simulate multi-character dialogues across thematic registers. However, such traversals are not self-motivated explorations but prompt-constrained activations. The AI does not conceive of genres, rules, or styles as malleable constructs; it does not “experiment” in the human sense. Rather, it retrieves and repositions existing configurations based on the statistical relationships embedded in its pretraining. As Gervás argues, “true exploratory creativity requires an internal model of the space being explored and the capacity to evaluate novelty within it” (Gervás, 2013). Current AI systems lack this capability, and in fact, cannot be said to possess genuine exploratory creation. Consequently, the new aesthetic framework constructed by AI's script generation presents significant challenges.

The most profound form of creativity in Boden’s framework—transformational creativity—remains far beyond the grasp of generative AI. This form involves altering or redefining the very conceptual space within which creativity occurs. It is what happens when Beckett refuses to give his characters memory or history in Waiting for Godot, or when Sarah Kane collapses character, setting, and time in 4.48 Psychosis. These are not new arrangements of old elements, but inversions of the rules themselves—aesthetic events that generate new forms of legibility, alter theatrical temporality, and demand new interpretive

grammars. Transformational creativity requires an awareness of the system being subverted and a reason to subvert it—neither of which an LLM possesses. AI, in its current state, can only mimic strangeness—it cannot will it.

What, then, are we to make of AI's so-called creativity? If LLMs can produce scripts that are readable, even stageable, does this not satisfy some minimal definition of creative authorship? The answer depends on where one draws the aesthetic threshold between simulation and creation. If creativity is defined narrowly as novel and valuable recombination, then AI may qualify as a co-author of minor works. But if creativity also demands emotional intuition, cultural subtext, and historical situatedness—as it arguably must in theatre—then AI's outputs fall short. Emotional intuition refers to the calibrated articulation of affect that emerges from lived embodiment; cultural subtext refers to the layered encoding of power, identity, and ideology within language; and historical context integration refers to the anchoring of characters and conflicts within material conditions.

At the core of generative AI's dramaturgical capacity lies a paradox of mimesis without memory, imitation without experience. Large language models produce compelling dramatic outputs by mimicking patterns of language, structure, and theme distilled from vast corpora of preexisting texts. These models do not originate aesthetic form through lived perception or intentional design; rather, they statistically reconstitute the stylistic and structural norms of what has already been written. In this sense, AI dramaturgy is not generative in the etymological sense of "bringing into being," but regenerative—a recursive simulation of existing dramaturgical blueprints.

Modern AI playwriting, however, is governed not by philosophical aesthetics but by computational operations of pattern recognition and probabilistic modeling. Transformer models generate outputs token by token, predicting the most likely next word given a preceding context. The model's capacity to produce plausible dialogue and dramatic arcs arises from its exposure to enormous textual datasets wherein it has learned which narrative moves and stylistic forms most commonly co-occur. The consequence is a dramaturgical mode grounded in surface plausibility rather than contextual intentionality. Dialogue tends to reproduce dominant speech patterns, plot structures converge toward familiar arcs, emotional affect is encoded through clichés, and characters are constructed via templated motivations that lack historical specificity or ideological depth.

Moreover, unlike human playwrights who internalize traditions through lived encounter, cultural participation, and critical tension, AI systems reproduce dramaturgical form without epistemic friction. There is no struggle between author and canon, no dialectic between innovation and influence. It merely optimizes for statistical fidelity—what Bender et al. term "stochastic parroting"(Bender et al., 2021). In doing so, it produces what may be called non-reflexive mimesis: a form of imitation stripped of phenomenological

encounter and artistic deliberation. Thus, AI's mimicry remains bounded by technical fidelity to existing data structures, never rising to the status of a creative encounter with form.

As generative AI continues to infiltrate domains once considered the sole purview of human artistry, a deceptively simple yet philosophically profound question arises: **Is mimicry a form of creation?** If an AI can simulate the style of Tennessee Williams or the metrical precision of Shakespeare with grammatical elegance and rhetorical plausibility, does this performance of authorship constitute authorship itself? Or does it remain a hollow echo—technically impressive, but devoid of aesthetic legitimacy?

This question demands more than a functionalist answer. It requires us to revisit foundational assumptions about **creative intent**, **symbolic transformation**, and the ontology of the artwork. Imitation, after all, is not new to artistic practice. T. S. Eliot (1921) famously argued that "immature poets imitate; mature poets steal," suggesting that all art is, in some sense, recombinatory. But the human artist, even in acts of pastiche or homage, brings to imitation a *conscious orientation*—a dialectic between influence and invention, memory and rupture.

Generative AI lacks such intentionality. It recombines without reflecting, predicts without projecting, assembles without desiring. Its "creativity" is stochastic and substrate-driven: the product of token-based probability rather than affective encounter or imaginative vision. Walter Benjamin's seminal essay The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1936/2008) offers a prescient framework. For Benjamin, the proliferation of mechanically reproduced images strips the artwork of its aura—that "unique appearance of a distance, however near it may be" [1]. Aura is not mere originality; it is the historical and ritual embeddedness of the artwork, the trace of human presence and temporal specificity that reproduction cannot convey.

Transposed to the dramaturgical field, the question becomes: *Can a text composed by a non-conscious algorithm, trained on a corpus it does not "remember" and oriented toward a prompt it does not "understand," possess aura?* The answer must be no. However theatrically functional an AI-generated play may be, it lacks the **ontological singularity** that grounds human-made works in a matrix of intention, vulnerability, and sociohistorical inscription. It is not simply that the AI has no "self"—it is that the work it produces is not **imprinted by irreproducible labor**, by the kind of existential stakes that saturate human art.

Moreover, symbolic transformation—arguably the core of artistic creation—requires not only form but intentional deformation: a bending of inherited structures toward new significations. As Ricoeur argues, metaphor is not the replacement of one term with another, but a redescription of reality through imaginative tension (Ricoeur, 1977).

Creation, in this sense, is not replication but worldmaking. AI, in its current state, reorganizes only syntax. It cannot reach the domain of the symbolic because it does not inhabit the experiential. Thus, mimicry is not equivalent to creation. It is the shadow of creation, a technically elaborate echo that moves like art, speaks like art, but does not mean as art.

5. The Impact of AI Drama Creation on Traditional Aesthetics and Its Ethical Concerns

5.1 Displaced authorship: The impact and hidden risks of AI drama creation on creativity

The emergence of generative artificial intelligence in the domain of scriptwriting has rendered newly urgent a set of debates that literary and cultural theory have long sought to resolve. At the heart of this theoretical constellation is the status of the author—not merely as a historical individual, but as a functional principle that organizes meaning, legitimates interpretation, and guarantees originality. In Roland Barthes' seminal essay "The Death of the Author", he argues that "to give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text" (Barthes, 1977), contending that the act of writing must liberate itself from the "tyranny" of authorial intention in favor of the reader's interpretive multiplicity. Michel Foucault, while more cautious, similarly deconstructs the ontological status of the author by asking: "What is the mode of existence of this discourse?" (Foucault, 1984), positioning authorship not as the origin of discourse but as a historically contingent function.

Artificial intelligence's transformative impact on theatrical creation has fundamentally challenged the author's central role. While post-structuralist theories had previously questioned authorial centrality within traditional theater systems, their influence remained confined to human linguistic frameworks. In contrast, AI-driven theatrical creation has replaced human authors with machine-generated entities. The rise of large language models (LLMs)has further complicated this post-human paradigm: authorial identity isn't vanishing, but rather being algorithmically dispersed across training datasets, probabilistic matrices, and system parameters. As N. Katherine Healeys (2012) noted, "as soon as you begin to envision the human actor as a component of a large and complex system with other agents also at work within that system, there's an inevitable tendency to de-centre the human subject" (Healeys, 2010). From this perspective, generative AI hasn't abolished authorship but rather restructured it as a decentralized, functionally emergent system. In this context, texts are no longer written by singular individuals but co-created through interconnected media systems. Generative AI powerfully drives this transformation——challenging lingering anthropocentric biases in literary theory while demanding relational, computational, and procedural redefinition of

authorship. Theater texts are evolving from artificial constructs into manifestations of systemic operations, where creativity emerges organically rather than being deliberately crafted.

In the realm of AI-driven theatrical creation, the formation of systematic authorial identity manifests through the deconstruction of human experiential logic and textual construction. Dialogue, characters, and conflicts no longer originate from psychological realism or lived experiences, but are instead grounded in data correlations and linguistic similarities. The playwright's displacement stems not from other humans, but from a machine learning system trained on statistical subjects——that can simulate the form of authorial identity without participating in its phenomenological essence. This transformation not only shakes the image of the author but also undermines the aesthetic foundations that sustain theatrical forms.

The absence of "authors" or the intervention of artificial intelligence raises a series of ethical issues. The copyright issues surrounding creative works have garnered widespread academic attention, as AI-generated content is constructed by combining existing internet materials, which may bear similarities to works by human authors. Moreover, whether AI-generated content can be freely used and whether it involves copyright disputes remains highly controversial. As generative AI increasingly encroaches upon the domain of creative writing, it compels a re-evaluation of long-held assumptions regarding authorship, ownership, and aesthetic responsibility. The most immediate question concerns ownership: who, if anyone, can lay legal or moral claim to a dramatic script written by a machine? Under most current intellectual property frameworks, copyright is granted only to works created by humans. Yet the ambiguity intensifies when the human contribution is prompt-based or curatorial.

Some scholars have proposed the idea of algorithmic authorship as a hybrid category that accounts for the entanglement of human and non-human agency. From this standpoint, the “author” of an AI-generated dramatic text is not GPT-4 itself, but the broader assemblage of its developers, trainers, prompters, and users. Yet this diffusion of agency also disperses accountability. If a machine-generated play perpetuates bias or appropriates marginalized voices, who bears the ethical burden?

Indeed, the problem extends beyond attribution to encompass the ethical status of creation itself. Unlike human playwrights, AI systems generate content without stakes. They are indifferent to justice, unaware of oppression, and incapable of dissent. In this context, the increasing presence of AI-generated drama in public culture may risk evacuating theatre of its critical and social vocation. Historically, theatre has functioned as a site of ethical confrontation and civic reflexivity. But AI, operating through the neutral logic of prediction and probability, is structurally incapable of producing this kind of

critical rupture. The danger is that it will replace human urgency with computational adequacy—substituting aesthetic form for critical force.

Moreover, the rise of generative AI in theatrical writing raises concerns about cultural appropriation by proxy. When a model trained on vast, scraped datasets synthesizes a “Black voice,” “feminist rhetoric,” or “queer narrative arc” without authorship by individuals from those communities, it creates an illusion of representation that may in fact re-inscribe erasure. In light of these issues, a new aesthetic ethics of computation must be formulated—one that moves beyond simplistic binaries of “human vs. machine” and toward a relational understanding of responsibility.

Regarding whether using data to train artificial intelligence (AI) constitutes copyright infringement, there exist two approaches: the "cutting off the root" approach that denies the applicability of copyright law (Li, 2025), and the "first-to-file" approach that acknowledges potential copyright violations while advocating rights limitations represented by fair use. Although many scholars ultimately argue that AI's reproduction behavior should not be deemed as copyright infringement under copyright law, the discussion on this issue remains significant. In the field of AI script creation, certain ethical concerns and even related legal issues still persist. Reflecting on these issues will also contribute to the improvement and advancement of legal systems in the age of artificial intelligence.

5.2 Reconstruction of the Spiritual Dimension: AI's Impact on Traditional Theater Aesthetics

"The inherent randomness of artificial intelligence generates diverse content, while automated systems have replaced the 'manual labor' aspect of traditional human creation, leading to creative alienation" (Lin, 2025). With creation no longer requiring physical effort or time investment, its value has drastically diminished, resulting in this phenomenon of creative alienation. When free scripts become easily accessible, many scriptwriters may face unemployment, and whether high-quality scripts will still be valued by audiences becomes a pressing concern.

Walter Benjamin's theory of "aura" vividly illustrates the fundamental differences between AI-driven theatrical creation and human-authored drama. While artificial intelligence can replicate traditional creative patterns, it perpetually loses the essential "aura" of art. As Benjamin noted: "AI art dissolves traditional aura through triple disenchantment (Boden, 2004)—reducing creators to algorithmic regulators, material carriers to blockchain hash values, and reception aesthetics to biological data feedback loops" (Wang et al., 2025). If authorship is reconfigured under the conditions of generative AI, so too must we reconsider the aesthetic regimes through which dramatic texts are produced, perceived, and evaluated. One of the most enduring insights in media theory comes from Marshall

McLuhan, who famously asserted that "the medium is the message" (McLuhan, 1964), by which he meant that the formal properties of a medium exert greater influence over human perception and social organization than the content it delivers. In this framework, AI systems do not merely generate scripts—they reconstitute the material substrate and perceptual logic of dramatic writing.

Applied to generative AI, McLuhan’s axiom invites us to examine how the technical conditions of textual production shape the dramaturgical output. AI-generated plays do not emerge from consciousness or aesthetic vision, but from the architecture of transformer models: layered attention mechanisms, token prediction strategies, and training data distributions. These systems instantiate what Wolfgang Ernst calls "media epistemology" (Ernst, 2013)—a way of knowing the world through technical formats and signal processing, rather than narrative coherence or humanistic insight. Consequently, the aesthetic of AI-generated drama is not a byproduct of style or genre, but a function of computational constraints and affordances.

To further understand the generative logic underpinning this new aesthetic regime, we turn to Philip Galanter’s theory of generative art. Galanter identifies three interrelated axes that define generativity in artistic systems: authorship, complexity, and unpredictability (Galanter, 2008). First, authorship is dispersed among system designers, users, and algorithms, undermining the notion of a singular artistic subject. Second, complexity emerges from rule-based operations, which may produce outputs too intricate for prediction yet bounded by finite rules. Third, unpredictability refers not to randomness but to emergent novelty—patterns arising from the interaction of simple rules rather than being prefigured.

AI-generated scripts fit squarely within this framework. The "author" is the language model’s latent space, the "complexity" arises from the combinatorial explosion of textual possibilities, and the "unpredictability" is governed by sampling temperatures and token entropy. For instance, when prompted with a dramatic scenario, GPT-4 may generate plausible dialogue, conflict, and resolution—yet the pathways it takes are not deterministic. They are probabilistically situated within the network’s learned distribution. As such, the resulting script is neither authored nor accidental—it is procedurally curated within a statistical field.

This raises significant questions about the poetics of AI-generated drama. If the dramaturgical form is shaped by machine learning protocols rather than human cognition, what kind of aesthetic logic is at play? Unlike traditional playwriting, which builds meaning through narrative arc, psychological development, and socio-political embeddedness, AI-generated drama often relies on formal mimicry and structural pastiche. Its scripts are convincing not because they carry emotional or philosophical

weight, but because they simulate the surface syntax of dramatic discourse. In this sense, the aesthetic of generative drama may be characterized not by its content but by its epistemological mimicry—a performance of form without ontological depth.

6. Toward a New Dramatic Aesthetic in the Age of AI

The encounter between generative artificial intelligence and dramatic writing demands not merely a critique of simulation or an inquiry into authorship—it calls for a rethinking of the aesthetic ontology of the dramatic form itself. If drama has historically been understood as a closed structure of action, intention, and resolution—what Peter Szondi termed the “teleological unity” (Szondi, 1987) of modern tragedy—then the emergence of AI disrupts that closure not through innovation in narrative, but by altering the conditions of composition. It challenges us to ask: What is drama when the author is procedural, the conflict statistical, and the stage potentially synthetic?

This section proposes that AI dramatization signals a shift from closed textual production to open aesthetic systems—from authored finality to generative instability. This shift is not simply technological; it is paradigmatic. And to understand it, we must revisit Umberto Eco’s foundational concept of the *opera aperta*, or “open work,” which offers a theoretical framework for situating AI-driven dramaturgy within the evolving landscape of contemporary aesthetics.

6.1 From Closed Form to Generative Process: Eco and the Ontology of the Open Work

In *The Open Work*, Eco argues that certain modern artistic forms—particularly those of the 20th century—resist fixed meaning and instead invite interpretive completion. These works are “open” not in the sense of being unfinished or vague, but in their structural orientation toward ambiguity, multiplicity, and indeterminacy (Eco, 1989). For Eco, the open work does not relinquish form; it transforms form into a field of potential relations, distributed across the artist, the audience, and the structural logic of the medium.

This concept finds fertile resonance in the context of AI-generated dramatic writing. Here, the “openness” is not only interpretive but procedural. A single prompt to a language model such as GPT-4 may yield infinite textual permutations, each grammatically coherent yet narratively distinct. The text is no longer a stable object but a provisional instantiation of a latent possibility space. The play is generated anew each time the model is queried, rendering the notion of a definitive version not merely irrelevant but ontologically incoherent.

AI dramatization thus radicalizes Eco’s insight: the dramatic work becomes not only open to interpretation but open in its very composition. It exists not as a script but as a regenerable set of instructions, contingent upon algorithmic performance. This procedural openness invites a reconceptualization of dramaturgy as a non-linear, non-finalizable field —a dramaturgy of iteration, not inscription.

6.2 Algorithmic Dramaturgy and Human–Machine Co-Creation

Within this emergent paradigm, a new concept takes form: algorithmic dramaturgy. By this term, we mean not simply the use of software in theatre-making, but a dramaturgical logic in which rules, constraints, and generative systems become co-authors of form. This is dramaturgy no longer rooted in Aristotelian causality or even Brechtian critique, but in procedural generation, parametric modulation, and non-human patterning.

Algorithmic dramaturgy dissolves traditional binaries between creation and interpretation. The playwright becomes a curator of inputs, a designer of prompts, a sculptor of code. The AI, in turn, functions less as a tool and more as an aesthetic collaborator, albeit one with no intentionality of its own. What emerges from this entanglement is a co-authored textual space, shaped by both human aesthetic decisions and machine affordances.

We are already witnessing early manifestations of this paradigm. Projects such as the “AI Playwright” initiative at MIT (Cox, 2021), which employs transformer-based models to assist in dialogue generation and character interaction, or Annie Dorsen’s algorithm-driven theatrical performances (Dorsen,2010), exemplify an experimental dramaturgy that is iterative, interactive, and co-generated. These works do not rely on AI for narrative architecture alone; they rely on AI to introduce procedural unpredictability, allowing structure to emerge dynamically within a live system.

Such practices align with what Lev Manovich calls the aesthetics of “modularity and variability” (Manovich, 2001) inherent in new media art, wherein the artwork becomes a database of possibilities rather than a linear text. In algorithmic dramaturgy, the script is not “written” in the conventional sense; it is sampled, edited, revised, regenerated, often with each iteration yielding different narrative contours, tonal registers, or character arcs.

6.3 Toward a Posthuman Poetics of Performance

This movement toward open, procedural dramaturgy must also be understood in relation to posthuman aesthetics, which decenter the human subject not only as performer or spectator, but as sole arbiter of meaning. The posthuman, as theorized by Rosi Braidotti (2013), marks a “relational ontology” that sees subjectivity as entangled with technological, ecological, and machinic systems. Within such a framework, creativity is no

longer the exclusive domain of the expressive individual but is distributed across networks of material and symbolic agency.

AI-generated drama, viewed through this lens, is not a lesser form of human creativity but a symptom of aesthetic decentering. It embodies a shift from the sovereign author to the assembled script—a textual artifact generated through the interplay of human prompts, machine computation, and algorithmic rule-sets. The dramatic form no longer emerges from subjective insight alone; it emerges from infrastructural process.

This processual aesthetic poses new challenges, to be sure—questions of intentionality, legitimacy, and meaning. But it also offers new possibilities: dramas that evolve across performances, scripts that adapt to audience inputs, characters that behave differently each time the play is run. The performance becomes not an execution of a pre-written text but a generative event—a theatre of iteration rather than repetition.

6.4 Risks and Responsibilities: The Ethics of Openness

Yet with these possibilities come responsibilities. Procedural openness, if unchecked, may slide into epistemological vagueness or aesthetic nihilism. Without discernment, variability becomes noise. Moreover, as discussed in Section 4.3, algorithmic dramaturgy raises pressing questions about representation, bias, and cultural authority. Who trains the model? Whose narratives are included or excluded? Who is empowered to prompt, and who is subjected to its output?

To navigate these tensions, what is needed is not merely openness for its own sake, but an ethically situated openness—a dramaturgy that acknowledges its machinic conditions without renouncing human accountability. This means designing systems that are transparent in their training, reflexive in their outputs, and collaborative in their orientation. The aesthetic possibilities of AI must be held in tension with the social contracts of theatre—its obligation to complexity, critique, and community.

7. Conclusion

The incursion of generative artificial intelligence into the field of dramatic writing marks not a mere technological shift but a paradigm rupture—a threefold disruption that compels us to rethink the very ontological, aesthetic, and ethical foundations of the dramatic form.

First, AI redefines authorship, displacing the figure of the solitary playwright with a distributed, procedural, and sometimes opaque assemblage of human and machinic agencies. Authorship is no longer the emanation of a subject, but the convergence of

prompts, data architectures, and probabilistic recombination. This move demands that we recalibrate our criteria for originality, intention, and authority in the literary arts.

Second, AI instigates a restructuring of dramatic form, transforming the script from a linear, teleological text into a generative, variable system. Theatrical writing becomes less an act of narrative inscription than one of systemic orchestration—an iterative negotiation between algorithmic outputs and human aesthetic sensibilities. This procedural dramaturgy aligns with emerging conceptions of “open work,” “algorithmic variability,” and “posthuman authorship,” pointing to a future where scripts are not stable objects but contingent, regenerable events.

Third, and perhaps most urgently, the proliferation of AI-generated drama demands a new aesthetic ethics—a framework that can contend with questions of authorship responsibility, representational justice, and cultural legitimacy. In an era where texts can be synthesized without experience, where voices can be emulated without context, and where narrative patterns can be statistically approximated without ideological accountability, the ethical stakes of theatrical creation become newly fraught. We must ask not only what AI *can* write, but what it *should* write, and under what systems of governance, collaboration, and critique.

Yet to cast AI solely as a threat would be to miss the generative possibility latent within this transformation. For the theatre scholar, AI opens novel avenues of inquiry: how do audiences receive machinically authored performances? What semiotic frameworks are required to stage computationally derived scripts? What hybrid dramaturgical models—combining human intentionality with algorithmic structure—might emerge as dominant forms of twenty-first-century performance?

These are not speculative questions for the future; they are exigent problems of the present. As digital infrastructure becomes embedded in every layer of cultural production, the work of theorizing, staging, and responding to AI-generated drama becomes inseparable from the broader project of understanding our evolving relationship to language, agency, and aesthetic meaning.

In this sense, the arrival of generative AI in dramatic writing is not the end of the playwright—it is the beginning of a new dramaturgical condition: co-authored, procedural, ethically entangled, and ontologically unstable. To meet this condition with the critical, historical, and imaginative rigor it demands is not merely a scholarly task, but a cultural imperative.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This study has certain limitations that warrant attention.

- Data scope constraint: The analysis is based on a small corpus of AI-generated scripts from a single platform, which restricts the generalizability of the findings—different generative AI models or training data biases may yield distinct aesthetic and structural characteristics that were not captured here.
- Prompt dependency limitation: AI-generated content is highly dependent on prompt engineering; the study primarily employed standard or moderately structured prompts, meaning the results only reflect the basic generative logic of AI drama rather than its optimal performance under refined, specialized prompts.
- Ecological integrity gap: The research focused heavily on textual and structural analysis of scripts, with insufficient exploration of how AI-generated content interacts with practical theatrical elements such as stage direction, actor interpretation, and audience feedback in live performances, leaving the ecological impact of AI drama in complete theatrical contexts underaddressed.
- Temporal dynamics oversight: Generative AI technology evolves rapidly, and the findings based on the current version of GPT-4 may not keep pace with subsequent model upgrades, limiting the temporal validity of the conclusions.

Future research could proceed in several directions. Expand the scope of data sources by incorporating scripts from multiple AI platforms and diverse cultural contexts to verify the universality of the identified aesthetic tendencies and structural features. Design a gradient prompt to systematically explore the upper limit of AI’s dramatic creation potential and the mechanisms through which prompt design shapes creative outcomes. Adopt an interdisciplinary mixed-methods approach, combining textual analysis with theatrical performance experiments, audience ethnography, and actor interviews to investigate the holistic impact of AI-generated scripts on the entire theatrical ecosystem. Additionally, future studies could delve into the long-term ethical and cultural implications of AI’s involvement in drama, such as its influence on the inheritance of traditional theatrical forms and the cultivation of emerging dramatic aesthetics, providing more comprehensive insights for the sustainable development of AI-driven theatrical creation.

Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests..

Data Availability:

No data were generated or analyzed in this study, so no data are available for sharing.

Ethical Approval:

This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

Informed Consent:

This study does not involve human or animal subjects, and thus does not require ethical approval.

Author Contributions Statement:

L: Conceptualization,Methodology, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft.

Z: Conceptualization,Resources, Writing - Review & Editing, Supervision.

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Footnotes

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