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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HUMAN INTERPRETATION IN LITERARY ANALYSIS: THE LIMITS OF AUTOMATED UNDERSTANDING OF METAPHOR, CONTEXT AND NARRATIVE NUANCE

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ABOUT ARTICLE

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Abstract: This article examines the role of artificial intelligence in literary analysis, with particular attention to the limits of automated interpretation in relation to metaphor, context and narrative nuance. Modern AI systems can process large volumes of literary data, identify lexical patterns, classify emotional tone and support structural analysis. However, literary interpretation requires more than pattern recognition. It involves cultural memory, historical awareness, aesthetic sensitivity, ambiguity, irony and the reader's subjective experience. The article follows the IMRAD structure and analyses AI as an auxiliary instrument rather than an autonomous interpreter. The study argues that artificial intelligence may significantly enhance philological research by accelerating technical procedures and revealing hidden textual regularities, but it cannot fully replace human hermeneutic judgement. The most productive model is therefore a hybrid approach in which computational tools support, but do not dominate, human literary interpretation.

Introduction. The rapid development of artificial intelligence has transformed the methods used in literary studies. Digital tools are now capable of analysing thousands of pages, detecting recurring motifs, classifying emotional tone and comparing stylistic features across different texts. These possibilities are especially important for contemporary philology, where researchers increasingly work with large textual corpora and interdisciplinary methods. However, literature is not only a system of words, structures and patterns. It is also a field of symbolic meanings, historical references, emotional tension and cultural memory. For this reason, the application of AI to literary interpretation raises an important question: can a machine truly understand metaphor, context and narrative nuance, or can it only imitate understanding through statistical association? This article explores the productive but limited role of AI in literary analysis and argues that automated systems should be viewed as supportive instruments rather than replacements for human interpretation.

Methodology. The study is based on a qualitative analytical approach combining theoretical observation, comparative literary reasoning and elements of computational humanities. The main methodological focus is placed on three interpretive categories: metaphor, context and narrative nuance. These categories were selected because they represent the areas in which literary meaning most clearly exceeds literal language and formal structure. Metaphor requires the recognition of symbolic transfer and conceptual association. Context requires knowledge of cultural, historical and biographical circumstances. Narrative nuance requires sensitivity to irony, unreliable narration, emotional implication and implicit authorial position. The research method consists of analysing how artificial intelligence can assist in each of these areas and where its interpretive limitations become visible. AI is considered as a tool capable of performing technical operations such as keyword extraction, sentiment analysis, topic modelling, stylometric comparison and narrative mapping. At the same time, these operations are compared with the tasks traditionally performed by a human literary scholar: close reading, hermeneutic interpretation, cultural explanation and aesthetic evaluation.

The article does not present an experimental computational model; rather, it offers a conceptual and methodological discussion of AI-assisted literary analysis. Such an approach is appropriate because the problem concerns not only technological capacity but also the philosophical status of literary understanding. Therefore, the study evaluates AI from the perspective of philology, interpretation theory and digital humanities.

Results. The analysis shows that artificial intelligence is highly effective in identifying visible and repeated textual features. It can quickly detect frequent words, lexical clusters,

emotional shifts, stylistic similarities and structural patterns. For example, in a novel, an AI system can identify repeated images of darkness, silence or movement and suggest that these elements may be thematically significant. It can also trace the distribution of characters, map plot development and compare the vocabulary of different authors or literary periods. These functions make AI useful for preliminary research, especially when the scholar needs to process a large amount of textual material. However, the results also reveal that AI's understanding remains limited when interpretation depends on implicit meaning. A metaphor cannot always be explained through lexical similarity. Its meaning may depend on cultural tradition, philosophical background or the emotional atmosphere of the text. Similarly, irony often depends on the gap between what is said and what is meant, which is difficult for an algorithm to identify without deep pragmatic understanding. Narrative nuance presents another limitation. A machine may describe what a narrator says, but it may fail to understand why the narrator is unreliable, biased or emotionally conflicted. Thus, AI demonstrates strong analytical capacity at the level of form, frequency and structure, but weaker capacity at the level of deep interpretation. It can show where meaning may be located, but it cannot always explain why that meaning matters.

Discussion. The findings suggest that artificial intelligence should not be understood as a complete substitute for the literary critic. Its strength lies in speed, scale and technical precision. It can reveal textual regularities that may remain invisible during ordinary reading, especially in large corpora. In this respect, AI contributes to the development of digital humanities and computational philology by expanding the empirical basis of literary research. It allows scholars to move from isolated textual examples to broader patterns of style, genre, theme and narrative organization. Nevertheless, literary interpretation is not purely empirical. A literary text is not only a dataset but also an aesthetic and cultural object. Its meaning emerges through interaction between language, reader, history and context. AI systems operate through statistical prediction and pattern recognition; they do not possess lived experience, cultural memory, ethical judgement or emotional consciousness. This becomes especially important when analysing metaphor, trauma, irony, silence, ambiguity or symbolic imagery. In such cases, the human reader's interpretive responsibility remains central.

The most productive model is therefore not opposition between AI and human interpretation, but cooperation between them. AI can perform preparatory analytical work: collecting textual evidence, identifying possible patterns, comparing large textual units and visualizing structural relations. The human scholar can then evaluate these findings, reject accidental correlations, interpret symbolic meanings and place the text within a wider cultural

and historical framework. This hybrid model preserves the value of traditional philology while integrating the advantages of computational analysis. It prevents two extremes: technological optimism, which assumes that machines can fully understand literature, and conservative rejection, which ignores the real benefits of AI. A balanced approach recognizes that AI can enrich literary studies, but only when guided by human critical thought.

Conclusion. Artificial intelligence has become a valuable instrument in modern literary analysis. It can process large textual corpora, detect patterns, support structural analysis and offer useful preliminary observations. However, the interpretation of literature cannot be reduced to automated classification or statistical similarity. Metaphor, context and narrative nuance require cultural awareness, emotional sensitivity and human judgement. AI can identify textual signals, but it cannot fully experience or interpret the aesthetic complexity of a literary work. Therefore, the future of literary studies should be based on a collaborative model in which artificial intelligence assists the researcher without replacing human interpretation. Such cooperation may make literary analysis more systematic, flexible and innovative while preserving the central role of human understanding.

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