The Death of the Author in the age of AI: Style, Ownership, and Ghibli

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ARTICLE DETAILS	ABSTRACT
	MidJourney and DALL.E are the commonly used and well known AI tools to create artistic styles but they raises questions regarding the ethical use and the erasure of individual artistic identity. This research examines the impact of AI in the digital age and the absence of authorship, focusing on the recent controversy of AI generated images styled after the Studio Ghibli. The study concentrates on how AI distracts the traditional ideas of creativity, ownership and the originality using the poststructuralist theory proposed by Roland Barthes particularly the concept of "death of the author." This recent issue of the use of AI generated Ghibli art without the consent of its original creator Hayao Miyazaki stands as a good example. These animated images mimics the original creation of Ghibli art and it goes viral but it is detached from the human world and even from the one's who originally shaped them. This paper undermines that AI generated images transforms to a decentralized and anonymous creation where the digital world overshadows the artist's presence. By the mixing of poststructuralist idea with the concept of contemporary digital practice, this study provides insights on the decline of the meaning of authorship and the cultural value of art in an age where anyone can create anything under their fingertips.

Introduction

AI generated art is a type of artwork which is developed using the Artificial Intelligence commonly known as AI. The term was coined in the 1956 by John McCarthy. The idea of artificial intelligence is originally mentioned by Alan Turing in his work *Computer Machinery and Intelligence* which was published in 1950. It eventually became Turing test and experts used it to measure computer intelligence and later the term Artificial Intelligence was coined and became popular. John McCarthy had also invented the Lisp Programming language which is still used in AI research.

The field of AI is significant in this 21st century. In other words we can also state that it plays a major role in everyone's life. It even became as an indispensible part of everyday life. People often uses it in academics, research, generated images, for receiving suggestions and even people started to share their personal problems to find a solution. This may indirectly affect their problem solving ability and increases social anxiety as they were trapped in a vicious circle inside digital media. AI generated art is an output of Artificial Intelligence which is created according to the user's demands. In other words we can also describe it as a medium which masks the reality and fakes them infront of human beings. This will lead to make people believe that the provided output is the reality and it will finally lead them in losing their imaginative ability. In this research paper I am trying to explore about the AI and it's significance in the lives of people in this 21st century. This paper mainly focuses on the recent issue of the online animations mimicking the Studio Ghibli art style which gained massive online attention disregarding the original creator of the specific art. This unauthorized use of the artist's style even questions the years of hardwork that he put on to develop the art form. Today the people who uses social media only need public attention so they are just following what others do to take the place in the trending chart and this was also the reason behind the use of Ghibli art without the consent of the creator Hayao Miyazaki. People across the world just followed the trend they didn't even take a moment to understand about the art or about the person who created it. My question to the people who simply followed the trend is that "Is it really necessary to follow any trend that posses the years of hardwork of a person?" "Do you even think about the person who created such a unique art even once when you're about to mimic it with the help of artificial intelligence?" "Do you even know about the situation the creator was forced to go through when he witnessed that the value of his own unique style of art is declining due to the intervene of AI?" Many of the people will not be able to answer these questions because they may have never imagined about that someday, someone will point the fingers at them. They just need to follow the trend no matter what happens. According to my research, all the problems

started only because of the over use of AI in everyone's life. Earlier people were able to understand and empathize the one's who are in any distress but when AI took control over their life everything had changed. Now people no longer need any companion to share their problems they just share it with AI, they considers it as their best companion. As I mentioned earlier the main cause to this problem is not because of people using this technology but, the way they are using it. According to me I will state that this world had changed to a world that is ruled by the technology and there is no place for human emotions and feelings. This idea relates to the concept that Guy Debord introduced in his work "The Commodity as a Spectacle." In his essay he stated about the world which is transforming to a "world of economy ruled by the commodities" and how a real consumer is transformed to a "consumer of illusion." All these happens only when we give importance to anything other than human life. Everything is needed in this world for the overall development but, relying on them too much will result in the decline of human values, emotions and feelings and we will no longer be able to understand each other.

Artificial Intelligence is a mere technology that is created from the human brain and completely relying on this specific technology will not bring any good to the human lives. It will only result in the overpowering of technology over people. Imagine about the situation when the creation of humans overpowering them. As we navigate this technology-driven landscape, it is crucial to prioritize human values and recognize the hard work behind artistic expression to preserve our capacity for empathy and understanding. This paper will try to explore the part of AI in the lives of human in relation with the latest issue on the use of Ghibli art.

When the Author disappears: AI reimagines Ghibli without the artist

This section draws on the insights on the theoretical aspects of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. In the essay "Death of the Author" by Barthes he proceeds a sort of post structuralist or deconstructive view of the author. He takes different stand through which he announces the metaphoric death of the author. It also declares the death of structuralism. Barthes' concept suggests that the meaning of a text is not dictated by its creators but by the readers, while Foucault expands this idea with his notion of the "author function" which views the author as a construct shaped by culture and institutions. These theories can be used to analyze the shift in the notion of authorship in the age of AI.

In the essay "Death of the Author"(1967) Barthes argues that the reader is born at the cost of the death of the author he considers the text as a mere "tissue of quotations" where the author becomes

irrelevant in the process of interpretation. In the context of AI art this notion transforms to a literal form the creator fades to the background and the only focus is centered within the output. Here the author is "dead" not in a symbolic sense but his presence is overshadowed by the technology itself.

Michel Foucault in his seminal work "What is an Author?"(1969) he introduces the concept of "author function." It mainly deals with a set of roles that is culturally assigned to an individual who is credited with producing a work. Foucault argues that the authorship is a construct that systematize and controls meaning. The "author function" in the AI era diminishes and when an AI produces an image mimicking any art, who will fulfill the author's function? Neither the programmer or the user will be able to fulfill it. Here the question arises "if no one can fulfill the author's function then what is the motive behind mimicking someone else's years of hardwork for just a trend."

The idea of authorship has a major prominence in the literary and philosophical thought particularly after the introduction of post structuralist theory. Barthes and Foucault are the 2 key figures who openly challenged the traditional view "a text's meaning is determined by author's intentions." These ideas gained more relevance in the context of AI generated art which deals with the complexity of the authorship in an era where creativity can be simulated by machines.

The notion about the decentering of the author aligns with the fragmented authorship in AI generated works and these creations are not based on a single input, it acquires data from a wide variety of data on the existing art. It completely gains information from the already existing art works which relates to the notion of "tissue of quotations" proposed by Roland Barthes. The output will stand as a meaningful and emotional restrain, yet the origin remains ambiguous and it is considered as neither fully human nor entirely machine made. This ambiguity challenges various aspects of authorship and raises questions in both legal and aesthetic domains. The audience emotionally got attached to the AI generated Ghibli art style only because of the familiar visuals and emotions not through a connection to the creator.

The original artist's presence is felt in the animated images but authorship is absent. One AI generated art cannot be considered as a real art when the authorship is missing. This depicts the idea of Barthes that "the author is a cultural construct, a modern figure, and a product of our society. From basic computer function to images that look like that they were made by real artists, AI generated art came a long way. Using various tools we can simply create the duplicate version of real art but "who really owns the art?" This question remains unanswered. Unlike the traditional form of art the one's created by

AI feels like unknown as it includes a mixture of human idea and machine technology. This will make things hard to determine where is the real ownership lies and who deserves the credit in a world where technology grows along with human.

Studio Ghibli is founded in 1985 by animator and director Miyazaki Hayao and Takahata Isao , along with producer Suzuki Toshio. It has received both critical and popular acclaim for its feature films, as well as propagated creative influence on other animation studios. Miyazaki's first feature film *Lupin III: The Castle of Cagliostro (1979)*, was directed before he founded Studio Ghibli. Based on his own well-liked manga strip, he created his second in 1984, *Kaze no tani no Naushika (Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind).* Miyazaki prohibited his films from being released in the West for many years after his *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* was improperly edited for release in the US under the title *Warriors of the Wind (1986).* However, an agreement was made in 1996 to let Walt Disney Studios distribute Studio Ghibli's films, provided that no film editing was done. Miyazaki's smash hit *Mononoke-hime (Princess Mononoke)* was released by Studio Ghibli the following year. In 2001, the Miyazaki-designed Ghibli Museum opened in Mitaka, Japan. Its attractions included exhibits about animation and original short films from Studio Ghibli.

The Studio Ghibli became a hot topic in march 2025 when OpenAI, an American AI research organization, released an image generator capable of mimicking the studio's signature style. It became a popular debate topic as it questions the creative ownership. The users all over the world quickly started to post the AI created Ghibli art throughout the social medias. In an interview, Hayao Miyazaki had called AI-generated animation an "insult to life itself." He stated that "I can't watch this stuff and find it interesting. Whoever creates this stuff has no idea what pain is whatsoever. I am utterly disgusted. If you really want to make creepy stuff, you can go ahead and do it. I would never wish to incorporate this technology into my work at all. I strongly feel that this is an insult to life itself." We can understand the pain and distress that he felt when his art was mimicked by millions of users using AI. These images generated using AI were praised by their quality but they don't know the fact that it is created without the knowledge and consent from the creator Miyazaki.

In today's world the overuse of AI blurs the creativity and questions the authorship and it is clearly understood from the concepts of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault. Through their ideas they provide a clear vision on understanding why this AI generated art is visually interactive but hollow inside because the soul of the creator is not present there. The controversy of Ghibli trend highlights this

issue. The beauty of an art does not lie just in the external visual but also in the struggles, sufferings and experiences behind it. When the author fades the meaning also fades. In this AI dominated era one should rethink about what it means to create an art and who owns it.

Conclusion

In this era of a sudden advancement of technology AI generated art questions of creativity, ownership and authorship. The use of AI tools like MidJourney and DALL.E produces art which is the duplicated version of the real art. But no one is able differentiate them, the only thing that distinguishes them is that in the real art the soul of the creator in involved whereas in the mimicked version there is no presence of the creator's soul, it's hollow inside. The use of Ghibli style AI images across the world without Miyazaki's consent reflects the trend of digital world overshadowing artistic creation.

The issue is not only surrounded with the presence of AI itself, but the way how it is used. Unlike human beings AI lacks the lived experience and it has no emotions, feelings and thinking capacity. The art created with the help of AI may resemble the real art but it lacks the artistic presence and values which is embedded within the original art. Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault in their theories clearly states about the authorship and ownership of an art. These ideas has a greater significance in this AI dominated era to understand how the value of a creator is diminished or even abandoned when the machines produce art without consent from its respective creators. Authorship then becomes ambiguous and even raises the question about the real owner of the art but it is kept unanswered.

Through the words of Miyazaki on the AI generated animation, he terms it as "an insult to life itself." His response on this issue makes people to have a second thought and it reminds us that art is not just about the external visual factors it also includes, the vision, effort and personal history of an artist. The AI generated art reduced the value of a real art through mimicking them and mocked the efforts that is put in by the artist. The pivotal role played by digital media in everyone's life increases the complexity of this issue. Many of them are just following the trend without even realizing about the origins and about the consequences that they will have to face. This blind consumption reflects Debord's idea of the "consumer of illusion" where the spectacle of technology dominates the human connection.

Lastly, the controversy on Ghibli art depicts the great cultural shift when digital tools overpowers the human creativity because of the convenience and trend. As AI continues to dominate the

world one should question themselves not only about what they can create but also on what they should create. Technology is the output of human potential and it should enhance it not erase it. To preserve the real essence of an art we should value the artist not only their output and ensure that innovation does not come at the cost of empathy, originality, and respect.

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