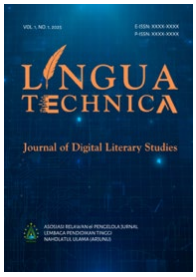
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When the machine writes back: generative AI, literary agency, and the reconfiguration of digital authorship

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A B S T R A C T

Background: Generative artificial intelligence has destabilized conventional literary authorship by separating textual production from ownership, responsibility, and institutional recognition across digital publishing environments. **Objective:** This study examines how human writers, generative systems, editors, publishers, platforms, and cultural institutions redistribute literary agency, attribution, disclosure, and legitimacy. **Method:** Using a qualitative comparative corpus design, this study analyzed 42 public documents published between 2021 and 11 July 2026, comprising 15 primary, 13 secondary, and 14 contextual sources through distributed-authorship mapping, workflow-chain analysis, and paratextual governance analysis. **Results:** Human actors retained legal, editorial, and ethical primacy, although machines increasingly occupied visible roles in drafting, stylistic production, and symbolic co-authorship. Literary agency operated across prompting, generation, selection, revision, arrangement, performance, and publication rather than residing exclusively in sentence production. Disclosure functioned constitutively, legitimizing experimentation in some contexts while enabling suspicion, restriction, or prohibition in others. **Implication:** Digital authorship should therefore be evaluated as a governed attribution network in which distributed creativity remains asymmetrical because accountability continues to rest with identifiable human and institutional actors. **Novelty:** This study integrates literary texts, creator accounts, publisher paratexts, media reception, platform rules, and policy documents within one auditable framework connecting attribution, workflow, and governance across contemporary transnational literary ecosystems.

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INTRODUCTION

Generative AI has moved literary production from speculative possibility into an institutional conflict over credit, ownership, and cultural labor. In two experiments involving 30 and 96 participants, Draxler et al. (2023) found that users often claimed authorship while withholding AI attribution, even when they felt limited ownership of generated text. A Science Advances experiment involving 293 writers and 600 evaluators further showed that AI ideas could raise perceived novelty and usefulness while making stories more alike, exposing tension between individual advantage and collective diversity (Doshi & Hauser, 2024). Professional concern is equally concrete: 90% of respondents to an Authors Guild survey supported compensation for training uses, while 86% supported credit. Meanwhile, the U.S. Copyright Office maintains that wholly AI-generated material is not copyrightable, although human selection, arrangement, or modification may qualify. These converging facts make authorship a problem of attribution, labor, law, and literary value rather than an abstract debate.

Existing scholarship has clarified several dimensions of this transformation. Formosa et al. (2024) examine perceptions of authorship, creatorship, responsibility, and disclosure in AI-assisted creative writing, while Nunes (2024) reframes agency through posthuman entanglement rather than a simple tool–author binary. Jiang et al. (2024) similarly conceptualize authorship as relational and postdigital, whereas Tsao and Nogues (2024) connect generative systems with intellectual emancipation in creative practice. Research on digital literature has also established that code, interfaces, platforms, and reader participation redistribute textual agency (Fawaid, 2025; Nadifah, 2025; Abdillah, 2026). Yet these strands remain insufficiently integrated. Prior studies commonly isolate user perception, experimental creativity, legal doctrine, or particular digital genres; they rarely compare literary works, creator accounts, publisher paratexts, journalistic reception, platform rules, and professional policies within one traceable corpus. This integration remains absent across regions, media, institutions, and analytical scales. Consequently, how agency travels across production stages and institutions remains empirically under-specified.

This study investigates how generative AI reorganizes literary agency and digital authorship across interconnected textual, paratextual, and institutional environments. It asks three questions. First, how are human writers, generative models, editors, publishers, platforms, and cultural institutions credited, differentiated, or combined within public accounts of AI-mediated literary production? Second, where does consequential agency operate across prompting, generation, selection, revision, arrangement, performance, and publication, and how does its location vary between human-led assistance, balanced co-creation, machine-dominant drafting, and disputed use? Third, how do disclosure practices, evaluative frames, copyright principles, labor protections, and submission policies legitimize, restrict, or reject particular forms of digital authorship? Addressing these questions requires more than stylistic comparison between human and machine prose. Following Draxler et al. (2023), Formosa et al. (2024), and Shah (2026), this study treats authorship as an observable configuration of attribution, control, responsibility, and concealment distributed across documents and institutions in publicly accessible literary ecosystems.

This study advances the proposition that generative AI does not eliminate literary authorship but reconfigures its operative basis. Authorship increasingly resides less in exclusive sentence origination than in the capacity to initiate, constrain, select, revise, arrange, disclose, and assume responsibility for machine-generated material. This proposition extends posthuman accounts of entangled agency (Nunes, 2024) while retaining the asymmetry that systems cannot bear legal, contractual, or ethical accountability. It also develops Jiang et al.'s (2024) relational approach and Abdillah's (2026) platform-oriented account by locating agency across production workflows and legitimating institutions, not solely within finished texts. A related expectation is that disclosure functions constitutively rather than supplementarily: labels, process narratives, publisher descriptions, and policy classifications determine whether AI participation appears collaborative, deceptive, experimental, or inadmissible. Thus, digital authorship should be evaluated as a governed attribution network in which creative agency may be distributed, but responsibility remains concentrated in human and institutional actors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital authorship

Digital authorship concerns how creative credit, ownership, and responsibility are constituted when writing emerges through computational systems. Earlier digital-literature scholarship treated authorship as distributed across code, interface, platform, and reader participation (Fawaid, 2025; Herdiana, 2025; Nadifah, 2025; Suaidi, 2025). Generative AI intensifies this distribution because models produce linguistically coherent material while humans prompt, select, revise, and publish it. Some scholars therefore retain a human-centered definition grounded in accountability and intentional control (Formosa et al., 2024), whereas posthuman approaches understand authorship as relational, emergent, and shared across human and nonhuman actors in contemporary literary production processes and reception contexts (Nunes, 2024).

Key dimensions of digital authorship include attribution, ownership, intervention, disclosure, and institutional recognition. Attribution asks who is publicly named; ownership concerns perceived and legal control; intervention tracks prompting, curation, and revision; disclosure records how AI participation is communicated; and recognition concerns whether publishers, readers, or institutions accept a work as authorial. Draxler et al. (2023) show that self-declared authorship may coexist with weak ownership feelings, while Formosa et al. (2024) identify responsibility and disclosure as distinct evaluative domains. Shah (2026) adds concealment as a defining problem, and Senftleben (2023) demonstrates that remuneration further complicates authorship beyond textual production alone today.

Literary agency

Literary agency refers to the capacity to shape form, meaning, and direction within a creative process. Humanist accounts locate agency in intention, judgment, and responsibility, thereby treating AI as an instrument whose outputs remain dependent on human choice (Day et al., 2024; Amirjalili et al., 2024). By contrast, relational and posthuman accounts distribute agency across prompts, model affordances, interfaces, and iterative feedback (Jiang et al., 2024; Nunes, 2024). Tsao and Nogues (2024) associate AI collaboration with intellectual emancipation, whereas Doshi and Hauser (2024) caution that individual creativity gains may coincide with homogenization. Agency is therefore productive, constrained, and unevenly distributed.

Operationally, literary agency can be examined through six stages: initiation, prompting, generation, selection, revision, and circulation. Initiation concerns who defines the project; prompting concerns constraint design; generation identifies who produces textual material; selection records what is retained; revision captures transformation; and circulation locates platform or institutional mediation. Hwang and Lee (2025) emphasize collaborative making, while Wang et al. (2025) show that advanced writers direct AI rather than simply accept outputs. Gürsoy and Şavk (2024) conceptualize a shift from scriptor to promptor, yet such language risks overstating prompting while underestimating editing, arrangement, and refusal. Agency must therefore be traced across workflows.

Disclosure and legitimacy

Disclosure and legitimacy concern how AI-mediated writing becomes acceptable, contestable, or disqualified within literary culture. Disclosure may be understood as naming a tool, or as documenting the extent, function, and consequences of AI involvement. Raitskaya and Tikhonova (2025) treat disclosure as an ethical publishing practice, while Crawford et al. (2026) connect it to trust and accountability. Hadan et al. (2024) show that judgments are shaped by misconceptions about AI use, and Nakano et al. (2025) demonstrate that authorship labels can alter reader perception. Legitimacy therefore emerges not only from textual quality but from paratext, institutional norms, and durable audience expectations.

Indicators of disclosure and legitimacy include specificity, timing, visibility, consistency, responsibility, and sanction. Specificity identifies tools and functions; timing distinguishes prior, simultaneous, or retrospective disclosure; visibility concerns placement; consistency compares claims across platforms; responsibility identifies accountable actors; and sanction records acceptance, restriction, or exclusion. Perkins and Roe (2023) reveal variation in publisher guidance, while Kaebnick et al. (2023) stress responsible use in publication. Hutson (2024) reframes plagiarism under generative conditions, and Belcher (2024) highlights democratizing and inequitable publishing effects.

METHOD

The material unit of analysis comprised 42 unique public documents published between January 2021 and 11 July 2026. As summarized in Table 1, the corpus combined 15 primary documents, 13 secondary documents, and 14 contextual documents. Primary materials included literary works, creator statements, project pages, publisher descriptions, interviews, and production documentation. Secondary materials comprised journalism, author interviews, library notes, and peer-reviewed studies. Contextual materials covered copyright guidance, guild policies, platform rules, survey reports, and literary-magazine submission policies. Each document constituted one analytical unit, while related paratexts concerning the same work were linked through a shared case identifier during initial screening.

This study adopted a qualitative comparative corpus design informed by digital literary studies, relational authorship, and posthuman agency (Fawaid, 2025; Jiang et al., 2024; Nunes, 2024). The design was comparative because it examined how authorship was configured across genres, institutions, media, and settings without treating them as statistically representative populations. It was corpus-based because every interpretive claim had to remain traceable to a coded document, excerpt, or policy clause. It was also process-sensitive, distinguishing textual generation from prompting, selection, revision, arrangement, publication, and reception. This design therefore supported relational interpretation while preventing unsupported causal claims about technology, creativity, or response.

Information was drawn exclusively from publicly accessible and institutionally identifiable sources. Creator-controlled sources included official project websites, process essays, interviews, and literary texts. Publisher-controlled sources included book pages, press releases, audiobook descriptions, and production documentation. Independent sources included reputable journalism, author interviews, library notes, and peer-reviewed articles. Contextual authority was supplied by the U.S. Copyright Office, Authors Guild, Writers Guild of America, Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, Medium, Uncanny Magazine, and Chestnut Review. Sources from Finland, the United States, the United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Japan, and Indonesia were retained when provenance, date, authorship, and public accessibility could be verified directly.

Data collection proceeded through a documented search and screening protocol. Searches combined terms such as “generative AI,” “AI author,” “AI-written novel,” “ChatGPT poetry,” “machine coauthor,” “AI screenplay,” “literary agency,” “AI disclosure,” and “AI submission policy” with titles of identified works. Eligible documents required a stable public link, identifiable creator or institution, publication date or year, and direct relevance to literary production, attribution, disclosure, reception, or governance. Metadata, short quotations, paraphrases, contextual notes, and visual fields were recorded. Duplicates were removed through normalized titles, canonical URLs, and dates, while distinct paratexts were retained and cross-linked for transparent future auditing and replication.

Analysis followed three sequential instruments, illustrated in Figure 2. First, a distributed-authorship matrix identified credited human, machine, editorial, platform, and institutional actors, together with the location and transparency of agency. Second, a revision-chain analysis traced prompting, generation, selection, revision, arrangement, and publication, recording where machine output entered and how extensively humans transformed it. Third, paratextual legitimacy analysis examined disclosure practices, evaluative framing, responsibility, reader reception, and institutional policy. Coding proceeded from evidence extraction to within-case comparison, cross-case categorization, and theoretical interpretation. All high-inference codes were marked for second-coder verification, preserving an auditable link between source evidence and conclusions throughout analysis.

Table 1. Composition of the corpus dataset

Code	Data Type	Main Sources	Location	Period	Number	Characteristics
PR-1	Literary works and official work/project pages	Aum Golly, The Believer, THEaiTRE, Deluge Books, The New Yorker, Amazon, Pushkin, Hachette, The Last Screenwriter, Shinchosha, Penguin	Finland, United States, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Japan	2021–2025	11	Published works, project descriptions, book pages, audiovisual production records
PR-2	Creator interviews and process narratives	November Magazine, Medium	United States, Finland	2022–2023	2	First-person accounts of prompting, selection, editing, and publication
PR-3	Institutional event and publisher announcements	Czech Centre London, Pushkin Industries	United Kingdom, Czech Republic, United States, Canada	2021–2023	2	Cultural-event framing and promotional authorship claims
SE-1	Journalism and media reception	WIRED, TIME, Associated Press, Longreads, The Guardian, Nippon.com	United States, United Kingdom, Japan, global web	2022–2025	8	Reporting, interviews, controversy, audience response, and market reception
SE-2	Institutional and professional reception	Middlebury Libraries, Authors Guild	United States	2024–2026	2	Collection recognition, disputed authorship, and professional commentary
SE-3	Peer-reviewed scholarship	Lingua Technica	Indonesia and international corpora	2025–2026	3	Platform poetics, multimodality, reader agency, and distributed authorship
CT-1	Government copyright materials	U.S. Copyright Office	United States	2023–2025	3	Registration guidance, copyrightability standards, and policy reports
CT-2	Guild, professional, labor, and ethical guidance	Authors Guild, Writers Guild of America	United States and global publishing	2023–2026	7	Disclosure, compensation, training rights, labor protection, and accountability
CT-3	Publishing-platform policies	Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing, Medium	Global platforms	2023–2026	2	AI-generated versus AI-assisted classifications and disclosure requirements
CT-4	Literary-magazine submission policies	Uncanny Magazine, Chestnut Review	United States and global submissions	2024–2026	2	Human-only submission rules and restrictions on AI-generated writing

RESULTS

Configurations of literary authorship, agency, and attribution

Authorship across the corpus was coded as a configuration of credited actors, decision-making authority, and disclosure rather than as a binary distinction between human and machine writing. Table 2 consequently consolidates document-level codes into eight mutually exclusive subconfigurations derived from the Distributed Authorship Attribution Matrix. Frequencies refer to documents rather than unique literary works because linked publisher pages, creator accounts, reception texts, and institutional policies perform different attributional functions. Percentages employ all 42 documents as their denominator, while data-tier variation identifies whether each configuration occurs in primary, secondary, or contextual materials. This organization preserves the corpus architecture and clarifies how literary credit changes when textual generation, editorial control, public labeling, legal recognition, and institutional gatekeeping are treated as analytically distinct dimensions of digital authorship.

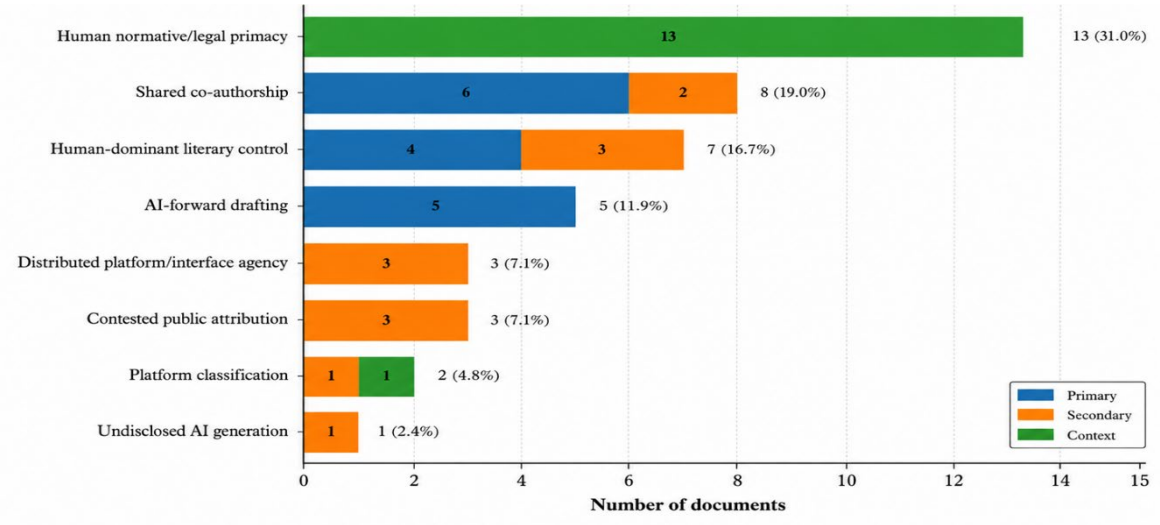


Figure 1. Authorship and attribution configurations across data tiers

Human-centred norms constituted the dominant pattern. Thirteen contextual documents assigned legal, contractual, or ethical primacy to human actors, while seven literary and reception documents retained human control despite acknowledging generative assistance. Statements such as "I asked for its help in telling a true story" (PRI-002) and "what you do with that is up to you" (PRI-007) located agency in prompting, selection, framing, and revision. Shared authorship was also substantial: eight documents employed co-creative or co-production models, including the declaration "Half traditionally-written and half AI-generated" (PRI-005). Machine-forward drafting appeared in five primary documents, although each retained human project control. Contested, undisclosed, and institutionally classified attribution appeared primarily in secondary and contextual sources, showing that ambiguity became more pronounced during reception, regulation, and platform governance.

These distributions support a relational understanding of authorship without erasing asymmetries of responsibility. Posthuman approaches appropriately recognize that literary production may be distributed across models, prompts, interfaces, editors, readers, and platforms (Nunes, 2024; Jiang et al., 2024; Abdillah, 2026). Nevertheless, generative participation does not independently establish responsibility, ownership, or accountable authorship, as Formosa et al. (2024) argue. Draxler et al. (2023) similarly demonstrate why public self-attribution and perceived ownership should remain analytically distinct. Shared and machine-forward configurations show that linguistic generation can migrate toward computational systems, whereas selection, revision, disclosure, and institutional liability remain predominantly human. Digital authorship is therefore best understood as a layered attribution network: creative agency is distributed across production processes, but cultural legitimacy depends upon publicly identifiable human and institutional accountability.

Table 2. Configurations of literary authorship, agency, and attribution in the corpus

Main Configuration	Subconfiguration	Operational Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Data-Tier Variation	Illustrative Evidence	Data Codes
Human-centred attribution	Human normative and legal primacy	Human legal agency; human-only writer status; professional accountability; protection of human contribution	13	31.0%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 0; Context: 13	"material generated wholly by AI is not copyrightable"	CTX-001–CTX-006; CTX-008–CTX-014
	Human-dominant literary control	AI use acknowledged, but humans retain prompting, selection, revision, framing, and final authority	7	16.7%	Primary: 4; Secondary: 3; Context: 0	"I asked for its help in telling a true story"; "what you do with that is up to you"	PRI-002, PRI-007, PRI-014, PRI-015; SEC-005, SEC-008, SEC-009
Collaborative attribution	Shared co-authorship and co-production	Human and AI roles publicly combined; explicit machine contribution; human curation or institutional mediation	8	19.0%	Primary: 6; Secondary: 2; Context: 0	"co-created by Finnish author Jukka Aalho and the GPT-3 language model"; "Half traditionally-written and half AI-generated"	PRI-001, PRI-003–PRI-005, PRI-009, PRI-010; SEC-001, SEC-007
Distributed attribution	Platform, interface, and reader agency	Authorship distributed among algorithms, users, interfaces, platforms, and participatory readers	3	7.1%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 3; Context: 0	"Platform circulation redistributes authorship among algorithms, users, and infrastructural systems"	SEC-011–SEC-013
Machine-forward attribution	AI-dominant drafting under human project control	AI produces poems, prose, images, or screenplay material; humans prompt, select, arrange, edit, or publish	5	11.9%	Primary: 5; Secondary: 0; Context: 0	"Poems written by code-davinci-002"; "Aidan Marchine is a set of computer systems. Kind of."	PRI-006, PRI-008, PRI-011–PRI-013

Contested attribution	Publicly disputed AI authorship	Backlash, cancellation, allegations, contested ownership, or rejection despite acknowledged AI involvement	3	7.1%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 3; Context: 0	"Artists Are Not Happy About It"; "AI-generated script cancelled after backlash"	SEC-002, SEC-006, SEC-010
Opaque attribution	Undisclosed AI generation	AI-dominant production combined with absent disclosure and human submission under conventional authorship claims	1	2.4%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 1; Context: 0	"a surge of AI-generated spam pitches"	SEC-003
Institutionally classified attribution	Platform-defined generated or assisted content	Private disclosure; generated–assisted distinction; institutional classification rather than public co-authorship	2	4.8%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 1; Context: 1	"requiring writers to tell the company in advance"; "We require you to inform us of AI-generated content"	SEC-004; CTX-007

Literary agency across human–ai production workflows

Creative agency was operationalized as a sequence of documented interventions rather than as a single act of textual production. Table 3 groups all 42 documents into eight mutually exclusive workflow configurations derived from prompting, generation, selection, revision, arrangement, performance, publication, and institutional regulation. Frequencies continue to refer to documents, preserving the same unit of analysis used for attribution patterns. Linked sources concerning one literary work remain separate because a creator interview, publisher description, news report, or policy page can disclose different stages of the same process. Data-tier variation identifies where each workflow is evidenced, while quoted excerpts anchor classifications in publicly accessible language. Figure 2 visualizes these identical counts across primary, secondary, and contextual materials without introducing additional observations or categories.

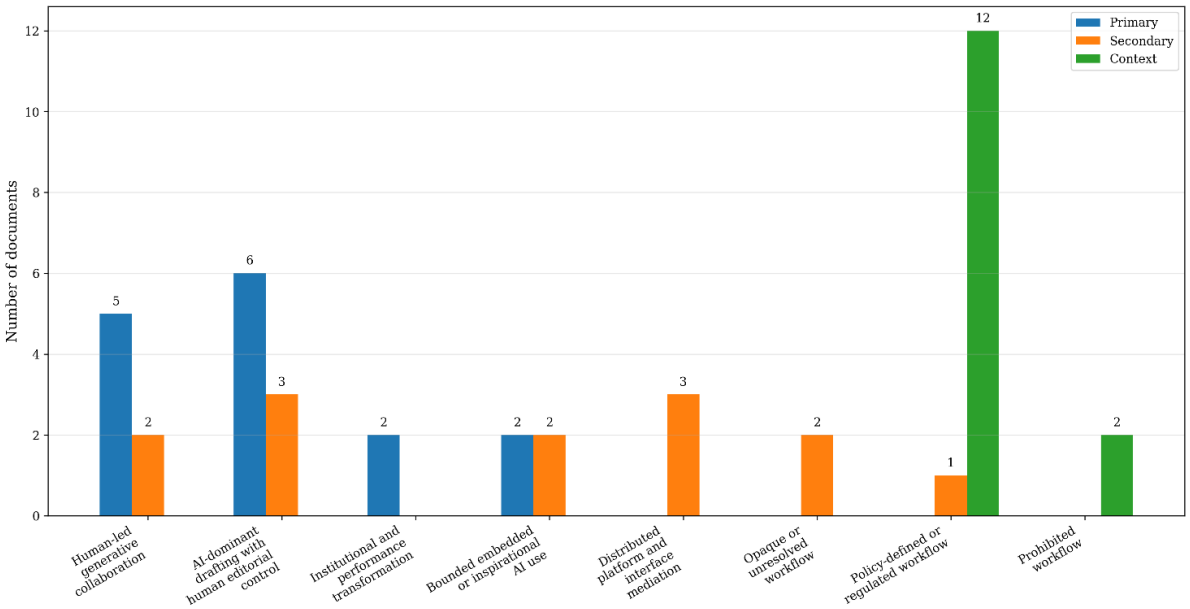


Figure 2. Workflow configurations across data tiers

Policy-defined or regulated workflows formed the largest configuration, comprising 13 documents, including 12 contextual items and one secondary report. AI-dominant drafting with human editorial control followed with nine documents, six primary and three secondary. These sources attributed poems, prose, images, or screenplay material to generative systems while retaining human compilation, cutting, arrangement, or publication. Human-led collaboration appeared in seven documents, where expressions such as “I asked for its help in telling a true story” and “what you do with that is up to you” explicitly foregrounded human initiation and selection. Four documents limited AI to embedded or inspirational material, while three distributed agency across algorithms, platforms, interfaces, and readers. Opaque, prohibited, and performance-transformation workflows remained comparatively infrequent.

The pattern locates literary agency in chains of decisions rather than exclusively in linguistic origination. Gürsoy and Şavk’s (2024) shift from scriptor to promptor captures initiation and constraint setting, but the corpus indicates that prompting alone inadequately represents the work of selection, refusal, revision, sequencing, and publication. Wang et al. (2025) similarly emphasize writers’ self-directed orchestration, while Jiang et al. (2024) and Nunes (2024) conceptualize agency as relational across human and computational actors. AI-dominant drafting therefore does not imply machine-dominant authorship at every stage. Conversely, policy and prohibition documents reveal that institutions can shape agency without producing literary text. This study consequently treats agency as distributed across workflow stages but asymmetrical in accountability, because humans and institutions retain consequential authority over retention, disclosure, circulation, and sanction.

Table 3. Configurations of literary agency across generative-ai production workflows

Workflow Configuration	Dominant Intervention Sequence	Operational Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Data-Tier Variation	Illustrative Evidence	Data Codes
Human-led generative collaboration	Human initiation → prompting → AI generation → human selection → revision → publication	Human defines project direction, iteratively prompts, evaluates alternatives, revises outputs, and retains final authority	7	16.67%	Primary: 5; Secondary: 2; Context: 0	"I asked for its help in telling a true story"; "what you do with that is up to you"	PRI-001, PRI-002, PRI-005, PRI-007, PRI-009; SEC-001, SEC-005
AI-dominant drafting with human editorial control	Human prompt → extensive AI generation → human compilation, cutting, arrangement, or publication	Models generate poems, prose, images, or screenplay material; humans control selection, sequencing, editing, and release	9	21.43%	Primary: 6; Secondary: 3; Context: 0	"Poems written by code-davinci-002"; "Aidan Marchine is a set of computer systems. Kind of."	PRI-006, PRI-008, PRI-010–PRI-013; SEC-002, SEC-006, SEC-007
Institutional and performance transformation	AI dialogue generation → dramaturgical selection → direction → performance → institutional presentation	Generated script material is transformed through dramaturgy, acting, staging, and cultural programming	2	4.76%	Primary: 2; Secondary: 0; Context: 0	"composed of dialogues generated by artificial intelligence"	PRI-003, PRI-004
Bounded embedded or inspirational AI use	Human authorship → AI consultation → limited selection → textual integration	AI contributes a restricted passage, dialogue, or source of inspiration within a predominantly human-authored work	4	9.52%	Primary: 2; Secondary: 2; Context: 0	"全体の5%くらい生成AIの文章を使っている"; "Partly inspired by conversations with an artificial intelligence"	PRI-014, PRI-015; SEC-008, SEC-009
Distributed platform and interface mediation	Algorithmic production ↔ user participation ↔ interface navigation	Agency emerges among code, users, readers, interfaces, and infrastructural systems rather than through one controlling author	3	7.14%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 3; Context: 0	"Platform circulation redistributes authorship among algorithms, users, and infrastructural systems"	SEC-011–SEC-013

	↔ platform circulation						
Opaque or unresolved workflow	AI generation → uncertain human intervention → concealed, alleged, or disputed publication	Prompting, revision, and selection cannot be verified, or AI involvement remains undisclosed or contested	2	4.76%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 2; Context: 0	"a surge of AI-generated spam pitches"; "canceled the release after allegations of generative AI"	SEC-003, SEC-010
Policy-defined or regulated workflow	Institutional classification → disclosure requirement → human responsibility → conditional circulation	Government, guild, or platform documents distinguish generated and assisted content and assign responsibility to human actors	13	30.95%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 1; Context: 12	"We require you to inform us of AI-generated content"; "material generated wholly by AI is not copyrightable"	SEC-004; CTX-001–CTX-008; CTX-011–CTX-014
Prohibited workflow	Detection or declaration of AI writing → rejection, removal, or exclusion	Literary institutions disallow substantively AI-generated submissions instead of regulating them through disclosure	2	4.76%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 0; Context: 2	"does not accept any submissions written with artificial intelligence"; "We do not accept submissions of AI-generated work"	CTX-009, CTX-010

Disclosure, legitimacy, and institutional governance

Disclosure operated as a constitutive condition of digital authorship rather than as supplementary information added after literary production. Table 4 classifies the same 42 documents used in preceding analyses into nine mutually exclusive configurations based on disclosure form, evaluative orientation, responsibility, and institutional response. Primary documents predominantly reveal how creators and publishers present AI participation, whereas secondary documents register reception, controversy, and interpretation. Contextual documents establish legal, professional, contractual, and platform-based boundaries. Retaining individual documents as analytical units is necessary because a literary work may be openly described by its creator yet framed differently by publishers, journalists, readers, or regulators. The classifications therefore capture how legitimacy changes as AI-mediated writing moves from production into circulation, evaluation, and governance.

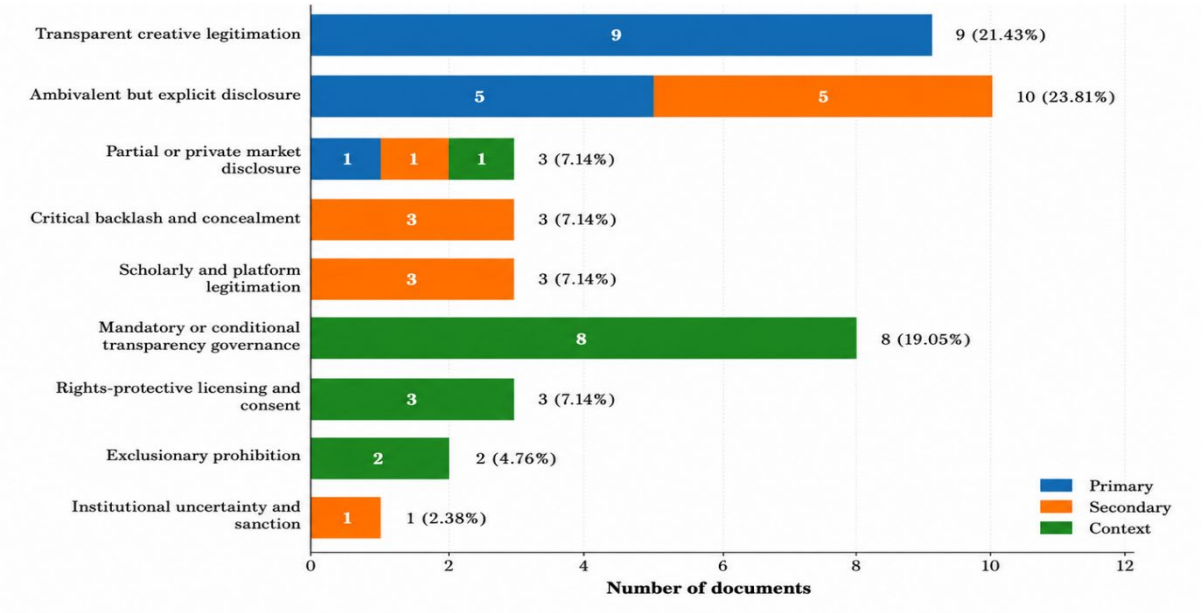


Figure 3. Disclosure, legitimacy, and governance configurations across data tiers

Ambivalent but explicit disclosure was the most frequent configuration, appearing in ten documents, followed by transparent creative legitimation in nine and mandatory or conditional governance in eight. Primary materials generally disclosed AI use to validate experimentation: works were called "co-created," "AI-generated," or partly inspired by artificial intelligence. Secondary materials showed greater evaluative instability, particularly where disclosure became associated with artistic labor, concealment, or cancellation. Contextual sources shifted attention from aesthetic innovation toward responsibility, copyrightability, labeling, consent, and remuneration. Two magazine policies rejected AI-generated submissions outright, while three rights-oriented documents linked authorship to control over training and market use. Partial or private disclosure remained limited, but its presence revealed a gap between information available to platforms and information visible to readers.

These patterns position disclosure as an institutional mechanism that actively produces authorial legitimacy. Formosa et al. (2024) distinguish authorship from responsibility and disclosure, while Shah (2026) identifies concealment as central to emergent digital authorship. Reader evaluation may also change when AI attribution becomes visible, as Nakano et al. (2025) demonstrate, indicating that identical textual material can acquire different cultural value through labeling. Publisher inconsistency identified by Perkins and Roe (2023) further explains why disclosure ranges from voluntary process narration to mandatory classification or prohibition. Consequently, transparency does not automatically legitimize AI-mediated literature: it can authorize experimentation, expose contested labor relations, or trigger institutional sanction. This study therefore understands legitimacy as a negotiated outcome produced by paratexts, policies, rights claims, and accountable human institutions.

Table 4. Configurations of disclosure, legitimacy, and institutional governance

Main Configuration	Disclosure Form	Legitimacy and Governance Indicators	Frequency	Percentage	Data-Tier Variation	Illustrative Evidence	Data Codes
Transparent creative legitimation	Full, quantified, reflective, or front-facing disclosure	AI participation openly presented as experimentation, co-creation, accelerated production, or literary innovation	9	21.43%	Primary: 9; Secondary: 0; Context: 0	"co-created by Finnish author Jukka Aalho and the GPT-3 language model"; "Half traditionally-written and half AI-generated"	PRI-001, PRI-003–PRI-005, PRI-007, PRI-009–PRI-011, PRI-015
Ambivalent but explicit disclosure	Embedded, interview-based, credit-line, or production-level disclosure	AI use is acknowledged, although authorship, ownership, aesthetic value, or labor implications remain unsettled	10	23.81%	Primary: 5; Secondary: 5; Context: 0	"I asked for its help in telling a true story"; "Poems written by code-davinci-002"	PRI-002, PRI-006, PRI-012–PRI-014; SEC-001, SEC-005, SEC-007–SEC-009
Partial or private market disclosure	Limited retail disclosure or disclosure only to a platform	AI involvement is known to sellers or platforms but is not consistently visible to readers at the point of consumption	3	7.14%	Primary: 1; Secondary: 1; Context: 1	"requiring writers to tell the company in advance"; "We require you to inform us of AI-generated content"	PRI-008; SEC-004; CTX-007
Critical backlash and concealment	Public exposure following limited, absent, or controversial disclosure	AI use is associated with artistic displacement, submission flooding, labor substitution, cancellation, or distrust	3	7.14%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 3; Context: 0	"a surge of AI-generated spam pitches"; "AI-generated script cancelled after backlash"	SEC-002, SEC-003, SEC-006
Scholarly and platform legitimation	Explicit scholarly attribution and methodological transparency	Algorithmic, multimodal, reader, interface, and platform participation are treated as analytically legitimate components of authorship	3	7.14%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 3; Context: 0	"Platform circulation redistributes authorship among algorithms, users, and infrastructural systems"	SEC-011–SEC-013

Mandatory or conditional transparency governance	Registration disclosure, labeling, employer notice, or professional guidance	AI use is permitted or assessed only when human contribution, tool function, accountability, and disclosure are documented	8	19.05%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 0; Context: 8	"material generated wholly by AI is not copyrightable"; "When and how to disclose AI use to publishers and readers"	CTX-001, CTX-002, CTX-005, CTX-006, CTX-008, CTX-011, CTX-013, CTX-014
Rights-protective licensing and consent	Compensation demands, opt-out notices, and training restrictions	Literary legitimacy is connected to control over training data, remuneration, licensing, and downstream market effects	3	7.14%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 0; Context: 3	"include a short 'no AI training' notice"; "copying involved in AI training threatens significant potential harm"	CTX-003, CTX-004, CTX-012
Exclusionary prohibition	Explicit declaration that AI-generated writing is inadmissible	Institutions preserve human-only literary production by rejecting AI-written submissions rather than regulating them through disclosure	2	4.76%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 0; Context: 2	"does not accept any submissions written with artificial intelligence"; "We do not accept submissions of AI-generated work"	CTX-009, CTX-010
Institutional uncertainty and sanction	Allegation-based scrutiny and publication cancellation	Institutional action occurs when AI involvement is suspected but workflow evidence, attribution, or disclosure remains unresolved	1	2.38%	Primary: 0; Secondary: 1; Context: 0	"canceled the release after allegations of generative AI"	SEC-010

DISCUSSION

The distribution of attribution configurations indicates that generative AI has not displaced authorship so much as fragmented its traditional functions. Human actors still dominate legal responsibility, editorial judgment, and public accountability, while machines increasingly occupy visible roles in drafting, stylistic production, and symbolic co-authorship. This functional separation matters because literary authorship can no longer be evaluated through a single criterion such as who produced the sentences. Instead, authorship becomes a layered arrangement involving origination, selection, revision, disclosure, and institutional recognition. This interpretation supports Formosa et al. (2024), who distinguish creatorship from responsibility, and Draxler et al. (2023), who show that self-declared authorship may coexist with weak ownership perceptions. It also extends Abdillah's (2026) account of distributed platform authorship beyond algorithmic poetry. The broader implication is that literary value and accountability now depend on how different contributors are coordinated, credited, and made answerable within a shared but asymmetrical creative network overall.

This fragmentation arises because generative systems can perform linguistic production without acquiring the institutional capacities historically attached to authorship. Models can generate coherent prose, dialogue, and poetry, yet they cannot independently negotiate contracts, consent to publication, accept liability, or explain aesthetic intentions. Human actors therefore retain authority where literary production intersects with law, markets, and ethics. Nunes (2024) helps explain this relational agency, but posthuman symmetry becomes insufficient when responsibility is considered. Jiang et al. (2024) similarly emphasize more-than-digital entanglement, whereas Senftleben (2023) shows that remuneration remains organized around human and corporate rights. The corpus therefore suggests an underlying structural division between productive capacity and accountable agency. Machine participation expands the former, while institutions reserve the latter for humans. This explains why shared attribution appears culturally possible, yet complete transfer of authorship remains unstable: literary systems can distribute creativity more readily than they can distribute obligation, ownership, accountability, and sanction.

The workflow patterns show that literary agency is best understood when treated as a sequence of interventions rather than a single moment of creation. Prompting initiates possibilities, but selection, refusal, revision, arrangement, and publication determine which possibilities become literature. This finding complicates celebratory accounts that equate generation with creativity and critical accounts that equate machine drafting with human displacement. Doshi and Hauser (2024) demonstrate that generative assistance may improve individual outputs while narrowing collective diversity, suggesting that agency includes curatorial resistance to model repetition. Wang et al. (2025) likewise show that writers use AI strategically rather than passively. The functional implication is that human contribution becomes less visible when evaluation concentrates only on surface text. Editorial and compositional labor may intensify as sentence production becomes automated. Consequently, assessments of originality, skill, and ownership should examine the workflow, because literary agency survives not merely in writing words but in governing alternatives.

The prominence of regulated and AI-dominant workflows can be explained by the architecture of generative systems and publishing institutions. Models produce immediate, fluent options, encouraging users to relocate effort from drafting toward evaluation and control. Platforms and publishers, however, encounter outputs only after this hidden interaction, so they reconstruct authorship through disclosure rules, process statements, and contractual categories. Gürsoy and Şavk's (2024) figure of the promptor captures part of this shift, but it underestimates later decisions that stabilize a text. Day et al. (2024) similarly show that editorial intelligence remains distinct from automated manuscript assistance. The underlying structure is one of asymmetric visibility: machine generation is technically central but often procedurally opaque, while human selection is culturally decisive but difficult to observe. This asymmetry explains why disputes concentrate around undocumented workflows. When prompts, revisions, and refusals remain invisible, institutions infer agency from final textual appearance or declared tool use alone.

Disclosure patterns demonstrate that transparency does not merely report authorship; it actively shapes whether AI-mediated literature is accepted, questioned, or excluded. Explicit disclosure can legitimate experimentation by clarifying roles, yet it can also intensify suspicion when audiences associate machine

involvement with labor substitution, diminished authenticity, or concealed appropriation. Nakano et al. (2025) show that AI labels can alter reader judgments independently of textual content, while Hadan et al. (2024) identify misconceptions influencing evaluations of AI-assisted writing. This dual function explains why transparent projects may still face backlash and why private platform disclosure remains ethically insufficient. Effective disclosure must communicate degree, function, and human intervention rather than merely naming a tool. It should also identify who assumes responsibility for selection, revision, and publication. Thus, legitimacy depends less on the presence or absence of AI than on whether its participation is rendered interpretable within recognizable norms of creative labor, trust, and accountability.

These divergent responses emerge from competing institutional definitions of what literature is expected to preserve. Publishers may value innovation and market distinction, platforms prioritize scalable classification and risk management, guilds protect labor and remuneration, while copyright authorities require identifiable human contribution. Perkins and Roe (2023) document variation across publisher guidelines, and Kaebnick et al. (2023) emphasize accountability in responsible AI use. Belcher (2024), however, notes that generative tools may broaden access to publishing, creating tension between democratization and professional protection. The corpus reflects this: the same AI-assisted practice can appear emancipatory, deceptive, or inadmissible depending on the institution evaluating it. Disclosure rules therefore function as boundary-making devices that stabilize different interests rather than neutral standards. This study positions digital authorship as governed negotiation. Agency may be distributed across humans and systems, but legitimacy is produced by institutions deciding which contributions count, which risks matter, and which participation remains culturally acceptable.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that generative AI reconfigures digital authorship by separating linguistic production from accountable literary agency. Across attribution, workflow, and governance patterns, machine participation became most consequential when combined with human prompting, selection, revision, disclosure, and institutional responsibility. This insight renews authorship theory by replacing the singular-author model with a governed attribution network in which agency is distributed but accountability remains asymmetrical. Methodologically, this study contributes an integrated corpus design that connects literary works, creator statements, publisher paratexts, media reception, platform rules, and policy documents. Its analytical framework clarifies how credit, intervention, legitimacy, and responsibility interact across literary ecosystems.

This study remains limited by reliance on public documents, uneven access to complete creative workflows, and a transnational corpus unable to represent every literary market or linguistic tradition. Document-level coding captures declared or institutionally visible practices rather than private prompting histories, unpublished revisions, or readers' experiences. Further research should combine corpus analysis with author interviews, prompt archives, manuscript versioning, reader-response experiments, and legal analysis across regions and languages. Longitudinal studies could examine how attribution and disclosure norms change as platforms, publishers, and copyright regimes evolve, while genre-specific research could test whether poetry, fiction, drama, and multimodal literature produce authorship configurations.

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Aisultanova Karlygash Abdukalykowna: conceptualization (lead), methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing (lead); **Syaiful Islam:** data curation, formal analysis, writing – original draft, writing – review and editing (supporting).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

AI USE DECLARATION

The authors used artificial intelligence tools to assist with the formatting and layout of this manuscript. AI was not used to generate the substantive content, conceptualization, data, analysis, or conclusions of the research, all of which remain the sole responsibility of the authors.

INFORMED CONSENT

Not applicable – this study did not involve direct human participants. Data consisted solely of publicly accessible documents, publisher paratexts, and platform policy materials.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

This research did not involve human or animal subjects; it analyzed publicly available literary texts, creator accounts, publisher paratexts, and platform policy documents, and therefore no institutional review board approval was required. Where research does involve human subjects, the authors affirm that such research would be conducted in full compliance with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies, in accordance with the tenets of the Declaration of Helsinki, and would be approved by the authors' institutional review board or equivalent committee.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The corpus/data analyzed in this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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