

Handout — Reconceptualising Authorship in the Age of Generative AI: A Theoretical Review

Slide 1: Reconceptualising Authorship in the Age of Generative AI



Slide 2: Authorship Was Never Settled

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- Debates predate AI: literary theory, philosophy, IP law all contested authorship.
- Behzadi et al. (2015): authorship historically encompassed collaborative and revisionary functions.
- The solitary originating author is a recent, culturally specific ideal.
- Knöchelmann (2023): recognition for intellectual labour remains a 'central struggle'.
- Generative AI makes latent instabilities practically urgent — not philosophically new.

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Slide 3: The Central Question

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3 Frameworks

Legal-copyright · Intentionalist · Posthumanist — each insufficient alone

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- How do competing frameworks conceptualise authorship when AI mediates academic writing?
- Goal: map explanatory limits of each tradition, not declare a winner.
- Five supporting claims structure the argument.

Slide 4: Framework 1: Legal-Copyright Tradition

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- Requires human author, original creative act, and identifiable legal person.
- Structurally anthropocentric — cannot extend to non-human generative processes.
- Fenwick & Juncys (2023): AI-generated works leave ownership unsettled across jurisdictions.
- Provisional responses: deny protection, attribute to operator, or defer to legislation.
- Provides institutional clarity but purchases it at the cost of conceptual flexibility.

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Slide 5: Framework 2: Intentionalist Tradition

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- Authorial meaning located in purposive mental states of a human agent.
- Barthes (2017) and Foucault (2019) already destabilised the unified author-subject.
- LLMs produce argumentative structure and disciplinary claims without intention.
- Rodrigues (2025): AI delegation challenges the epistemology of authorship itself.
- Preserves moral weight of responsibility but depends on eroded cognitive-sovereignty model.

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Slide 6: Framework 3: Posthumanist-Assemblage Tradition

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- Agency is emergent across human, algorithmic, institutional, and material actors.
- Zeilinger (2021): AI art entangles aesthetics with law and capital — not just creativity.
- Adema (2021): advocates anonymous collaborative and processual authorship models.
- Accurately describes distributed text production in human-AI collaboration.
- Risk: dissolves accountability to the point of unassignability.

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Slide 7: Where All Three Frameworks Strain

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- Each tradition breaks at the same point: locating epistemic responsibility.
- Fathallah (2017): the 'legitimation paradox' — AI users claim authorship within frameworks their practice undermines.
- Birkstedt et al. (2023): AI governance remains fragmented, lacking explicit definitions.
- Tools that generate claims differ categorically from tools that convey them.
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Slide 8: The Synthesis: A Continuum Model

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Continuum, not binary

From full human authorship → full AI delegation — disclosure calibrated to degree

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- Authorship reconceived as a transparency-regulated continuum of human-AI delegation.
- Bajohr (2024): 'causal authorship' — distance between human and machine in the creative process.
- Short causal distance: human supplies question, evaluates, revises, takes responsibility.
- Wide distance: minimal engagement — epistemic contribution becomes unidentifiable.

Slide 9: Transparency vs. Radical Deconstruction

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- Transparency camp (Rodrigues; Israel & Amer): strengthen disclosure within existing frameworks.
- Deconstruction camp (Adema; Zeilinger): dismantle the individual-author model entirely.
- This paper: accepts the assemblage description, rejects unassignable accountability.
- Israel & Amer's MetaScribe: provenance-tracking as one institutional instantiation.



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Slide 10: Implications for Academic Integrity

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- Originality must be reconceived as relational, not intrinsic.
- Transparency of AI participation — not origin-based originality — is the operative standard.
- Policies calibrated to degree of delegation, not a bright tool-vs-ghostwriter line.
- Henrickson (2021): authorship-to-generatorship spectrum maps the graduated reality.
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Slide 11: Limitations and Future Directions

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- Entirely theoretical: synthesis is reasoned, not empirically demonstrated.
- Literature skews Western, Anglo-American, and literary-legal — limited Global South coverage.
- Needed: longitudinal studies of academics' authorship practices as AI embeds.
- Needed: comparative work across disciplines with different attribution norms.
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Slide 12: Key Takeaways

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- Generative AI intensifies pre-existing authorship instabilities — it is not a rupture.
- No single framework — legal, intentionalist, or posthumanist — is individually sufficient.
- Authorship is best understood as a transparency-regulated continuum of epistemic delegation.
- Disclosure of AI involvement, not origin-based originality, should govern academic integrity.
- Accountability for epistemic claims must remain anchored to an identifiable human agent.

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