

Study of the Subjectivity of ChatGPT in Literary Creation from the Perspective of the Media Equation

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Abstract: Based on the perspective of The Media Equation, this study explores the issues of creative subject logic, intersubjective relationships, and subject rights brought about by the involvement of large language model technology, represented by ChatGPT, in literary creation. From the aspect of creative subject logic, although ChatGPT can generate structurally rigorous and grammatically standard texts, it still has noticeable deficiencies in emotional depth and originality compared to human creators. This phenomenon not only triggers a profound reflection on the essence of AI creation but also prompts a reevaluation of the importance of emotion in literary creation. From the aspect of intersubjective relationships, the emergence of ChatGPT has changed the relationship pattern between authors, readers, and AI, constructing a new triangular interactive model. This shift in power requires a redefinition of the boundaries of literary creation and an exploration of new paradigms of human-machine collaboration in creation. From the aspect of subject rights, the development of technology also poses new challenges to the existing legal system, especially copyright law. How to reasonably define the legal status of AI-generated content while protecting originality and encouraging human creation has become an urgent issue to be addressed.

Keywords: The Media Equation, Creative subject logic, Inter-subjective relationships, Subject rights.

1. Introduction

Amid the tide of the digital age, the age-old humanistic activity of literary creation is undergoing unprecedented transformation. With the rise of artificial intelligence technologies such as ChatGPT, the subjectivity of literary creation has been put under the spotlight, becoming a focal point of heated academic discussion.

This paper, from the perspective of The Media Equation, explores a series of issues and challenges brought about by the involvement of large language model technology represented by ChatGPT in literary creation, including creative subject logic, intersubjective relationships, and subject rights.

2. Literature Review

The Media Equation: In 1996, Stanford University communication scholars Byron Reeves and Clifford Nees collaborated to propose The Media Equation. They posited that “media equals real life”

and that “people have social and natural responses to media, even if they know it is irrational and believe it impossible to have such responses.” People unconsciously regard computers and other media as social actors [1].

Mei Qionglin and Zhang Xiao, starting from the definition of The Media Equation, explained the rich connotations of the theory and its potential application space in new modes of human-media interaction. A significant aspect is how this theory challenges the traditional instrumental view of media [2].

Shen Qi and Wang Luyu conducted a study on The Media Equation within the realm of human-computer interaction. With the continuous advancement of social robot technology, understanding its social roles and impacts is significant for promoting harmonious coexistence between humans and machines and realizing the positive potential of technology [3].

Shen Qi proposed that in the era of intelligent media, technology is no longer merely a passive tool but an active social participant. Its self-growing nature and inherent logic push the relationship between technology and human society into a new phase. Human-computer interaction is no longer limited to simple services and task execution but also involves the sharing of culture and values. The study validated The Media Equation from multiple dimensions and emphasized that under the trend of human-computer symbiosis, the human-machine relationship should be comprehensively considered from a social structure perspective, transcending the limitations of single interaction scenarios [4].

Li Yan, Tang Qu, and Wu Wenjing focused on the interaction between virtual idols and humans. With the continuous development of social cues, media is endowed with profound connotations. The research showed that media, when endowed with more realistic social cues, usually enhances its emotional transmission power and content dissemination power. However, this does not mean that unlimited optimization of social cues automatically brings about better communication effects. The key lies in skillfully balancing these social cues to achieve the optimal interactive experience and social influence [5].

Building on previous studies, this paper focuses on the subjectivity issue in literary creation, exploring the creative subject logic, intersubjective relationships, and subject rights brought about by the involvement of large language model technology, represented by ChatGPT, in literary creation.

3. Logic of the Creative Subject: Lack of Emotional Logic, Consistent Formal Logic

The emotional depth of literary creation is its essence. Texts generated by artificial intelligence such as ChatGPT, although capable of constructing syntactic structures and narrative frameworks, lack the emotional undertones that can touch the heart, making it difficult to elicit strong emotional resonance in readers.

As Zhang Sheng stated, “ChatGPT’s literary creation is more about unfolding the formal logic of literature rather than expressing emotional logic. This makes its works self-consistent in formal logic but deficient in emotional logic, unable to offer readers emotional appeal, thus making its poetry seem more like a game of words rather than an outpouring of emotions.” [6].

The true core of literary creation lies in the expression of personal emotions, stemming from the unique inner world of the author—an attribute that large language models like ChatGPT do not possess. While ChatGPT can serve as an auxiliary tool to inspire creative ideas and enhance the literary creation process, it essentially constitutes a bridge in the literary journey rather than its core essence. ChatGPT’s role is more akin to a key to the door of literature or an igniter of creative sparks, but real literary works still need to be crafted by the author’s hand, imbued with human warmth and the resonance of the soul to be brought to life.

Take the continuation of “Dream of the Red Chamber” as an example. This classic work captivates because of its intricate depiction of complex characters and profound emotional entanglements.

Content generated by algorithms, although it may superficially replicate similar plot structures, struggles to capture the subtle emotional fluctuations and nuanced layers of relationships between characters. Thus, the resulting stories may have form but lack the vibrant soul that brings characters to life, failing to deeply move readers and leaving the emotional resonance of the literature pale and weak.

In response to this, Yang Ning raises the question of the consciousness of the creative subject: “When facing literary works, readers can only experience, feel, and even speculate about the author’s creative intentions and emotions through the text, while the real emotions and intentions can never be directly perceived. When readers cannot distinguish whether the creator of the text before them is artificial intelligence or a human, the emotions and intentions contained in the text acquire a certain subjectivity. Whether artificial intelligence possesses self-awareness and whether emotions and intentions are involved in its writing process does not hinder human readers from perceiving AI-generated texts as literary works with emotional, intentional, and even aesthetic connotations.” [7].

4. Relationships Among Creative Subjects: The Imbalanced Triad of Reader, Author, and AI

“In the traditional relationship between reader and author, the author is God, and the reader struggles to voice their own perspective. There exists a kind of game between the two. However, today, readers have more tools, means, and technologies to collaborate with authors. Together, they form a triangular relationship: the traditional author is one vertex, AI is another, and the reader (as a new author or collaborator) is the third vertex.” [8].

This transformation not only revolutionizes the pathways of literary dissemination but also redefines the role of the reader. Readers are no longer confined to passive consumption; instead, they share insights through convenient channels, forming an interactive feedback loop with authors, thus promoting the diversification of literary creation. The internal power distribution of artistic production has subtly shifted: the authority of authors has loosened, while readers’ opinions have become increasingly valued, becoming a crucial factor influencing the direction of creation. “The nature of the author-work-reader structure has indeed undergone some changes. In the relations of artistic production, the author, as the producer, has to some extent lost dominance, while the role of the reader, as the consumer, has become more important.” [9].

Simultaneously, with technological advancements, authors are no longer the sole interpreters of their works. Literary works can be transformed and represented through various media, such as converting text into images or videos. This process allows the work to exist independently of the original creator, with its value potentially detached from its content, relying more on the breadth and form of its dissemination.

In this new creative ecosystem, market demand becomes a significant driving force behind the production of works, and the ability to replicate and disseminate a work becomes the core indicator of its value. This not only blurs the boundaries between creation and dissemination but also challenges the long-standing author-centric doctrine. The integration of AI technology further accelerates this trend, enhancing the efficiency of both creation and dissemination while provoking deep reflection on the essence of creation—how to maintain the purity and depth of creation in the collaboration between humans and technology, while preserving the diversity and richness of the literary world, is a pressing issue.

However, this process comes with a cost: artistic creation may sacrifice its original intent and artistic pursuit due to the excessive pursuit of dissemination effects. Creators, while enjoying widespread dissemination, may also feel constrained in their self-expression. Thus, in this imbalanced triad of author, reader, and AI, exploring a path of harmonious coexistence to ensure that technology serves rather than dominates the spirit of creation is a critical challenge facing us today.

5. Rights of the Creative Subject: Human-Centric Spirit in Copyright Law

Yan Feng believes that ChatGPT's behavior constitutes a form of high-tech "plagiarism." This assertion warrants in-depth discussion. People need to reexamine what constitutes plagiarism and what constitutes innovation [8].

The ownership and nature of the content generated by ChatGPT are undoubtedly complex issues that require detailed exploration. Whether ChatGPT's creative actions represent a new form of innovation driven by technology or unconscious imitation and plagiarism is a blurred boundary that demands thorough ethical and legal consideration.

Wang Qian introduced two perspectives on this issue. "First is the objective originality theory, which asserts that copyright protection should be for creativity itself, not just human creativity. Second is the legal fiction of authorship, which posits that artificial intelligence itself can be endowed with legal personality." [10].

Regarding the objective originality theory, this viewpoint recognizes the universal value of creativity, transcending the boundaries of a single species or entity. It showcases an inclusive mindset, respecting any subject with innovative potential. This argument is reasonable in its broad recognition of creativity, advocating a more expansive framework for understanding creativity beyond human limitations.

However, from the perspective of legal theory and legislative intent, this viewpoint faces strong opposition. Fundamentally, it contradicts the legislative purpose and spirit of copyright law, as well as its specific provisions. It is essential to clarify that the legislative intent of copyright laws in various countries is to ensure that authors receive due compensation from the use of their works, thereby encouraging authors not only to increase the quantity of their creations but also to enhance their quality.

This stance is rooted in anthropocentrism, explicitly limiting the scope of legal protection to works created by humans and the rights and obligations derived from them. Auxiliary provisions such as inheritance rights further reinforce the precondition that the creative subject must be human, thus establishing a legal system centered around human innovation activities.

Nonetheless, with the advancement of technology and the evolution of social concepts, the future legal system may undergo reforms, gradually moving beyond pure anthropocentrism toward a more universal and inclusive legal direction.

The legal fiction of authorship is also problematic. Imagining and granting non-human entities, especially artificial intelligence, a "virtual legal personality" similar to that of humans is a legal concept designed to address complex issues such as rights ownership, behavioral responsibility, and the implementation of legal liabilities. Fundamentally, the intrinsic value orientation of the law indicates that artificial intelligence cannot be equated with a legal subject. AI lacks the basic capabilities to enjoy rights, perform actions, and bear legal responsibilities, making it unsuitable to be a subject of legal relationships.

Lin Anlei and Wang Yanhua also presented opposing views: "If artificial intelligence is said to possess autonomous capabilities, then we should demand it to have the moral practice ability of self-determination. However, current artificial intelligence can either only intuitively formalize and reproduce the physical world or strictly execute externally input instructions within the scope of algorithmic rules. It still has a long way to go before it can achieve true human-like intelligence that handles small data with large tasks." [11].

At present, there remains a significant gap between the capabilities of artificial intelligence and true human intelligence. The two differ profoundly in terms of autonomy and morality.

Finding a fair and reasonable scheme for the distribution of responsibilities, balancing technological advancement and intellectual property protection, and ensuring that innovation and

morality progress hand in hand is a crucial challenge facing us. This issue not only concerns the definition of technological ethics but also prompts a deep reflection on the future coexistence model of artificial intelligence and human society.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Consciousness of the Creative Subject: Between Intention and Text

From the perspective of the creative subject's logic, while ChatGPT can generate texts with rigorous structure and grammatical correctness, it still shows significant deficiencies in emotional depth and originality compared to human creators. This issue can be further explored from the level of the creative subject's consciousness:

The author believes that the content of creation is indeed key to expressing inner emotions. However, if the act of creation is detached from the author's emotional foundation, what is its significance? Creation is a process driven by the creator's emotional fluctuations, choosing to use words as a medium to convey deep thoughts and delicate feelings. It is not only a demonstration of writing skills but also a transmission of humanity, emotions, and intellectual depth.

The essence of creation should be rooted in the creator's emotional experience and personal intentions. The emergence of art and literature originates from individual emotional triggers, a natural outpouring after the creator's perception and introspection of the world. It is this process that endows a work with its unique soul. Writing should be a bridge for dialogue between personal emotions and the world, a sincere projection of the inner universe to the external world. The true driving force of creation should be a profound understanding of the world and a sincere expression of personal emotions. This is the key to endowing words with a soul. In short, the motivation for creation—that is, why one creates—is the core that determines whether a work has a soul.

Technological advancement may change or even “dilute” the essence of creation. In the pursuit of technological efficiency and novelty, the most core value of creation—the genuine expression of human emotions and deep reflection—might be overlooked.

6.2. Existence of the Creative Subject: Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence

From the perspective of the relationship between creative subjects, the emergence of ChatGPT has altered the dynamics between authors, readers, and AI, constructing a new triangular interactive model. This issue can be further discussed from the level of the existence of the creative subject:

Media, especially artificial intelligence technology, has transcended the scope of mere tools, becoming an indispensable part of social interaction and creative expression. This not only challenges the traditional understanding of creative subjects but also prompts a re-examination of the role of intelligent entities in cultural production and social construction.

As artificial intelligence technology gradually acquires the ability to simulate emotions and understand social contexts, it increasingly demonstrates sociability and agency in content generation and dissemination. More importantly, AI participates in and influences people's understanding and shaping of reality, becoming a driver for reconstructing social structures and interpersonal relationships. Thus, artificial intelligence is no longer a cold, impersonal tool but evolves into an influential “social actor” whose existence and actions significantly impact the direction of social culture.

Human uniqueness lies not only in being carriers of rational thought but also in being rich repositories of emotion. These complex emotions not only serve as distinctive markers of individual differences but can also coalesce into collective power in specific contexts, sparking widespread social change. For instance, the May Fourth Movement in history is a prominent example of how emotional resonance can drive social progress.

The development of artificial intelligence compels a reevaluation of the essence of creativity, prompting deep reflection on what constitutes true creation. As technology increasingly approaches the boundaries of human emotion, it becomes crucial to maintain and respect the unique value and dignity of humans.

6.3. Crisis in Defining the Creative Subject: Reflections on Artificial Intelligence and Copyright Law

From the perspective of the rights of the creative subject, the development of technology poses new challenges to the existing legal system, particularly copyright law. This issue can be further discussed from the level of legal rights protection for creative subjects:

The author initially believed that artificial intelligence serves as an auxiliary tool for creativity, but this view limits the recognition of creative diversity. Especially when AI is capable of autonomous creation, the label of a tool becomes restrictive, challenging the understanding of the creator's identity and the issue of ownership of AI-generated works. This reveals the inadequacies of the existing conceptual framework in the face of emerging technologies and the difficulty in defining the role of AI.

Copyright law aims to incentivize human creation by promoting the development of literature and the arts through exclusive rights protection. Its core principle is "human-centered." However, envisioning a future where AI creation surpasses human efforts and incorporating AI works into copyright protection is unwise. This implies the end of copyright law's incentivizing effect, as the motivation for creation would no longer require external legal drives.

Copyright law implicitly warns that reliance on AI may lead to the loss of human values. The ideal future scenario should involve AI and humans collaborating, with the former assisting in inspiring the latter's creativity rather than replacing it. As AI potentially assumes responsibilities and pursuits, its role transcends that of a traditional tool, indicating the urgent need for a transformation in copyright law. This shift is both anticipated and tinged with a sense of nostalgia for the changing times.

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