## WHEN A DIALOG BECOMES A MONOLOGUE

A debate on custom-made literature with generative AI



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An interdisciplinary discussion between a computer linguist and a cultural anthropologist: what are the likely effects that fiction written by AI will have on the users prompting it?

### HOW WE GOT HERE

Reading is both a popular hobby and a key component of modern society, while generative AI has revolutionized the ways in which we create novel texts.

Most indicators point towards an explosion in the number of written works created with AI across all forums. "When we read a literary text we enter a relationship with its creator that is closely analogous to a conversation". But what happens when the creator is an AI following a prompt?

#### READING FICTION...

- ... helps us make sense of the world
- ... improves positive emotions and decrease negative ones
- helps the development of the own character
- ... increases people's willingess to help
- ... improves the ability to express emotional states and decreases discriminatory behavior
- ... enables a safe space to confront difficult topics

So what happens when we read fiction created by us and for us with the help of AI?

#### DYNAMICS OF READING FICTION

Our discussion focuses on four specific dynamics of reading and authoring fictional works of liter-ature with AI, centering on works created for the individuals themselves: Democratic use, Creativity, Customization and Connectedness.

AI allows more and more people to generate fictional for their own entertainment and education.

#### WEAKER SHARED STORIES

Shared stories are a major force binding together successful democracies. It has been weakened by the impact of digital and social media<sup>6</sup>. Individually-prompted-and-consumed literature further weakens those stories.

#### **UNDERMINE SHARED VALUES**

Self-made literature could keep us from reading an established canon. It stops people from commonly interpreting this canon against contemporary backgrounds and it may become harder for new works to be included.

#### MORE **MEANINGFUL STORIES**

AI enables countless options to customize products and make them more meaningful to their users: "if it is the narrative that we respond to, and the narratives are getting better or at least more vivid through technological developments, then it would make sense that we have increasingly stronger affective responses"7 to fiction.

#### **CUSTOMIZATION AS THERAPY**

People manage their emotional well-being by deciding when and how to occupy themselves with (individually) stressful topics<sup>8</sup>. Custom-made fiction can support them in doing so.

#### LIMITED **EFFECTIVENESS** WITHOUT USER INPUT

These benefits depend on the user, their motivation, and their engagement with the creative process — a user that prompts an AI to just "tell a story" without engaging in its creation would most likely not benefit from this potential.

# READING FICTION

FOUR DYNAMICS OF

#### **MORE IDEAS PUT INTO BEING**

With AI, everyone gets to call themselves a creator and make works that are technically better written. Creativity is connected to development and empowerment and leads to "pride, self-esteem, and thus mental health" 3

#### **EXPLORATION OF EVIL IDEAS**

The occupation with the evil in fiction can provide catharsis and prevent people from actually acting evil. The evil bears cultural connections and an artistic fascination<sup>4</sup> that responsible users can **WORKS CREATIVE?** explore without fear or judgement.

People are less inclined to assume that AIs can have "artistic intentions" and the users may themselves not feel like artists. AI-fiction is also less novel, more similar to other works, and therefore can be seen as less creative<sup>2</sup>.

#### UNCLEAR HOW TO MAKE AI SAFE, IF AT ALL

Restricting AI outputs limits agency and creativity by excluding ideas and reinforcing social biases, limiting agency and creativity<sup>5</sup>. Censoring prompts has also shown to be an impossible task. And what is

"evil",

anyway?

#### **INTEGRATION**

Any reader can create personas they can identify with, making fiction more meaningful to its reader and make them feel less alone.

#### **SELF-IMPROVEMENT**

AI-generated fiction could be written in a way that challenges the reader and encourages new perspectives.

#### FILTER BUBBLES

There is a risk that users would just create versions of themselves, creating a false sense of connectedness that is actually closer to narcissism.

#### LONELINESS

health risks<sup>10</sup>.

AI-generated works of fiction risk developing into solitarily-designed-and-read texts that discourage human connection at a time when technology is exhacerbating isolation, loneliness, and their associated

## OUTLOOK

HE FIGURE OF THE **AUTHOR...** 

... may become less important because AI tools will lower the technical barrier of entry.

.... may at the same time, depending on the literature, the marketing and the individual author, become increasingly important.

TO STAY...

... and we need to adapt to life with it. But we also need to decide in which role before someone decides for us.

WRITTEN WITH AL...

... could ideally reflect more diverse opinions, allowing more and more users to express their ideas in better-written texts. But there is the danger that it will include less

diverse opinions, reinforcing own biases and showing users only a mirror of themselves.

### TO-DO

**EDUCATION SHOULD** FOCUS ON...

... dealing critically with content regardless of who created it. We should also teach how to leave our "bubbles".

... understanding what these technologies can and cannot do, in order not to trust them blindly.

... helping people use them for their own and their society's benefit.

**INCREASE** TRANS-PARENCY...

... as we need tools to reliably identify AI-generated texts.

LLMS...

... may never work right — and we shouldn't even try. Artists should be free to take responsability for their work and explore freely. But there is still value in protecting society at large from stumbling into disturbing or

dangerous content. It will be a societal task to constantly evaluate.

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