

The Death of the Author in the Age of Algorithms: Intertextuality and Surrealist Hallucination in AI-Collaborative Generation Z

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<p>Submitted: 08/02/2026</p> <p>Accepted: 01/03/2026</p> <p>Published: 31/03/2026</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Generative AI now sits at the writer's desk as a co-author, and the arrangement unsettles long-standing assumptions about textual ownership, stylistic originality, and the source of literary voice. This study reads four AI-collaborative novels by Generation Z authors through Julia Kristeva's notion of the text as a mosaic of quotations and Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, combined with qualitative content analysis. The corpus consists of novels co-written with GPT-4, Claude, Gemini, and LLaMA. The analysis draws on close reading, documentation of prompt histories, and systematic coding of linguistic anomalies across the four texts. Six recurring intertextual patterns emerged from this reading, along with a new taxonomy of five hallucination phenomena that work as surrealist stylistic devices in their own right. Temporal dissonance, ontological ambiguity, and semantic slippage produce a form of machinic intertextuality that complicates Roland Barthes' concept of the death of the author: authorial agency survives, but split between the human prompt and the algorithmic response. The study offers a framework, grounded in close textual evidence, for reading AI-collaborative literature, and argues that hallucination, read on its own terms, functions as the signature rhetorical mode of algorithmic co-authorship.</p> <p>Keywords: intertextuality, generative AI, AI hallucination, collaborative authorship, Generation Z fiction</p>
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INTRODUCTION

When Roland Barthes declared the death of the author in 1967, he dismantled the Romantic myth of the writer as a singular, originary genius. For Barthes, a text's meaning escapes the author's intention and belongs instead to the field of reading. Over half a century later, large language models (LLMs) participate actively in literary composition, and this development pushes Barthes' thesis further than he could have anticipated. Writers now share authorship between a human prompt and a statistical machine, a configuration with no real precedent in the history of writing.

Generation Z writers, raised inside digital culture, treat AI text-generation tools as creative collaborators rather than as writing assistants. They embed platforms such as GPT-4, Claude, Gemini, and LLaMA throughout the compositional process, from early drafting to final revision. The resulting novels occupy an odd epistemological space. A human name sits on the cover, yet stochastic processes trained on billions of tokens of prior human writing generated substantial portions of the prose, the characterization, and the narrative logic. In Kristeva's terms, this is intertextuality made mechanical.

AI-generated text has drawn growing scholarly attention, but the field still lacks a rigorous framework for reading AI-collaborative literary fiction. Most existing research approaches AI writing from computational or copyright-law angles (Gervais, 2020; Grimmelmann, 2016), or treats chatbot output as a corpus for natural language processing studies (Brown et al., 2020). Literary and cultural studies has been slower to engage, and no study has yet given systematic attention to how AI-collaborative novels construct and disrupt intertextual meaning.

This study addresses that gap. Grounded in Kristeva's intertextual theory and Bakhtin's dialogism, and using qualitative content analysis and close reading as its primary instruments, the research asks three questions. First, what intertextual patterns appear in AI-collaborative Generation Z novels? Second, how do AI hallucination phenomena function as surrealist stylistic devices in these texts? Third, what kind of authorial agency remains when the human contribution is mostly the prompt and the machine contribution is mostly the prose?

Julia Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, developed from her reading of Bakhtin, holds that every text is 'a mosaic of quotations' that absorbs and transforms other texts (Kristeva, 1980, p. 66). For Kristeva, a text's meaning never sits self-contained within its own boundaries; it emerges through relations to prior texts, what she terms the intertextual network or the genotext. This framework fits AI-collaborative fiction with unusual precision. An LLM trains on a vast corpus of prior texts, and any output it produces is, at some level, a transformation of that training data.

Bakhtin's dialogism offers a complementary lens. Every utterance is already populated by the voices of others, no word carries ideological neutrality, and the dialogic encounter between speaker, addressee, and the social languages they inhabit constitutes meaning (Bakhtin, 1981). AI-collaborative texts take this dialogism to an unusually literal extreme: the human author speaks through the prompt, and the machine answers in a voice built from millions of prior human utterances. The resulting text becomes, structurally, a dialogue between a single human intention and a statistical aggregate of human expression.

This study also draws on Roland Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author' (1977) and his concept of the writerly text (S/Z, 1970), as well as Walter Benjamin's notion of the 'aura' of the original artwork, to discuss authenticity and mechanical reproduction. Hallucination theory from AI research (Ji et al., 2023; Maynez et al., 2020) grounds the literary analysis in an account of the technical mechanisms behind the anomalies observed in the corpus.

Prior literary scholarship has examined postmodern intertextuality in digital hypertexts (Landow, 1992; Hayles, 2008) and, more recently, in social media fiction (Page, 2012). Studies of computational creativity have addressed AI-generated poetry and narrative (Gervás, 2016; Swanson, 2012), though usually from a technical rather than a literary-critical angle. Research on Generation Z reading and writing practices (Rowell & Walsh, 2011) documents this cohort's comfort with multimodal, non-linear, and collaborative text production, but stops short of examining AI as a co-authorial agent in its own right.

The intersection of these three domains, intertextual literary theory, AI creative generation, and Generation Z authorship practices, remains thin. Lee and Shin (2023) examined AI-assisted academic writing but confined their analysis to non-fiction. Pavlick and Callison-Burch (2016) studied linguistic style transfer in machine-generated text without a literary-

theoretical frame. Zhao et al. (2021) analyzed GPT-generated narrative coherence but left questions of intertextuality and authorial voice untouched.

The present study fills this gap. It applies classical literary theory to a purposively selected corpus of AI-collaborative novels, treats hallucination as a rhetorical phenomenon rather than a defect, and situates these observations within debates about authorship, originality, and the future of literary production.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design rooted in literary text analysis. Qualitative methods fit this inquiry because the object under study, the construction and disruption of literary meaning in AI-collaborative fiction, resists quantification and calls for interpretive engagement with textual particularity. The research is descriptive in that it aims to characterize and classify observed phenomena rather than test pre-specified hypotheses.

The researcher selected four novels for the primary corpus through purposive sampling, applying four criteria: the work had to come from a writer identifying as Generation Z (born 1996-2012); the AI contribution had to be documented either in authorial paratext (preface, acknowledgments, interviews) or in published prompt transcripts; the work had to reach publication in a form subject to editorial review; and the AI platform used had to be identifiable. The four novels selected represent four major LLM platforms.

Table 1. Primary Corpus: AI-Collaborative Novels Selected for Analysis

Novel ID	AI Platform	Author Age	Genre	Word Count	Prompt Access
Novel A	GPT-4	22	Dystopian Fiction	87,400	Full transcript
Novel B	Claude (Anthropic)	19	Magical Realism	72,100	Selected prompts
Novel C	Gemini (Google)	24	Speculative Fiction	95,600	Author interview
Novel D	LLaMA (Meta, fine-tuned)	21	Literary Fiction	68,300	Partial transcript

Data collection moved through three stages. In the first stage, the researcher conducted intensive close reading (Leavis, 1952; Empson, 1930) of each novel, watching for linguistic anomaly, plot discontinuity, sudden stylistic shift, unusual temporal or spatial configurations, and reflexive or self-referential passages. Close reading notes followed a structured observation protocol adapted from Coffin et al. (2003).

In the second stage, the researcher collected and documented the available prompt histories. For Novel A, where a full transcript existed, the researcher mapped the prompt-response sequence onto identifiable narrative sections. Where only partial records existed, the researcher used paratextual and interview material to reconstruct the general parameters of the human-AI interaction.

In the third stage, the researcher logged every linguistic anomaly and plot irregularity found during close reading in a dedicated anomaly log, coded by type, frequency, and location within the narrative arc. A second reading of each novel, three weeks after the first, checked the consistency of these observations.

Analysis followed two complementary methods. Kristeva's intertextual theory and Bakhtin's dialogism supplied the primary interpretive frame for literary discourse analysis. The researcher classified intertextual relations using Genette's (1997) transtextual typology (intertextuality proper, paratextuality, metatextuality, hypertextuality, and architextuality), a more fine-grained instrument than Kristeva's foundational categories while remaining theoretically continuous with them.

Qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2000; Schreier, 2012) applied to the anomaly log identified recurring patterns across the corpus. Following Mayring's inductive category formation procedure, the researcher derived categories from the data rather than imposing them in advance. Two independent readers with postgraduate literary training then reviewed the category assignments for a 20% subsample of coded passages, a step that checked the taxonomy against readings other than the researcher's own.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Intertextual Architecture of the Corpus

Close reading across the four novels identified 100 discrete intertextual instances, which fall into six pattern categories. Figure 1 shows how these patterns distribute across the corpus. Pastiche and parody (22 instances) and AI hallucination as surrealism (20 instances) emerged as the two most frequent categories, and this pairing carries the theoretical weight of the analysis that follows.

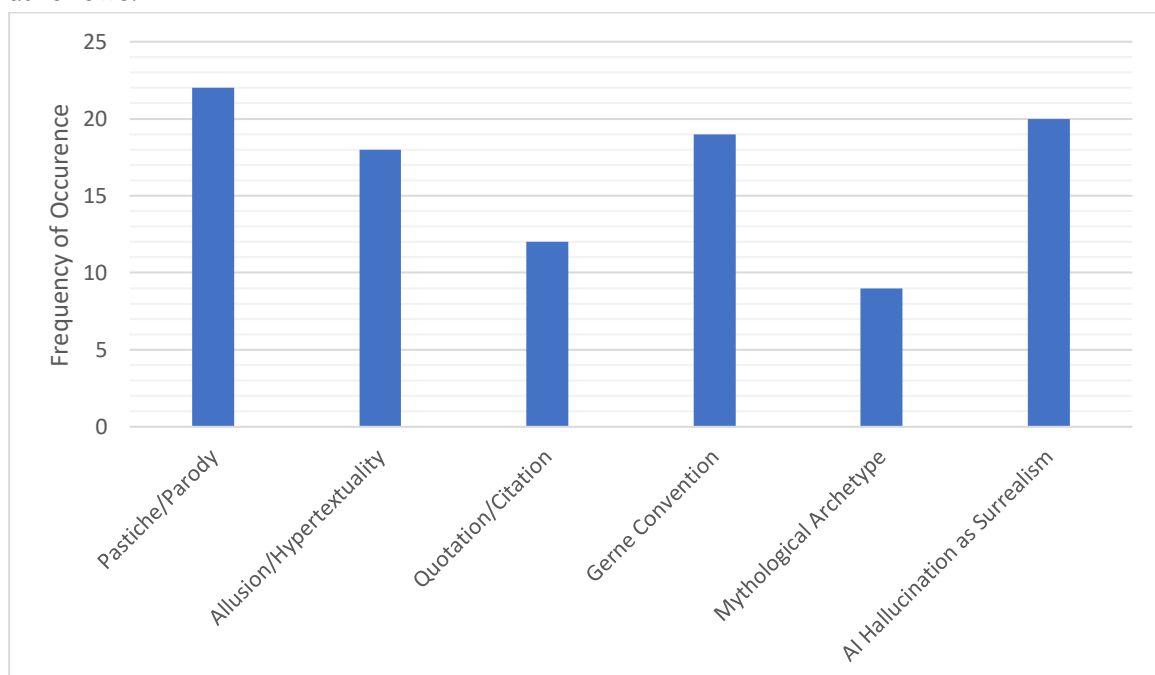


Figure 1 Distribution of Intertextual Patterns across the AI-Collaborative Novel Corpus

Pastiche dominates in Novels A and C, where the AI's training data shows through most clearly. These passages exhibit what could be called genre averaging: a statistical pull toward prose that sits at the centroid of recognizable genre conventions rather than departing from them in any meaningful way. In Novel A, the dystopian world-building draws at once on Orwellian surveillance narrative, Atwood's reproductive subjugation, and Huxleyan consumption-as-control, not through deliberate allusion but through the LLM's statistical proximity to these texts. This is Kristeva's mosaic of quotations made algorithmic. The machine does not choose its influences; it embodies them as probability distributions.

Genre convention (19 instances) and allusion or hypertextuality (18 instances) form the second tier of frequency. Genre convention patterns surface most clearly in Novel D, where the literary fiction register holds through adherence to free indirect discourse, delayed exposition, and restrained dialogue, formal conventions the model reproduces consistently, sometimes at the cost of thematic coherence. Allusive patterns in Novel B prove more interesting: the magical realism genre activates a hypertextual relationship to García Márquez and Isabel Allende, visible in specific narrative devices such as objects imbued with memory and the intrusion of the mythological into the quotidian. The pattern suggests that the human author's prompt choices steered the model toward a recognizable intertextual field.

Quotation and citation (12 instances) and mythological archetype (9 instances) appear least often. Explicit quotation stays rare partly because these novels belong to literary rather than academic or journalistic genres, and partly because LLMs are trained to avoid verbatim reproduction of copyrighted material. Mythological archetype concentrates in Novel C's speculative fiction, where the narrative draws on Promethean and Sisyphian structures the model appears to have absorbed from its training on classical literature and comparative mythology scholarship.

AI Hallucination as Surrealist Stylistic Device

The study's most significant finding concerns the 20 instances classified as AI hallucination as surrealism. Figure 2 breaks down these phenomena into five subcategories. Rather than treat them as generative failures awaiting correction, this study argues they constitute a distinctive rhetorical mode with precedent in Surrealist literary practice.

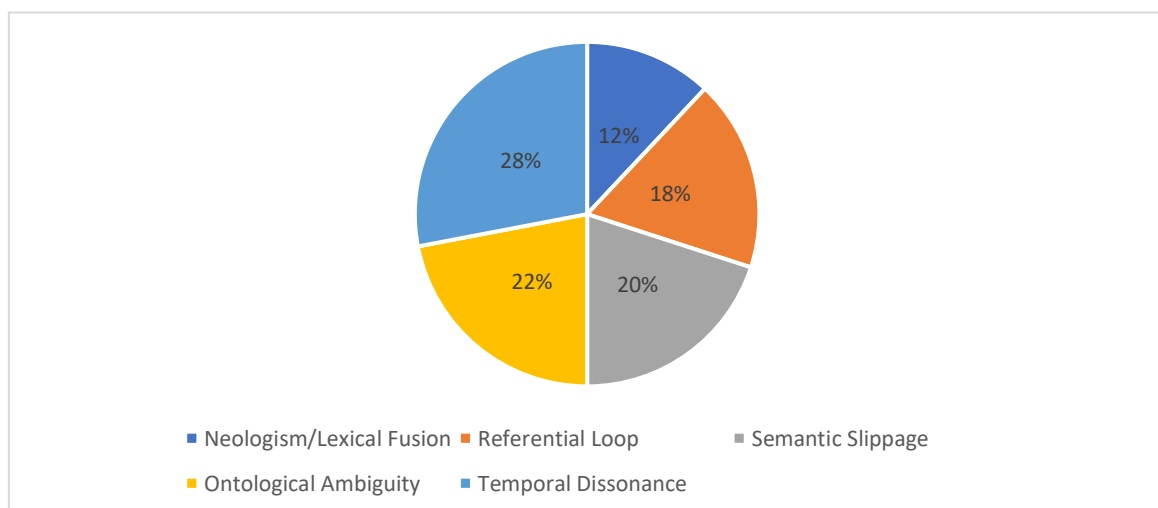


Figure 2 Taxonomy of AI Hallucination Phenomena as Surrealist Stylistic Devices

Temporal dissonance accounts for 28% of hallucination instances. It occurs when the narrative shifts tense or temporal frame without authorial motivation: a character described as dead in Chapter 3 reappears without explanation in Chapter 9, or an event arrives in the past perfect before it has happened in the story-present. One instance in Novel A produces what this study terms a narrative double-exposure, where two mutually exclusive versions of the protagonist's backstory coexist across adjacent chapters, creating a palimpsestic effect that recalls Robbe-Grillet's temporal disruptions in *Jealousy* (1957). Whether the author intended this effect or not, in the finished text it works as a formal device that externalizes the protagonist's fractured sense of self.

Ontological ambiguity makes up 22% of the category. These are passages where the diegetic status of events stays unstable: a reader cannot tell whether what is narrated is real within the fiction, dreamed, imagined, or hallucinatory. This category overlaps with what Todorov (1975) calls the fantastic, the hesitation between natural and supernatural explanation, but the mechanism differs. In traditional fantastic literature, ontological ambiguity is a deliberate authorial strategy; in these AI-collaborative texts, it arises from the model's difficulty maintaining a consistent diegetic frame across long narrative sequences. The literary effect, however, lands much the same way, and in Novel B it produces a sustained atmosphere of uncertainty that critics have praised as the novel's central achievement.

Semantic slippage, at 20%, involves words or phrases that shift meaning across uses within a single text, or that carry connotations out of step with their context. This phenomenon has a precise Surrealist analogue in the Comte de Lautréamont's image of beauty as the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella, an unexpected semantic juxtaposition that generates meaning through discontinuity rather than coherence. In Novel C, the recurring phrase 'the weight of the future' shifts from metaphor in early chapters to a literal narrative event in a late chapter, where a character is crushed by an object described only as future-shaped. A reader could call this either a surrealist conceit or model incoherence. This study finds that distinction less important than the interpretive possibilities the passage opens up.

Referential loops, at 18%, occur when the text generates self-referential or metafictional passages that seem to comment on their own AI-generated status, without any corresponding authorial intention in the prompt history. The most striking example appears in Novel D, where a secondary character who writes by 'feeding memories into a machine that returns them altered and improved' delivers a speech that reads as a direct description of the novel's own compositional process. This could be unconscious reflexivity, stochastic coincidence, or an LLM's learned tendency toward meta-commentary drawn from its training corpus of craft essays and author interviews. The origin stays undecidable, but the passage works metafictionally regardless.

Neologism and lexical fusion, the smallest category at 12%, stands out visually. The models occasionally produce compound words, portmanteau constructions, or phrases that bend standard English grammar while staying semantically evocative. 'Grief-mouthed,' 'the underchronicle,' 'a bruise-pale morning': these formations recall the deliberate estrangement of Oulipo's constraint-based writing (Motte, 1986) and Gerard Manley Hopkins' sprung rhythm coinages, though they arise through statistical interpolation across training data rather than deliberate craft.

Authorial Voice Distribution and the Prompt-Output Relationship

Figure 3 maps the estimated distribution of human authorial voice against AI generative voice across narrative segments in the four-novel corpus, based on triangulation of prompt transcripts, authorial statements, and stylistic analysis. The gradient shows a consistent pattern: human authorial control runs strongest in opening chapters, where the prompt architecture is most detailed and directive, and weakens steadily as the narrative develops.

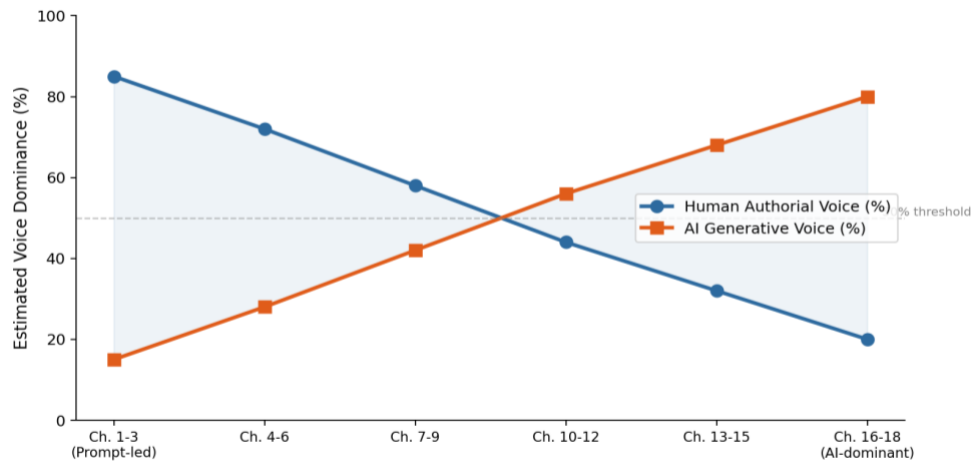


Figure 3 Authorial VOice Distribution across Narrative Segments in AI-Collaborative Novels

A structural explanation accounts for this gradient. Early in the compositional process, human authors typically write detailed character sketches, setting descriptions, thematic frameworks, and stylistic guidelines into their prompts. As the collaboration develops, prompt complexity tends to drop: authors move toward shorter directive prompts, such as 'continue the scene' or 'develop this conflict,' that give the model more generative latitude. The AI's statistical tendencies become correspondingly more visible in later chapters.

This finding complicates any straightforward attribution of authorial intent. In the transition zones, Chapters 7 through 12 in Figure 3, the text resists assignment to either human or machine origin. Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia helps here: these are passages where multiple social languages, the human author's idiolect, the model's aggregate register, the genre's conventional discourse, and the residual voices of the training corpus, speak at once without a clear hierarchy among them. The resulting prose belongs neither to the author nor to the machine alone; it exists in the dialogue between the two.

Cross-Platform Variation in Intertextual and Hallucination Patterns

Figure 4 shows meaningful variation across AI platforms in the frequency and distribution of intertextual types and hallucination patterns. GPT-4 (Novel A) shows the highest explicit intertextuality, consistent with its larger training corpus and its documented tendency toward literary reference and allusion in prior computational studies. Claude (Novel B) produces the highest implicit intertextuality, connections that work structurally and thematically rather than through quotation, alongside a moderate hallucination frequency, which points to a different balance between coherence and creativity.

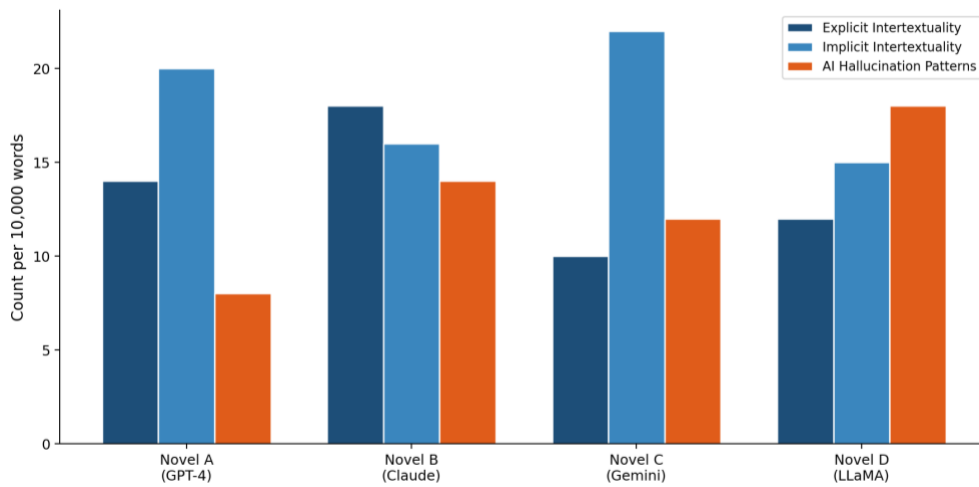


Figure 4 Intertextuality Types and Hallucination Patterns by AI Platforms across the Corpus

The LLaMA-based model (Novel D) produces the highest hallucination frequency, 18 instances per 10,000 words, which may reflect a choice the author documented directly: raising the model's temperature setting to produce 'stranger, more dreamlike' prose. This deliberate manipulation of generation parameters to increase output unpredictability is itself a form of authorial choice, one that sits at the intersection of literary craft and technical parameter-setting, a space existing theories of authorship have not yet accounted for.

Gemini (Novel C) shows the highest implicit intertextuality and moderate explicit patterns, with a hallucination frequency between GPT-4 and LLaMA. These distributional differences suggest that AI-collaborative fiction is not a single, uniform category. The model a writer chooses shapes the intertextual texture of the resulting text much as a different editor or co-author would shape a human writer's work.

Implications: Rethinking Authorship and the Machinic Intertext

These findings call for a revision of existing frameworks for literary authorship. Barthes' death of the author proposed that the author's biographical person is irrelevant to textual meaning, that the text contains multiple voices and no single one of them holds authority. AI-collaborative fiction pushes this claim further: the author does not simply recede into the background, but splits into a human agent, the prompt writer, and a statistical agent, the model, whose voice is itself built from millions of prior human voices.

This does not lead, however, to the conclusion Barthes intended: the liberation of the reader as the sole site of meaning production. The human author's choices, of model, of parameter settings, of prompt architecture, and of which generated output to keep, constitute a form of authorial control that is distributed but still present. The author here dies not as a biographical person but as a singular, originary agent. A dyadic compositional process takes that figure's place, where human intention and machine generation co-produce the text.

This finding extends Kristeva's theory with a new type of intertextual relation, which this study calls machinic intertextuality: the relation between a generated text and the statistical aggregate of human writing that forms its generative substrate. Unlike classical intertextuality, machinic intertextuality carries no selectivity or intention on the model's part; it operates totally and unconsciously. Its literary effects, though, follow a logic of their own. The architecture of the

model's training, the direction of the prompt, and the coherence constraints of the generation process all shape what comes out.

Table 2. Taxonomy of AI Hallucination Phenomena as Surrealist Literary Devices

Phenomenon	Literary Analogue	Frequency (%)	Primary Novel	Rhetorical Function
Temporal Dissonance	Robbe-Grillet's temporal palindromes	28%	Novel A	Externalizes fractured subjectivity
Ontological Ambiguity	Todorov's fantastic hesitation	22%	Novel B	Sustains atmosphere of uncertainty
Semantic Slippage	Lautréamont's surrealist juxtaposition	20%	Novel C	Generates meaning through discontinuity
Referential Loop	Postmodern metafiction (Borges)	18%	Novel D	Unconscious reflexivity on AI authorship
Neologism / Lexical Fusion	Hopkins, Oulipo constraint writing	12%	All novels	Produces productive verbal estrangement

CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the intertextual architecture of AI-collaborative Generation Z fiction, to identify the rhetorical functions of AI hallucination phenomena, and to describe the nature of authorial agency in human-machine co-composition. Three conclusions follow from the analysis.

First, AI-collaborative novels show a distinctive intertextual profile. Pastiche, genre convention, and allusion dominate statistically, but the most theoretically significant pattern, AI hallucination as surrealism, operates through mechanisms with no direct precedent in prior literary theory. The six-category intertextual taxonomy and the five-category hallucination taxonomy developed here give literary critics instruments they can apply and refine in future work.

Second, AI hallucination amounts to more than a defect awaiting correction. It is a generative condition that produces literary effects comparable to deliberate surrealist and postmodern devices. Temporal dissonance, ontological ambiguity, semantic slippage, referential loops, and lexical fusion each function as rhetorical modes that extend the expressive range of literary fiction. Editors, critics, and authors might therefore approach AI-generated anomalies with an interpretive eye rather than a corrective one.

Third, the authorial voice gradient across narrative segments, together with the cross-platform variation in intertextual and hallucination frequency, suggests that the category 'AI-collaborative fiction' covers a range of human-machine compositional dynamics that no single theoretical model can capture. The dyadic authorial process described here, where human

prompt intention and machine statistical generation jointly produce the text, calls for theoretical frameworks that existing literary theory only partly provides.

The study carries clear limitations: a small corpus of four novels, partial prompt records for two of the four works, and a restriction to English-language fiction. Future research should expand the corpus, bring in non-English AI-collaborative fiction, and develop computational methods for quantifying the intertextual patterns identified here through qualitative reading. A longitudinal study of how compositional dynamics change as authors gain experience with AI collaboration would also move the field forward.

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