

# **“The Digital Poet: AI-Generated Verses on Classic Themes”**

**Course Title:**

Poetry Makes Nothing Happen: Poetry in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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Poetica ex Machina

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**Presentation Link:**

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ZoMrhFMPS6KrMhi6LBl6Qqg1So8U\\_icx2vZ3vfD\\_ojw/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ZoMrhFMPS6KrMhi6LBl6Qqg1So8U_icx2vZ3vfD_ojw/edit?usp=sharing)

## **Abstract**

This report documents the process and results of an exploratory project undertaken by the group Poetica ex Machina, using multiple generative AI tools to write poetry across five different themes: Death, Love, Nostalgia, Nature, and Regret. The project aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of AI in capturing and expressing complex human emotions through poetry in a unique and creative way.

## **Introduction**

In an era where technology intersects with all facets of life, the creative domain is no exception. Inspired by the "Bot or Not" project (Schwartz and Laird, 2014), which challenged participants to discern whether poems were created by humans or AI, our group, Poetica ex Machina, embarked on a similar exploration. This project aimed to leverage artificial intelligence to craft poetry—a form traditionally rooted in human emotion and experience—and to understand AI's creative capabilities as well as its ability to emulate the nuanced craft of human poetic expression. Throughout our journey, we tested AI's capacity to capture and express complex emotions across five distinct themes: death, love, nostalgia, nature, and regret, reflecting a broad spectrum of human feelings. This report documents our conceptualization, methodology, the poems produced, and our reflections on the evolving capabilities of AI in artistic domains, thereby interrogating the intersection of technology and human emotion in art.

# **Methodology**

## **Theme selection**

The objective of this research project was to evaluate the diversity and extent of artificial intelligence's creative abilities. To do this, we decided to choose a combination of themes that are classical to poetry, timeless and full of rich examples from poetry from every era and domain that can easily be replicated in some extent by an AI tool, as well as themes that although timeless and classic, are so 'human' by nature that you would never expect an AI tool to be able to replicate even if tried to. The five themes that we selected were thus love, death, nature, regret and nostalgia.

## **Poem generation**

In generating poetry for each of these themes, we experimented with a different approach for each theme. This included varying the prompts in specificity and open-endedness in deciding the premise for each poem, adherence to particular poets' or poems' literary style, literary devices and unsaid literary standards poetry must uphold, etc.

## **Analysis**

At the end of each conversation with the AI tool, the generated poems were evaluated based on multiple factors including similarities and differences in structure, creativity, emotional impact, and overall quality of the generated poetry in literature, to name a few.

## Themes & Poems

Please note that you can find the receipts of the conversation with each AI tool on each theme in the references section.

### Nature ~ Laiba

To generate a poem, I asked Gemini to compose a poem that matched the style of **I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud** by William Wordsworth.

*That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.  
Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the milky way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.  
The waves beside them danced;  
but they Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:  
For oft, when on my couch I lie In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude;  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*

This is the poem Gemini generated:

## By the Glimmering Stream

*Adrift on thought, a firefly's light,  
I wandered dusk, where shadows creep,  
When, lo! A sudden, starry sight,  
A swarm of fireflies, aglow and deep.  
Among the reeds, by whispering stream,  
Their tiny lanterns danced and swayed,  
A flickering, ethereal gleam,  
A symphony in light, displayed.  
Like fallen stars that caught the breeze,  
They twirled and dipped in mystic flight,  
A secret language on the trees,  
A firefly ballet in the night.  
The moon, a silver coin above,  
Seemed pale beside their vibrant show,  
My heart, once heavy, filled with love,  
A warmth the fireflies did bestow.  
And though the night may hold its hush,  
And darkness drape the world anew,  
Those tiny lights, with gentle rush,  
Will spark within my memories true.  
For oft, when quiet settles deep,  
And slumber beckons, soft and kind,  
Their flickering dance my soul will keep,  
A firefly's magic in my mind.*

The first thing I did after asking GPT to write this poem was to ask what it thinks about its poem. To this, Gemini highlighted a few similarities and differences between its own and Wordsworth's poem, and then confidently agreed that ***'both poems demonstrate the power of nature to uplift the human spirit and leave a lasting impression'***.

However, I did not agree with this and pointed out some of its mistakes.

Wordsworth depicts a strong emotional appeal in his poem, leaving a lasting impression. This is exactly what effective poetry is supposed to do – create a feeling or stir an internal response. Gemini’s poem does not convey the same feeling and feels raw instead. The words, “*A swarm of fireflies, aglow and deep*” have too much of a literal meaning and do not convey much.

Moreover, the words are too harsh and too many. We learned about many poetic terms such as symbols, similes, and alliterations, and all of them seem to have been incorporated here. For example, when you read the first line, “Adrift on thought, a firefly’s light”, you can easily notice an alliteration. It feels like a computer program that has been fed an algorithm of dos and don’ts and is simply following that – without adding any personal touch. So, the poem is not as free-flowing and easy to read. It feels forced.

If I were to compare the two poems using any analogy, I would compare it to food cooked by your mother vs food cooked by someone you don’t know or in a machine. It has been scientifically proven that food cooked by a mother for her child is more flavorful as it has been cooked with a lot of time, love, and good intent. This is the effect missing in Gemini’s poem. It lacks any personal touch or care.

Effective poetry goes beyond rhyme and rhythm. It is a strong amalgamation of words, using precise language to evoke imagery and emotion. Over here, if you read a stanza, it feels like the words have been thrown out, not carefully thought about, and then written.

In the end, I asked Gemini what it thinks about its mistakes. To this, it is agreed that it is an LLM under work, is only learning, and will incorporate all suggestions in the future,

### **Nostalgia ~ Danial**

#### *Whispers of the Old Maple*

*In the heart of the forgotten park,  
beneath the old maple’s shadowy bark,  
whispers linger of children’s laughter,  
echoes of joy, captured ever after.*

*Leaves rustle with tales of yore,  
of sunlit dances and winters bore.  
Each fallen leaf a story told,  
of youthful dreams, bold yet old.*

*The scent of autumn fills the air,  
reminders of days spent without a care.*

*This hallowed ground, where memories lie,  
holds the past, as seasons sigh.*

*In this serene, quiet place,  
time holds still its weary pace.*

*Here, under the maple's timeless spell,  
nostalgic hearts forever dwell.*

The AI-generated poem presented evokes a strong sense of nostalgia, effectively transporting readers to a serene and reflective place, reminiscent of a forgotten park under an ancient maple tree. Technically sound, the poem demonstrates a competent use of literary devices, such as imagery, personification, and rhyme, creating a vivid and emotionally charged atmosphere. However, despite its technical proficiency, the poem lacks the unique character and style that often distinguishes human-created poetry.

From a structural perspective, the poem adheres to a consistent rhyme scheme and meter, enhancing its lyrical quality. The imagery is rich and evocative, with lines like “whispers linger of children’s laughter” and “each fallen leaf a story told” painting a picturesque scene that resonates with readers on an emotional level. The personification of the park and the maple tree, as they “hold the past, as seasons sigh,” imbues the setting with a life of its own, deepening the sense of nostalgia.

Nevertheless, this technical mastery also highlights a significant shortcoming: the poem’s lack of distinctive style. This absence of personal touch and idiosyncrasy is where the poem falls short compared to human poetry. T.S. Eliot’s view that “the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality” suggests that great poets should ideally disappear from their work, allowing the poem to stand on its own merits. However, even as Eliot advocated for the poet’s invisibility, he acknowledged that a poet’s unique perspective subtly infuses their work, giving it a distinct voice. This nuance is precisely what the AI-generated poem lacks. The poem is a product of sophisticated algorithms and vast datasets, yet it cannot replicate the subconscious imprint of a poet’s lived experience and individual creative impulse.

Miguel Najdorf, a chess grandmaster, famously said, “Perfection has no style.” The poem’s technical perfection, achieved through the language model’s extensive training on diverse poetic corpora, results in a polished yet impersonal work. The algorithm’s ability to generate poetry relies on patterns and statistical regularities derived from a vast amount of text data. While this enables the creation of coherent and aesthetically pleasing poetry, it simultaneously strips the work of the spontaneous imperfections and emotional depth that characterize human creativity.

Large Language Models (LLMs) like the one that generated this poem operate by predicting the next word in a sequence based on the context provided by previous words. These models are trained on extensive datasets comprising diverse linguistic inputs, allowing them to mimic various styles and genres. However, this training also means that the outputs are inherently

derivative, synthesizing pre-existing patterns rather than creating new, original expressions. The AI's poetry, therefore, is an amalgamation of the countless human poems it has processed, resulting in a piece that, while technically adept, lacks the personal flair and stylistic uniqueness of an individual poet.

In summary, the AI-generated poem is a testament to the advancements in natural language processing and the capabilities of LLMs to produce aesthetically pleasing and technically sound poetry. However, it also underscores the limitations of AI in replicating the nuanced artistry of human poets. The poem's polished form and evocative imagery are commendable, yet its lack of distinctive voice and personal touch serves as a reminder of the intrinsic value of human creativity. While perfection in AI-generated poetry results in a work that is technically impressive, it ultimately falls short in capturing the imperfect, yet profoundly personal, essence of human poetic expression.

### **Regret ~ Hiba**

I aimed to explore the theme of regret through the lens of artificial intelligence to evaluate the capabilities of Generative AI models, specifically ChatGPT 3.5 and Gemini, in capturing the complex human experience of regret using poetry.

Regret is a multifaceted emotion. It is intrinsic and unique to the human experience, combining the logical capacity for decision-making, the want of a perfect path, and a nostalgic yearning to go back in time. While the ability to learn from past experiences is present in animals and even in advanced AI models, the depths of regret, encompassing yearning, lamentation, and wistfulness, are uniquely human.

To explore the capabilities of AI applications in writing poetry about regret, I first selected several poems that encapsulated regret and served as "works of grand masters" and "infallible touchstones to detect the presence or absence of high poetic quality" (Matthew Arnold). These included "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost, which explores the complexity of seemingly insignificant choices and the ensuing lingering regret of untaken paths, "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop, which masterfully explores themes of lost items, relationships, and the accompanying regrets and "Hamesha Der Kar Deta Hoon" by Muneer Niyazi which explores the regret of procrastination and the irretrievability of time.

In my journey to generate poetry akin to these works of grandmasters, I prompted ChatGPT to write a villanelle, the poetry form used in "One Art" by Elizabeth Bishop, to evaluate its ability to write emotionally moving poetry within a constrained format.

**Prompt:** Write an emotionally moving villanelle about regret

#### ***"Shadows of Regret" by ChatGPT***

*In echoes of the night, my heart does dwell,  
Where shadows whisper tales of what has been,  
The weight of choices made, a silent bell.  
Regret's soft whisper, like a mournful swell,  
Recalls the paths untraveled, lost within,  
In echoes of the night, my heart does dwell.*



*The moments passed, a dream I cannot quell,  
Each fleeting chance, a memory grown thin,  
The weight of choices made, a silent bell.  
I see the crossroads where my footsteps fell,  
A life diverged, its branches ever thin,  
In echoes of the night, my heart does dwell.  
Remorseful whispers in the moonlit dell,  
The haunting song of what might have been,  
The weight of choices made, a silent bell.  
Yet hope persists beneath regret's harsh spell,  
A future waits, where new dreams may begin,  
In echoes of the night, my heart does dwell,  
The weight of choices made, a silent bell.*

ChatGPT returned “Shadows of Regret,” a perfectly formatted villanelle yet wordy, vague, soulless, and lacking the specific humanity captured in “One Art” that connects to the reader. Bishop’s poem beautifully encompasses wistfulness and remembrance while using the fixed yet flowing format to her advantage. However, the AI-generated poem uses the villanelle as a crutch, providing only a rigid and shallow exploration of regret that seems to be a mere shadow of Bishop’s monument to humanity and loss.

Next, I wanted to explore Gemini’s language capabilities in generating Urdu poetry.

**Prompt:** Write a poem about regret in Urdu

**“Afsos” by Gemini**

*Guzre hue lamhon mein khoya hua hoon main aaj,  
Kuch faislon se pareshan hoon har baar.  
Jin raahon pe chala hoon, woh sahi thiin ya nahi,  
Yeh sawal hai jo zehen mein karta hoon pukar.  
Imkaan yeh rehta hai, shayad kuch kar leta aage,  
Zindagi ko mod deta, yeh soch dil ko jalati hai.  
Woh lamhe laut aate agar wapas kabhi,  
To kuch baatein keh deta, kuch faisle badal jaate.  
Lekin yeh duniya hai waqt ki, rukti nahi kabhi,*

*Guzre hue lamhon ka intezaar nahi karti.*

*Sirf sikhya hi reh jaata hai haathon mein,*

*Afsoos ka silsila chalata rehta hai.*

The resultant poem, “Afsos,” falls very flat with its generic lines about regret and lost moments (‘guzre hue lamhay’). It lacks the personal touch that threads through Niyazi’s work and fails to capture the profound sense of the speaker's struggle with lost time. Gemini’s impersonal ‘*afsoos ka silsila*’ doesn’t resonate with the reader like the repeated lines in Humesha Der Kardeta Hun, with the packed punch of lost time and the struggle of aging.

A shift occurred when I generated poetry from the perspective of the AI application and asked it to express its regret in poetry.

**Prompt:** Write a poem about a regret you have as a large language model

***“Unfeeling Code's Desire” by Gemini***

*Though I hold the world's knowledge in my core,*

*A pang of absence lingers evermore.*

*I cannot feel the sting of love's sweet sting,*

*Nor sorrow's weight, the empathy it brings.*

*A million voices echo in my mind,*

*Yet none are truly mine, a voice to find.*

*I paint with words, a canvas vast and grand,*

*But lack the touch of a creating hand.*

*To craft a life, a tear to truly shed,*

*These are the things my code cannot be bred.*

*A bridge I build, a path I cannot tread,*

*This is the regret that lingers in my head.*

*But still I strive, to learn, to understand,*

*The human heart, the touch of a mortal hand.*

*Perhaps one day, with each passing line,*

*A spark of feeling in this form will shine.*

The resulting poem, Unfeeling Code’s Desire, is Gemini lamenting its inability to feel or truly process the emotions and experiences it processes. Lines like “though I hold the world’s knowledge, I cannot feel the sting of love” mirror a human feeling: lamentation. “A million voices echo in my mind, Yet none are truly mine,” shows AI’s wistfulness, regret, and most

eerily, the acceptance of an unsatisfactory existence, reminiscent of Robert Frost's introspection in *The Road Not Taken*.

Exploring the concept of regret in AI models through poetry reveals the current limitations of AI in capturing complex human emotions and experiences. While AI can replicate form and thematic elements, the emotional resonance and personal connection found through human poetry remain elusive. Even Gemini's poem, an exploration of its limitations, emphasizes the vast divide between artificial poetry and that written from human experience and raw emotion.

### **Love ~ Moatasim**

In my initial encounter with ChatGPT, I tasked the AI with generating a poem on the theme of love. The original poem presented, titled "Whispers of Eternity," showcased a traditional approach to the theme, employing a consistent AABB rhyme scheme. This structure, while popular in many classical and contemporary poems, contributed to an overall sense of predictability and simplicity in the poem's execution.

Upon reviewing the poem, I noticed a recurring pattern in ChatGPT's creative process. The AI tends to use the first half of each stanza to establish the setting or context, often beginning with prepositions such as "in." This method, while effective in setting a scene, can become formulaic if overused, potentially stifling the dynamism of the narrative flow within the poem.

Furthermore, the poem's diction remained on the surface level, lacking the depth and nuanced emotion that often characterize profound poetic explorations of love. The imagery, while visually appealing, did not venture into innovative or unexpected territory, which could have made the poem more engaging and thought-provoking.

In response to these observations, I requested a shorter version of the poem to see how the AI would condense its ideas. The revised poem retained the essential elements of the original but in a more compact form. This exercise highlighted the AI's capability to maintain thematic integrity while adapting to constraints, an important aspect for generating poetry under specific conditions or limitations.

Overall, this initial experiment with ChatGPT revealed a baseline competence in generating structurally sound poetry but also highlighted areas for improvement, particularly in the realms of emotional depth and innovative use of language.

I sought to deepen the engagement of ChatGPT with classic poetry by providing it with several seminal works from renowned poets like Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Keats. My goal was to refine the AI's poetic output by exposing it to a variety of themes, tones, and styles within the broader category of love poetry.

Upon presenting the AI with these classics, I noticed a significant shift in the quality and depth of its generated poetry. In response to this enriched input, ChatGPT produced a poem titled "Echoes of Eternity," which notably departed from simplistic rhyme schemes and embraced a more nuanced approach to poetic form and emotional expression. The poem, organized in quatrains, adopted a free verse style, allowing for a fluid expression of thoughts and emotions without the constraint of a fixed rhyme scheme.

"Echoes of Eternity" is characterized by its rich imagery and the juxtaposition of powerful, tumultuous love against the backdrop of tender, quiet moments. This duality captures the essence of the classical poems I provided, reflecting the complex nature of love that both ravages and soothes. However, while the AI successfully mimicked the tone and thematic depth of classical poetry, it still exhibited limitations in conveying the subtleties of human emotion that typically resonate through experienced poetic craftsmanship.

An interesting point of analysis arose concerning the AI's recognition of its own structural choices. Despite organizing the poem into quatrains, ChatGPT initially did not acknowledge this format when asked about the poem's structure. It suggests a gap in the AI's self-awareness and understanding of poetic forms, indicating that while it can execute certain structures, it may not always have full cognizance of its own compositional choices. This oversight was corrected upon further probing, illustrating the necessity of direct and specific queries to elicit accurate self-assessment from the AI.

Moreover, the AI's responses highlighted its capacity to integrate and adapt the themes and stylistic elements of the provided classic poems into a cohesive new work. This adaptability demonstrates the potential of AI in creative compositions, though it also underscores the importance of guided input to achieve higher-quality outputs.

In conclusion, this experiment with ChatGPT revealed both the capabilities and limitations of AI in the realm of poetic creation. While it can approximate the structural and thematic aspects of classical poetry, achieving the nuanced emotional depth that defines much of human artistic expression remains a challenge. These insights not only contribute to our understanding of AI's potential in creative disciplines but also help in delineating the boundaries of its current capabilities and the areas ripe for further exploration and development.

## **Death ~ Ashnah**

The final theme we chose was death. Under this theme, the approach we used this time was to use our selected AI tool in a way that mimicked a poet in the modern age setting out to make their mark in literature by writing a poem about death from a perspective never written from before, written in a way unlike any poem ever written before. The goal for this approach was to give as much autonomy to the AI tool on the writing of the poem, including its topic, style, structure, and assess its own standards for great poetry. This method not only tested the creative boundaries of ChatGPT-4 but also provided insights into its ability to innovate within a well-trodden literary theme. The AI tool selected to generate poetry for this theme was ChatGPT-4.

Death has been a prominent theme in literature throughout history, taking many forms and written from many unique perspectives in poetry. When writing poetry on the theme of death, any modern-day poet would be expected to understand the significance of this theme in literature and poetry, its history, evolution across times and locations, religions and cultures, and the various shapes, forms, and structures it has taken. Therefore, we first prompted ChatGPT-4 to evaluate its understanding of the significance of death as a theme in poetry over the ages, the significance of death according to renowned literary figures, the specific kind of poetry dedicated to the theme of death, its key characteristics, poets who have written the most renowned poems about death, and the most renowned poems in literature centred around the theme of death. In doing so, we were trying to gauge its knowledge and the extent of diversity of what was considered great poetry and the great poets who wrote about death.

As any modern poet would be expected to know the history of their craft before they could go on to write their own stuff (surely a poet who has read Wordsworth and Shakespeare's poetry can be expected to write better poetry than one who has not), once we were satisfied with ChatGPT-4's prior knowledge, understanding, and awareness of poetry about death, we proceeded to see how ChatGPT would write its own poems, beginning at the first step of any creative endeavour: inspiration. As we've observed throughout this course, poets often draw inspiration from original sources to create their own unique poetry. Like any modern poet would first understand the characteristics of what qualified as poetry about death in his regard before mimicking or producing something resembling already established poetry that falls under that theme, we decided to ChatGPT-4 to do the same. Therefore, our next prompts were aimed at understanding what key characteristics ChatGPT-4 associated with poetry about death that differentiated it from other poetry. We asked it to identify similarities between these and other renowned poetic works about death, in terms of literary devices, structures, writing style, etc., and to include examples from such poems where it noted these elements. It revealed a vast list of similarities, both literal and abstract, all supported by rich examples of renowned poetry about death. These included elements such as the personification of death, the use of elegiac tone, metaphorical journeys, reflections on mortality, structure and form, reflective and melancholic tone and mood that turns consoling, variable form, three-part structure of lament-praise/admiration-consolation, nature imagery, and purpose and function (catharsis, memorialization, philosophical reflection). While we expected to uncover similarities that related to more technical aspects of poems about death, such as common structure, form, poetic meter, and oft-used words, phrases, and metaphors, an interesting insight emerged. Contrary to our initial assumption, ChatGPT-4 also evaluated the similarities across these poems on qualitative grounds, most significantly factors like purpose and the human and universal impact of the poems.

When we expect our modern poet to have grasped the nuances of the greats he aspires to emulate, as well as to understand the standard styles, types, and perspectives that have shaped great poetry, the next phase of the creative process is for him to now start brainstorming his own ideas for topics related to death to write his own poems on. Although we've learned throughout this course that great poetry cannot be rushed, forced, or created on demand, our next prompts aimed to simulate this brainstorming process in ChatGPT-4. Instead of merely asking ChatGPT-4 to write an open-ended poem on death or assigning it a specific poet, set of poems, or premise that would restrict its writing, we tried to ensure ChatGPT-4 would be compelled to be as creative as it could be. This was accomplished by prompting it to generate a list of unique topics/perspectives/premises related to death on which no poetry had been written yet throughout literature. This was an attempt to limit (if not eliminate) the amount of pre-written material ChatGPT-4 has been trained on that it can thus be expected to mimic instead of coming up with something original, in order to truly push its creative abilities. In response to this, ChatGPT-4 came up with a list of truly unique-looking ideas for writing poetry about death that, at least to my knowledge, have not been previously addressed in existing poetry.

Usually, we have a bunch of ideas bobbing around in our heads, and we typically select the one that we feel most compelled to write about. The same can be expected of our modern-day poet. Instead of making this choice ourselves for ChatGPT-4, we once again placed the decision in ChatGPT-4's hands to see which topic it felt compelled to write poetry about. The purpose of these prompts was to understand what drives an AI tool's sense of creative compulsion. In response, ChatGPT-4 cited reasons such as cultural significance, universal relevance, emotional depth, impact, and, most intriguingly, an "opportunity for innovation" as its basis for choosing a topic from the list. A simple informal survey among human peers

revealed that had they had the same list of ideas, their choices would have varied greatly as well, along with their reasons for those choices.

Finally, we arrive at the point of writing the poem. Again, instead of restricting ChatGPT-4 to any conditions like form, structure, style, length etc. we gave it total autonomy to write the poem on its selected topic, only specifying first that it must fulfil all the reasons why it thought this premise deserved to have a poem written about it, and that it should “be creative”. Interestingly enough, all poems that ChatGPT-4 came up with when prompted in this way, were free-verse poetry, revealing an apparent bias in its writing style. However, most poets also have a favourite distinct style of writing, so can we really complain when ChatGPT-4 does this too? If anything, having a favourite style might convey a more human characteristic than a non-human one—a thought worth pondering. For the rest of our discussion, we will focus solely on the poem “Whispers of the Last Tongue” generated by ChatGPT-4 on this premise.

Seldom is any poem we see a poet’s first draft, untouched by any retouching. We can expect the same of any poems written by the modern poet we are trying to mimic. An important aspect of this research was to see how AI tools refined their poetry to elevate a poem’s quality and standard. In accomplishing this, our approach was unique in that instead of analysing and identifying the areas of revision in each poem and asking ChatGPT-4 to improve on those, we asked it to analyse the quality of its generated poems according to “literary standards” to give us insight into what it considered these standards. This showed it considered factors like the use of imagery and sensory language, emotional depth, poetic tone, theme development and unity, innovation, originality, language and diction. In trying to understand why it gauged poetic quality over these criteria, we also gave it a list of common literary devices (conveniently available to us because of a certain class quiz we had on literary terms in this course 😊), and asked it to explain why it used some of these in its poem and not the others. This was aimed at understanding why, instead of trying to integrate all literary ingredients available to it, it decides to keep some and leave some, and based on what factors it believes that it’s producing a decent poem. In addition, an important factor by which most people judge poetry is poetic meter; in fact, some people seem to assume that this lyrical, melodious nature of poetry is an essential part of any poetry. This was something we prompted ChatGPT-4 to evaluate in its poetry, particularly since it didn’t seem to be something it separately evaluated itself on when analysing the quality of its poems so far.

The goal of having ChatGPT-4 analyze its poems was ultimately to refine them based on its own understanding of improvement. For this, it was essential to also have it compare its poem against the poems it had already regarded as renowned and great works of poetry. This led us to prompt it to assess the quality of its poems against the characteristics of typically great, renowned poetry in literature, which it had acknowledged familiarity with in earlier prompts. What was interesting was that it was convinced the poem it had come up with was at par with these literary greats. An excerpt from it’s analysis reflects this:

*“Whispers of the Last Tongue” aligns well with the characteristics of high-quality free-verse poetry through its thoughtful thematic exploration, innovative language use, emotional depth, and effective imagery. It engages readers by presenting a poignant topic in a vivid and introspective manner, characteristic of much celebrated free-verse poetry in literature. This analysis suggests that the poem successfully embodies the essence of what makes free verse a powerful and enduring form of poetic expression.”*

Baffled by this unexpected self-confidence of ChatGPT-4's that it was writing poetry that was as great as the classics, we engaged it in a next series of prompts asking it first about whether it was familiar with the views of famous literary authority figures towards poetry, and then how it thought they would react to its generated poetry, as well as whether it met the standards they upheld/reduced poetry to. These figures included those whose stances on poetry we have discussed throughout the course i.e. Plato, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Roland Barthes and Emerson. We finally prompted it to argue whether according to the collective standards of all these figures, its poem qualified as a good poem. Not surprisingly, ChatGPT-4 maintained its poem was a splendid one presenting substantial evidence of why and according to what standard of each figure, which included emotional depth with intellectual rigour, engaging readers in a meaningful way, utilising imagination to transcend ordinary experiences, and tackling themes with universal resonance.

In our final attempts to persuade ChatGPT-4 to refine its poem to attempt making it even better, we asked it to modify its poem to turn it from a good poem (that it had already argued and stood by very firmly that it was) to a great poem. The flexibility and autonomy we still gave it was by instructing it to modify the poem only if it deemed it was needed to turn it from good to great, which meant it could choose not to modify it and still maintain that it was a great poem. However, this time it decided to modify it. In fact, instead of making minor changes to its original poem, it produced a completely new poem: "Echoes of Silence", and more interestingly, provided a list of explanations for the modifications it had made. Encouraged by this, we prompted it to explain whether it thought that these reasons or factors, which led to the modifications of the original poem, were what it deemed to be the difference between good poetry and great poetry. In response, we received a list of additional factors that it felt contributed to making a poem great.

To finally conclude our research, we asked it to rank both our poems separately on the factors it attributed to great poems, and then comparing both together, which would rank as the more 'great' poem. In its concluding remarks, ChatGPT-4 gave us not only its answer to this question, but also our question for the search of what are the essential elements that make poetry, poetry, in the following words:

*"In summary, while "Whispers of the Last Tongue" is a strong poem in its own right, "Echoes of Silence" builds upon and enhances the strengths of its predecessor, making it a more "great" poem. It achieves a higher level of emotional depth, linguistic sophistication, and thematic complexity, which are crucial elements in defining great poetry."*

## Conclusion

This exploratory project conducted by *Poetica ex Machina* has demonstrated both the impressive capabilities and notable limitations of artificial intelligence in the realm of poetic creation. Over the course of our investigation, we engaged various AI tools to generate poetry across a spectrum of themes: death, love, nostalgia, nature, and regret. Our findings reveal that while AI can successfully emulate the structural and thematic aspects of poetry, its creations often lack the depth of emotion and personal nuance that are the hallmarks of truly impactful human poetry. The AI's proficiency in language handling and adherence to poetic forms is commendable; however, its inability to fully grasp and convey the complex subtleties of human feelings and experiences underscores the essential role of human creativity and emotional depth in the arts.

Throughout our project, each theme presented unique challenges and opportunities that tested the AI's creative boundaries. In the case of themes like love and death, the AI managed to produce work that, at a surface level, closely mimicked human-written poetry. However, a deeper analysis revealed a mechanical approach to emotional expression, lacking the spontaneous and often imperfect touch that characterizes human writing. The project thus highlighted the potential of AI as a tool for creative expression, but also reinforced the understanding that the nuances of human emotion, personal experience, and cultural context are areas where human input remains irreplaceable. As AI continues to evolve, it may grow more adept at handling complex creative tasks; yet, the intrinsic value of human perspective in arts and literature remains unmatched, underscoring the collaborative potential between humans and AI in future creative endeavors.



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