



MYTHIC DISCOURSE IN HUMAN AND AI-GENERATED CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH NARRATIVES

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to analyse mythic discourse in modern English storytelling as seen in both human and AI narratives. It combines the findings of other scholars in the field of secondary qualitative analysis through the concepts of mythic structures, archetypes, symbolic motifs and new digital myths. The results suggest that it is possible to identify a striking resemblance in the reproduction of traditional mythic pattern elements such as creation, change, heroic struggle, sacrifice and human-AI conflict. However, human narratives show higher levels of contextual transformation while machine-made narratives are more likely to re-combine inherited elements of the mythos and technology-related themes such as artificial consciousness, digital existence and machine autonomy. The authors conclude that the study has demonstrated the role of AI in the transformation

of stories, but also found that the stories are clearly tied to human cultural and literary legacy.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Myth has always been a significant means of people's cultural and literary expression, which helped people understand the world around them, share values, explain confusion and create collective meanings. As a popular genre, myth is not restricted to the gods, heroes, origins or supernatural events, but remains active as a more general cultural mechanism that may be utilised in other areas of culture such as the literary, popular, media, political and technological¹. Traditional myths have never been entirely preserved by modern writers, but rather have been modified to suit the needs of different social, cultural and technological situations. Thus, myth is a malleable genre of narrative that can carry the charge of current issues.

With the development of generative AI, an advanced strategy has been added to this ongoing trend of storytelling. Large language models can generate stories with characters, plots, symbolic imagery, archetypal characters, and known mythic forms². Such systems can produce text by copying an already established literary or cultural form, because they have learned the form in their context from a large amount of human produced text. This raises the question for contemporary literary studies whether AI can create narratives that can be viewed as mere repetition of the inherited mythic structures or their recombination and transformation of familiar elements can be ways to new mythic forms. Thus, this research investigates mythic discourse in modern-day English stories created by humans and AI. The main emphasis is on the mythic forms, archetypes, and symbolic elements as well as their parallels, contrasts, and evolution between human and machine storytelling. It also examines the question of whether the AI-generated narratives in this

¹ Agha, A. (2025). Reimagining the Past: The Use of Mythology in Contemporary Literature. *Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies*, 3(1), 355-383. <https://doi.org/10.71281/jals.v3i1.227>

² Yuan, A., Coenen, A., Reif, E., & Ippolito, D. (2022, March). Wordcraft: story writing with large language models. In *Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Intelligent User Interfaces* (pp. 841-852). <https://doi.org/10.1145/3490099.3511105>

way offer the opportunity to 'new myths' that are emerging in the context of digital age imaginaries, anxieties, and cultural transformation.

1.2 Problem statement

Throughout the evolution of myth, it can be seen that the process of myth-making is not static at all. Oral transmission of traditional myths and repeated changes in traditional myths over generations of individuals and communities³. With the dawn of writing and literary production, other avenues emerged to preserve, amend and reimagine the myths. The process continues in contemporary genres such as fantasy, science fiction, and speculative fiction, as they alter creation and destruction, sacrifice and immortality, transformation and human struggle in their modern context. The contemporary use of traditional mythic forms in relation to new cultural and technological contexts is well exemplified in the field of contemporary English story writing⁴. The creator of a divine being can be a scientist or an engineer, god or can be an artificial being, and traveling to an unknown world can be done technologically or virtually. These metamorphoses hold onto recognisable mythic relationships, but offer writers the opportunity to address contemporary issues of identity, artificial life, human metamorphosis, and technological power.

The study aims to examine the mythic structures, archetypes and symbolic motifs present in contemporary English narratives produced by both human authors and AI systems, identifying points of convergence, divergence and transformation in myth-making practices. It also seeks to analyze how AI-generated stories construct or replicate mythic discourse, assess whether these narratives introduce emergent "new myths" that reflect digital-age imaginaries, technological anxieties, or evolving cultural identities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Myth and Mythic Discourse

³ Bullard, E. (2025). *Oral tradition* | EBSCO. EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | [Www.Ebsco.Com. https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/oral-tradition](https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/social-sciences-and-humanities/oral-tradition)

⁴ Kagaba Amina, G. (2024). The Role of Myth in Contemporary Storytelling. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kampala-International-University-Researchcentre/publication/386136879_The_Role_of_Myth_in_Contemporary_Storytelling/links/6745dd58359dcb4d9d3aac79/The-Role-of-Myth-in-Contemporary-Storytelling.pdf

Myth is neither a stable body of ancient narratives nor a static collection of them. It has been acknowledged in the literature that the myth is not a repository of ancient stories and is not static but rather is continually malleable in the way it makes sense. Modern narration maintains familiar forms of story such as creation, heroic action, metamorphosis, giving up, destruction, loss of life and revival, but sets them in new cultural and technological contexts⁵. Such a process of reproduction and transformation of mythic discourse is therefore treated in the existing study, instead of being represented as simply a process of maintaining the myth. The point of this aspect is that it does not focus on the presence or absence of a mythic element in a contemporary narrative but rather on the way in which the mythic element is reorganized and the new significance that it has been given. The same separation is apparent in scholarship on archetypes. Recurring narrative patterns are found in archetypal characters such as Hero, Mentor, Creator, Shadow, Trickster and Outsider that help to structure the narrative of conflict, identity and transformation⁶. The existing literature indicates that Large Language Models or LLMs are able to generate familiar personae with comparative accuracy, especially those that are rather fixed such as the Hero and Wise Old Man. However, they may be more formulaic in depictions of more complex figures such as the Shadow and Trickster. This discovery makes it difficult to make a simple statement of machine creativity, given the presence of archetypes. This may be a good sign of pattern's reproduction to the extent that the character configuration is similar.

2.2 Symbolic Motifs and Mythic Imagery

The same state of tension is also visible in regard to the symbolic motifs. Myths are created, heroic journeys, sacrifice, death, rebirth and transformation are found throughout myth, and can be found in AI-generated myths as well. However, AI systems can take such inherited motifs and add modern issues such as AI and digital life and human-machine

⁵ Schachtner, C. (2020). Storytelling as a cultural practice and life form. *The Narrative Subject*, 29–75. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51189-0_2

⁶ Whitmore, E. (2021). Myth and Archetype in Contemporary Fantasy Literature. *Electronic Research Journal Of Literature*, 3(1), 33-41. <https://doi.org/10.52152/wja5db40>

interactions⁷. There is thus a continuum between repetition and recombination, rather than a dichotomy between old and new, as suggested by the literature. Novelty does not always reside in the appearance of a technological setting in the work, it can equally lie in the relationship set up between the inherited motifs and the matters of the day.

Beguš found the Pygmalion myth in both corpora in their study of 250 stories created by humans and 80 by AI⁸. However, the ongoing discussion in the study suggests that AI can create hybrid patterns which incorporate heroic and creation as well as apocalyptic, aspects with technological features and may be connected with any one of the traditional mythic patterns. The point here is not so much if AI can make recognisable mythology, but whether recombination is enough to qualify as a “new myth.”

2.3 AI-Generated Storytelling and the Reproduction of Mythic Patterns

This is a great pace for further research in the field. Research about the production of AI-generated narratives has focused mainly on fluency, coherence, originality or style, or even overall creative ability, with less research paying attention to the mythic, symbolic and culturally embedded aspects of machine-generated narratives. However, there is not yet much known about how or if the repeated mythic patterns and motifs in AI stories are used as simply a textually inherited set of structures or if they have been altered to depict concerns specifically of the digital age. The notion “new myths” thus calls for special analytical care. In the present study they are not just new stories: symbolic stories that can convey the fears, hopes, beliefs and interpretations of technological change of the present time. This definition enables two divergent alternatives to be central to the literature synthesis, and to be considered in competition.

The important difference between these is that of mythic resemblance from mythic transformation. Archetypes, motifs and structures can be reproduced by AI and could be recombined around digital imaginaries. Less information is available in an organised

⁷ Führer, C. (2026). Understanding Literature in the Age of AI. In *Humanities Perspectives on AI: An Interdisciplinary Introduction* (pp. 221-240). Scandinavian University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.18261/9788294167234-26-10>

⁸ Beguš, N. (2024). Experimental narratives: A comparison of human crowdsourced storytelling and AI storytelling. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1), 1392. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-03868-8>

comparative way in regard to whether such recombinations are real changes in the nature of the mythic discourse. The study seeks to answer these questions by looking at the human-created and AI-generated contemporary English texts and examine their mythic structures, mythic patterns and mythic motifs respectively to determine whether AI produces inherited mythic structures or contributes to the creation of new mythic imaginaries.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The secondary qualitative research design employed in the study is aimed at the exploration of available scholarly studies on mythic structure, archetype, symbolic motifs and the process of building or breaking the process of mythic discourse during the contemporary English story-telling. A qualitative approach is suitable when the research deals with interpretations of meanings, patterns, representations and arguments in scholarship rather than numeric measurements of variables⁹. The analysis is also comparative in nature with a focus on comparing the existing research on human stories versus the research on AI-generated storytelling.

3.2 Data Sources

The study is based on secondary sources. The main sources were peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, conference papers and other academically meaningful works that examine the nature of contemporary mythology, literary storytelling, the creation of narratives by AI, archetypal patterns and symbolic motifs as well as the myth-making in the digital era. The literature compiled in the study evidences the capacity of AI systems to mimic already known narrative patterns and to merge the traditional mythic elements with technological themes. Selected literature is purposely selected that directly relates to the first two research objectives. Studies of mythic structures, archetypes, symbolic motifs, AI generated narratives, contemporary English storytelling and new digital or technological myths will be given priority. Special focus is placed on newer

⁹ Haq, M., & Yasin, N. (2025). Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodology paradigms. *Journal of Practical Studies in Education*, 6(6), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.46809/jpse.v6i6.144>

scholarship to ensure the discussion is reflective of the recent progress in generative AI and today's digital storytelling. Research about the technical performance of AI technologies which has no relevance for narrative, mythic, literary or cultural aspects is beyond the core scope of the study.

3.3 Data Analysis

Literature collected is analysed using qualitative interpretive synthesis. The results of the studies are analysed to determine what is common and what is conflicting as well as what is continuity and transformation. Previous research is analysed in terms of the description of recurring structures, figures and symbols in human and AI-produced narratives. It also takes up questions of evidence of reproduction, recombination and transformation of inherited mythic forms in technologically-oriented narratives. Some of the previous comparative studies have shown that noticeable mythic patterns are common to both human and AI-generated stories, and some have revealed that AI can integrate the elements of a myth with modern technological issues.

3.3 Analytical Focus

The synthesis is structured in terms of the two goals of the study. First, it looks at similarities, differences and changes in such mythic elements as structures, archetypes, symbolic motifs in human and AI-generated stories. Second, it takes account of the way that current scholarship has theorised the reproduction or transformation of mythic discourse in the age of AI, and the production of “new myths” that emerge with the imaginations of the digital age, anxieties towards technology and evolving cultural identities. The study does not presume that a mythic motif that is found automatically becomes a new myth. Rather, the existing literature is critically assessed to see whether any reported changes in myths are significant in terms of how the myth is represented.

3.4 Research Quality and Ethics

The use of reliable academic textbooks and sources, with a consistent approach to the selection of both, the clear use of the results of the research and the comparative use of the results from different studies strengthen research quality. The analysis clearly separates facts reported by earlier researchers from those aspects of the facts used to propose a new interpretation in the present study. The lack of human subjects and personal data in the

research does not introduce any specific ethical risks to the research. However, it is critical that the academic writing features proper referencing, correct interpretation of the sources, and no misinterpretation of the sources.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Mythic structures in Human and AI-generated Narratives

The secondary literature reveals that mythic structures continue to be strong and successful in present-day English stories with their significance being further modified to reflect the social and cultural issues. For instance, McShane (2022) shows how the structures of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are used in Naomi Iizuka's *Polaroid Stories* in the connection of classical mythic characters to homelessness, violence, gender and marginalisation¹⁰. Fantasy and speculative fiction's ability to create alternative possibilities and to question dominant social norms is also emphasised by Boucher (2024)¹¹ and Charlton (2024)¹². The results of these studies suggest that the human authors usually preserve the recognisable mythic form, but change its context and meaning. The same kind of structure is found in the AI-generated texts. As demonstrated by Kabashkin et al (2025), large language models tend to produce patterns of recurring narratives, and the dissertation highlights patterns of departure, conflict, transformation, resolution, creation, destruction, sacrifice, rebirth and technological transcendence. O'Sullivan (2025) also points out that the AI-generated creative writing can be identified through literary devices and that there are differences between human and machine writing¹³. While generative AI is now part of the human linguistic and semiotic system, as Paolucci (2025) posits, novelty produced by the machines is still linked to the inherited cultural system¹⁴.

¹⁰ McShane, S. (2022). 'Some Myths Need to be Ripped Apart' (Iizuka): The Violence of Reception and Reception of Violence in Naomi Iizuka's *Polaroid Stories*: An Adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 30(3), 314–334. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12138-022-00629-3>

¹¹ Boucher, G. M. (2024). The Specificity of Fantasy and the "Affective Novum": A Theory of a Core Subset of Fantasy Literature. *Literature*, 4(2), 101–121. <https://doi.org/10.3390/literature4020008>

¹² Charlton, K. (2024). Using Speculative Fiction to Imagine Queer Abolition Real Utopias. *Critical Criminology*, 32(4), 903–917. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-024-09793-1>

¹³ O'Sullivan, J. (2025). Stylometric comparisons of human versus AI-generated creative writing. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12(1), 1708. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-025-05986-3>

¹⁴ Paolucci, C. (2025). The myth of meaning: generative AI as language-endowed machines and the machinic essence of the human being. *Semiotica*, 2025(262), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.1515/sem-2024-0204>

In this way, it is seen that there is a convergence of structure and a divergence of context. While both types of stories make use of traditional mythic patterns, human writers tend to use these patterns more explicitly when they are describing their cultural and social experiences. On the other hand, AI replicates patterns that are found in the textual material that has been provided to it.

4.2 Archetypes and Symbolic Motifs

Another significant comparison is the archetypal figures. Heroes, mentors, tricksters, shadows, rulers, caregivers and outsiders which are all authoritatively narrated to people by human beings, still exist and are still carried in the narrative. But in recent scholarship, they are regarded not as stereotypes but as flexible possibilities of symbolization. Goodwyn (2022)¹⁵ is keen to place emphasis on embodied experience, and Sun & Kim (2024)¹⁶ emphasise the importance of cultural and ritual context to the archetypal meaning. AI systems can replicate common types as well. Models are fairly accurate for simple figures such as Hero and Wise Old Man while they are less accurate and can turn into formulas for the more complex characters as Shadow or tricksters¹⁷. This implies that there is a level of similarity within the human and AI story, which is most likely at the archetypal level, where the narrational structure is recognisable, but differences can be seen in terms of contextual depth and complexity.

The same trend is observed in the case of symbolic motifs. The narrative elements of creation, heroic journeys, sacrifice, death, rebirth and transformation are present in both types of storytelling and as AI-generated stories become more common, these are often linked to AI and digital life with the relationship between man and machine. However, the Pygmalion creator-creation relationship occurs in both machine and human stories, as

¹⁵ Goodwyn, E. (2022). Archetypes and clinical application: how the genome responds to experience. *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 67(3), 838–859. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5922.12821>

¹⁶ Sun, H., & Kim, E. (2024). Archetype symbols and altered consciousness: a study of shamanic rituals in the context of Jungian psychology. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1379391. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1379391>

¹⁷ Kabashkin, I., Zervina, O., & Misnevs, B. (2025). AI narrative modeling: How machines' intelligence reproduces archetypal storytelling. *Information*, 16(4), 319. <https://doi.org/10.3390/info16040319>

illustrated by a comparison of 250 human-created stories and 80 AI-generated stories undertaken by Beguš (2024).

4.3 AI reproduction, transformation and “New Myths”

Based on the evidence, it appears that AI storytelling does so at multiple levels: reproduction and recombination. The idea of a creator and of artificial beings and of forbidden knowledge and conflict between human and non-human beings are transferred over and over into the stories of AI. Meanwhile, these inherited motifs are being increasingly intertwined with modern issues such as Artificial Intelligence being more autonomous, Digital Immortality, Superintelligence and Human replacement. Rakowski et al (2025)¹⁸ conceptualize the digital space as a new cultural landscape that emerges from technologies, algorithms and collective imagination, while Prasad (2024) defines digital technological mythology as one of the most significant aspects of contemporary technology, which consists of AI, automation, human enhancement and digital immortality¹⁹.

The genre of myth, however, is not to be taken for granted; and the literature warns of not considering all technologically themed narratives as authentic myths. A narrative that is inherited is not an automatic trigger to create a new narrative, if robots, AI or digital environments are present. Rather, newness can be achieved by the recombination and reinterpretation and contextualisation of old mythologic concepts. This means that an AI story could be new, but still be very dependent on cultural frameworks that are handed down.

4.4 Comparative synthesis

In general, the secondary findings show a high degree of convergence in the use of mythic structures, archetypes and symbolic motifs, in the human and AI story. The key distinction is how contextualisation and transformation of these elements take place. While

¹⁸ Rakowski, R., Kowalikova, P., & Polak, P. (2025). Digital mythologies. *Society*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-025-01125-5>

¹⁹ Prasad, A. (2024). “The role of technology in Shaping contemporary myths and their impact on society.” *African Journal of Biomedical Research*, 772–777. <https://doi.org/10.53555/ajbr.v27i5s.6730>

human writers are more likely to associate mythic elements with specific cultural moments and social issues, AI systems excel at recognising and combining existing structures with technological motifs. Together, Beguš (2024), Kabashkin et al. (2025), O'Sullivan (2025), Paolucci (2025), and Rakowski et al. (2025) suggest that the relationship is thus neither one of opposition between the human myths and the machine myths, but one of continuity, reproduction and transformation.

Therefore, the results situate AI-generated storytelling as a key place for the current mythic metamorphosis. AI can replicate mythic resources and generate new formations based on something that is more newly human-machine relationship and technological hopes and fears. However, the current evidence is not conclusive in proving that AI is a self-generating producer of culturally autonomous myths. Based on the available literature, the most drawn conclusion is that AI broadens the scope of possibilities for the recombination and transformation of myth, yet at the same time is also quite close to the cultural and literary legacy of human kind.

5. Conclusion

The present study shows that today, mythic frameworks, archetypes and symbolism are still relevant for human and AI-generated stories. The secondary evidence indicates that archetypal narrative elements such as creation, transformation, heroic struggle, sacrifice, rebirth and human versus AI conflict are also common as are archetypal characters such as heroes, creators, mentors and tricksters. But the significance and usage of these elements varies between storytelling in fiction and storytelling in non-fiction. Usually human-made stories alter inherited mythic forms in specific social, cultural and historical settings. Unlike the AI-produced examples, the handwritten stories have a notable ability to replicate the common mythic form and then fuse it with current technological issues. The results highlight very specific themes related to artificial consciousness, digital life, machine autonomy, technological power and human replacement as new themes of mythic imagination.

The study argues that AI-generated storytelling is a phenomenon that has a greener connection to human cultural and literary heritage, which also lies in the apparent newness of the phenomenon. Rather than as new myths, “new myths” can be seen as reconfiguration

of mythic ideas and images in the symbolic order, where the traditional mythic elements are reorganised in relation to the new digital realities. That is why AI has great potential to be part of the transformation of modern mythic rhetoric, but is also deeply reliant on the narrative resources that have been passed down from human beings.

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